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Stress and Resilience: The Negative and Positive Aspects of Being an Asian American Lesbian or Bisexual Woman

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Stress and Resilience: The Negative and Positive Aspects of Being an
Asian American Lesbian or Bisexual Woman

A Dissertation Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my "househusband," SinHan Hwang, who is my

lifetime companion and counselor, and my best friend. I would also like to dedicate this

dissertation to the women who were willing to participate in my study and honestly

shared their own stories and experiences.

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ABSTRACT

Despite the richness of the literature about minority stress and negative psychological outcomes and growing attention on lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB) people of color, few studies have examined the intersection of multiple identities of Asian American lesbian and bisexual women (AA LBW). Thus, the purpose of this study was to provide an understanding of the experiences of 50 AA LBW. More specifically, this study explored challenges, coping strategies, and positive aspects of being an AA LBW through the lens of intersectionality. Qualitative analyses revealed three overarching domains concerning day-to-day challenges faced by AA LBW: living as AA sexual minority women in the context of Asian culture, experiencing heterosexism and bisexism, and living with multiple minority identities. In terms of AA LBW's coping strategies used for dealing with these challenges, three overarching domains were identified: dealing with stigma and prejudice, empowerment strategies, and engaging in a variety of resilience processes. Lastly, two domains of positive aspects about being an AA LBW were identified: socio-cultural sources of strength and insight into and empathy for self and others. Corresponding themes (a total of 33 themes), two of which included subthemes, are also described, and interpretation is provided in light of the relevant literature.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, as multiculturalism has become a fourth force in counseling and psychology (Pedersen, 1990; Pedersen, Crethar, & Carlson, 2008), many researchers have explored multicultural issues focused on the ways in which social oppression (e.g., racism, classism, ableism, heterosexualism, ethnocentrism, and/or sexism) contributes to the mental health problems that people present. They have been doing research and elaborating theories "that step beyond the traditional ethnocentric, androcentric, and heterocentric perspectives" (Bridges, Selvidge, & Matthews, 2003, p. 113), as well as moving toward social change to improve sociopolitical and psychological conditions of marginalized populations. A burgeoning body of literature regarding lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) populations has demonstrated that exposure to stigma, prejudice, discrimination, and violence in a predominantly heterosexist society is connected with deleterious consequences for the health and well-being of these stigmatized groups (Meyer, 1995, 2003). However, this body of research has been limited by focusing largely on the experiences of White LGB persons, failing to adequately attend to multiple minority identities and oppressions, and giving limited attention to coping, resilience and positive aspects associated with having multiple minority identities (Moradi, DeBlaere, & Huang, 2010; Moradi, Mohr, Worthington, & Fassinger, 2009; Szymanski & Moffitt, 2012).

Reviews of the sexual orientation research reveal a paucity of research about LGB persons of color and their invisibility in the counseling psychology literature (Moradi et

al, 2009; Moradi et al., 2010; Szymanski, Kashubeck, & Meyer, 2008). In addition, a recent content analysis of articles regarding LGB people of color during the past decade (1998-2007) showed that when a significant number of racial/ethnic minority LGB people are included in empirical studies, the most represented LGB subgroup was Latino men, followed by African American men and Asian American/Pacific Islander men (Huang, Brewster, Moradi, Goodman, Wiseman, & Martin, 2010). That is, "compared with Latino and African American men, other subgroups of LGB women, men, and transgender people of color were represented in substantially fewer studies" (p. 380). Furthermore, the content analysis also revealed that the most common topics of focus reflected in empirical studies were sexual behaviors and risks, symptomatology, and disease such as high-risk sexual behaviors, condom use, AIDS and HIV, psychological distress, and alcohol and drug use (Huang et al., 2010). Huang et al. (2010) pointed out that while these topics may indicate risk factors and health concerns for LGB people of color, the limited range of these topics may also implicate that these are the most relevant areas to examine with these populations.

Thus, the time is ripe to move toward exploring Asian American (AA) lesbian and bisexual women's (LBW) unique experiences including both negative and positive aspects within a racist, heterosexist, and sexist society. The purpose of this study is to explore challenges, coping strategies, and positive aspects of being an AA LBW, a group that has been largely neglected in research.

Challenges/Stressors

Several decades ago homosexuality was officially removed from the second

edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-II; American

Psychiatric Association, 1973) and there have been major changes in social attitudes

toward LGB people. However, much research has focused on the areas of mental health

of LGB populations indicating that LGB individuals suffer from greater psychological

distress and symptomatology than their heterosexual counterparts (Cochran, 2001;

Hatzenbuehler, 2009; Meyer, 2003). These kinds of theoretical and empirical

perspectives are often grounded in the minority stress theory (Meyer, 1995, 2003, 2010).

According to Meyer, the core concept of stress theory is based on a postulation that

members of minority groups/statuses are disadvantaged in multiple ways in society:

> Unique stressors—which do not affect members of advantaged groups, such as
>
> those related to prejudice—place added burden on members of minority (or, more
>
> generally, *disadvantaged*) groups. Thus, through both structural and interpersonal
>
> routes, prejudice causes members of disadvantaged social groups to experience
>
> greater burdens and have fewer resources than members of advantaged groups. As
>
> a causal theory of mental disorders and well-being, the minority stress arguments
>
> goes further to suggest that this unique stress causes mental health problems,
>
> leading people in disadvantaged social positions to have higher rates of mental
>
> disorders. (Meyer, 2010, p. 448)

Supporting minority stress theory, studies using between group designs have found that

LGB people have more mood, anxiety, and substance-use disorders than their

heterosexual counterparts (for a review, see Cochran, 2001; Meyer, 2003). In addition, these studies have fairly consistently found that LGB individuals report more experiences of oppressive events than their heterosexual counterparts. For example, data from numerous studies have found that LGB individuals report experiencing more frequent discrimination, incidents of victimization, and parental maltreatment (e.g., psychological and physical abuse during childhood) than heterosexual persons and these discrimination and victimization experiences explain sexual orientation differences in mental health (for a review, see Szymanski & Moffitt, 2012). In addition, studies using within group designs have also found that sexual orientation based minority stressors (e.g., heterosexist prejudice, rejection, harassment, and discrimination; sexual orientation based hate crime or attempted hate crime victimization, workplace specific heterosexism, and internalized heterosexism) are related to more psychosocial distress among LGB persons (for a reviews, see Szymanski et al., 2008; Szymanski & Moffitt, 2012).

Researchers who consider multiple social identities, such as gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation have recently paid attention to LGB people of color to examine their experiences of oppression related to their minority statuses. Using the minority stress perspective, many authors have tried to test their theoretical assumptions (e.g., an additive perspective, an added burden stress model) that disadvantaged social statuses put additional psychosocial burden related to multiple minority identities on LGB people of color. For instance, Meyer, Schwartz, and Frost (2008) investigated additive minority stress related to sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, and gender, and Szymanski and Sung (2010) examined the relationship between multiple

minority stressors including heterosexism in communities of color and racism in sexual

minority communities and psychological distress in AA LGB people. In terms of an

added burden of stress resulting from multiple minority identities, researchers have

argued that LBW of color in particular deal with "triple jeopardy" (Bowleg, Huang,

Brooks, Black, & Burkholder, 2003; Greene, 1995), or the interactive influences of

racism, heterosexism, and sexism.

However, in his recent works regarding a social stress perspective and minority

stress (Kertzner, Meyer, Frost, & Stirratt, 2009; Meyer et al., 2008), Meyer raised

significant issues regarding risk and resilience among LGB people of color. He insisted

that this minority stress theory is not supported when looking at these populations, and

evidence with regard to stress and resilience has been mixed. For example, Meyer (2010)

states that African American LGB persons may be buffered against the negative effects

of stress related to homophobia because they had to confront racism prior to coming out.

That is, "strong positive other-minority identities" (Brown, 2010) learned early in life to

respond to social oppression of racism might be protective factors or resilience for LGB

people of color. In addition, he also found that although African American and Latino

LGB people are exposed to greater stressors and have less support and resources than

LGB and heterosexual Whites, they do not have more mental disorders than LGB Whites.

In fact, the risk and resilience perspectives have been conceptually discussed as recurring

topics of focus in the literature about LGB people of color but have received limited

empirical attention (Huang et al. 2010). Thus, Meyer (2010) admits there exist some

inconsistencies in social stress theory and also asserts that "reflecting on the general

stress theory might help put the question about risk and resilience among LGB people of color in a larger context" (p. 448).

Minority stress theory is based on the additive stress model and postulates that multiple minority statuses/identities add to the stress burden resulting in negative effects of stigma on mental health. As mentioned above, however, this perspective cannot be applied constantly in research of minority stress and resilience, and it suggests that we need a new theoretical framework and definition. Interestingly, feminist researchers using the intersectionality approach have already criticized that the additive approach "conceptualizes people's experiences as separate, independent, and summative" (Bowleg, 2008). Bowleg (2008) insists that one's multiple identities cannot be linearly ranked and furthermore that ranking is fruitless since "people can be members of dominant and subordinate groups (e.g., a White man with a physical disability) simultaneously" (p. 314). Warner (2008) also argues that social identities interdependently interact with each other to create each group's unique position within a social matrix.

A good example for better understanding the concept of intersectionality is as follows: "the category "Asian American" does not capture important differences between AA men and women, the category "Asian women" cannot capture differences between heterosexual and sexual minority women, and so forth. Therefore, studying identity intersection (AA sexual minority women) will be more informative than studying AA, women, and sexual minority individuals separately" (adapted from Kertzner et al., 2009, p. 508). Thus, applying the intersectionality approach to psychological research might be useful to better understand the intersection of multiple identities and socio-culturally

situated identities within a complex social matrix. Furthermore, it may resolve the issue of inconsistency of minority stress theory based on the additive approach among LGB people of color.

In addition to minority stress and intersectionality perspectives, some scholars have noted that culturally specific influences may affect the way in which sexual identities emerge and are expressed among LGB people of color (Biesckhe et al., 2008). Specifically, Asian culture's oppressive aspects such as a huge emphasis on the family as the primary social unit, familial obligations to continue the family line through marriage and the bearing of children, rigid socialized gender roles, belief that homosexuality is a sin, and traditional patriarchal values and socioeconomic system have negatively portrayed being lesbian or bisexual as a rejection of the importance of family and Asian cultural values (Chan, 1989; Shrake, 2009). Research findings on Asian (American) LGB people of color show that the intensity of heterosexism and homophobia is much stronger in Asian cultures than in the U.S. culture (Chung & Katayama, 1998; Chung & Szymanski, 2006; Kimmel & Yi, 2004). In many Asian cultures, a non-heterosexual lifestyle or relationship is more likely to be unacceptable and almost invisible. In addition, AA LBW are likely to experience not only inner conflicts related to their sexual orientation but also traditional cultural pressure from their families to marry a man, procreate children, and perform gender roles and filial responsibilities (Liu & Chan, 2003).

Although some researchers have paid attention to minority stress of LGB people of color, there is almost no empirical research on how the multiple minority identities,

including but not limited to race, gender, and/or sexual orientation, among AA LBW intersect to serve as a protective factor and/or risk factor in the experience of heterosexism and Asian cultural context. Given the fact that intersectionality might be a good lens to better understand the experience of "Asian American lesbian and bisexual women" instead of Asian (American), lesbian or bisexual, women, this study will explore their resilience and coping strategies as well as challenges and stressors.

Coping and Resistance

Recently, growing attention to the positive strength and resilience factors in LGB populations has expanded the scope of research focusing on the effective ways to relieve psychological distress as well as enhance positive strengths and support resources (Frost & Meyer, 2009; Sheets & Mohr, 2009; Szymanski, 2004, 2009). Furthermore, it is important to broaden knowledge regarding human resilience and strengths by examining how LGB individuals maintain their well-being in challenging circumstances of pervasive social stigma. In this context, researchers are already beginning to pay attention to minority stress and resilience and coping strategies among LGB people of color, expanding the scope of minority stress theory. One study conducted with a sample of 106 Latino gay men and lesbians exploring the relationship between individual psychosocial factors, identification with the Latino gay and lesbian community, and psychological well-being shows that they have resilience in their active coping style, high self-esteem, and relatively low levels of depression (Zea, Reisen, & Poppen, 1999). In another study focused on African American, Latino, and AA gay men, the author found that gay men of color use various coping strategies to manage heterosexism such as suppressing and

denying homosexuality, confronting, and experiencing social support. The results also demonstrate that their identities as being gay and as being of color cannot be categorized and that, oftentimes, race is more of an issue than one's sexual identity (Emano, 2007).

In addition, several studies focused on African American LGB people indicate that they use different coping strategies to deal with oppressive experiences related to their multiple minority statuses. In their qualitative research, Wilson and Miller (2002) identified role flexibility, changing sexual behavior and feelings, standing up for oneself, creating gay-only spaces, keeping the faith for emotional comfort, and accepting self and their sexual orientation as minority status management strategies African American gay and bisexual men employ to cope with heterosexism. These strategies attempt to serve to help avoid stigma, build support systems/buffers, and make social change. In another qualitative study examining the experiences of multiple minority stress and resilience of African American lesbians, the authors assert that their findings support "triple jeopardy," intersections of racism, sexism, and heterosexism (Bowleg et al., 2003). However, African American lesbians in this study also demonstrate their resilience including seeking balance in families and Black communities, taking active steps to engage in protective and supportive Black lesbian environments, maintaining internal psychological resilience characteristics, engaging in a variety of resiliency processes, and building social support systems despite the multiple minority stresses they have to manage.

Although there has been some research regarding LGB people of color and their resilience and coping strategies, very limited research has been conducted examining

strengths and resilience of AA LBW. Therefore, this study will add to the literature of LGB people of color and also help to gain a greater understanding of the underrepresented multiple minority population of AA LBW. Additionally, clinical implications of findings may enhance mental health care and therapeutic approaches for AA LBW.

Positive Aspects

In terms of positive aspects of being LBW, a few studies of predominantly White LGB populations have been conducted. For example, a qualitative study based on predominately White participants of 203 gay men and 350 lesbians revealed 11 themes as positive aspects of being lesbian or gay (Riggle, Whitman, Olson, Rostosky, & Strong, 2008). The 11 themes identified were belonging to a community, creating families of choice, having strong connections with others, serving as positive role models, living authentically and honestly with self, personal insight and sense of self, increased empathy and compassion for others, involvement in social justice and activism, freedom from gender-specific roles, exploring sexuality and relationships, and creating egalitarian relationships (lesbian participants only). However, the authors point out that further research is needed on racial and ethnic minority gay men and lesbians to examine their potentially different positive aspects.

Some researchers have emphasized how LGB people of color may gain resilience through communities of color's unique values and experiences which hold potential as resources and coping skills (Huang et al., 2010). For instance, AA LGB individuals face challenges and stressors related to race, and greater stigma toward homosexuality among

racial/ethnic communities. However, at the same time their multiple minority identities and multiple communities can also be sources of strength and coping to manage stigma-related stress in their daily lives. These individuals can obtain more flexible and adaptable views in responding to life events because they have been exposed to both Asian and Western values and perspectives on their life experiences (Liu & Chan, 2003). That is, although AA LGB people may "have particular difficulties in overtly acknowledging their lesbian, gay, or bisexual identities, they may also have some flexibility and freedom in integrating their sexuality and sexual behavior, which may differ substantially from more rigid Eastern or Western models for integration" (Liu & Chan, 2003, p. 97).

Furthermore, a content analysis of gay and lesbian issues affecting ethnic minorities such as African Americans, Latinos, and AAs from 1989 to 1998 shows that AA gay men and lesbians have strengths related to family as the primary social unit throughout one's life time and traditional religions (e.g., Buddhism) that do not address homosexuality (Akerlund & Cheung, 2000). In addition, the majority of AA lesbian participants compared to AA heterosexual counterparts also reported that they were not struggling with the traditional Asian feminine role (Chao, 2001). In terms of the cultural aspects of sexual identity formation and sexual expression, East Asian culture maintaining stringent restrictions on open and public expressions of sexuality, AA lesbians may develop less dichotomization and more fluidity of heterosexual and homosexual behaviors (Chan, 1997). "The cultural prohibition against defining or declaring sexual orientation/identity may ironically result in a broader range of

acceptable behaviors even as public identities are more rigidly defined" (Chan, 1997, p. 247). Therefore, the study of positive aspects among AA LBW will be able to deepen understanding of unique and culturally contextualized experiences of LGB people of color beyond the deficit view, and to shed light on the issue of inconsistency of minority stress theory.

Current Study

In sum, despite the richness of the literature about minority stress and negative psychological outcomes and growing attention on LGB people of color, few studies have examined the intersection of multiple identities of AA LBW. That is, little empirical attention has been given to the fact that AA LBW may utilize their strengths to develop strategies for dealing with the challenges they confront in their daily lives. In this context, in order to offer a richer understanding of underrepresented LGB people of color and to contextualize the experience of positive aspects as a dimension of resilience despite multiple oppressions, research on AA LBW's experience of intersectionality but not limited to race, gender, and/or sexual orientation is needed.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Participants

The sample consisted of 50 AA sexual minority participants, 47 of whom identified as female and 3 as transgender. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 52 years, with a mean of 24.72 years ($SD = 7.82$). Of the participants, 38% self-identified as lesbian, 36% as bisexual, 2% as questioning, 4% as not sure, and 20% as other. Participants reported their race as 84% Asian/AA and 16% as biracial/multicultural. Participants' ethnicities were 30.6% Chinese, 8.2% Filipino, 2% Hmong, 4.1% Indian, 8.2% Japanese, 10.2% Korean, 2% Laotian, 2% South Asian, 10.2% Taiwanese, 10.2% Vietnamese, and 12.2% Other. Generational status of participants included 16% first-generation AA, 74% second-generation AA, 4% third-generation AA, and 6% fourth-generation AA. For first-generation AA, length of time in the United States ranged from 5 to 46 years, with a mean of 24.29 years ($SD = 14.76$).

In terms of highest level of education, 34% attained a high school diploma, 12% attained a 2-year college degree, 28% attained a 4-year college degree, and 26% attained a graduate or professional degree. Sixty-six percent of participants were currently enrolled in a college or university, with 12.1% being 1st-year undergraduates, 18.2% sophomores, 9.1% juniors, 24.2% seniors, 30.3% graduate students, and 6.1% other. Total household income varied among the participants: 31.9% reported an income less than $29,999; 25.6% reported an income between $30,000 and $59,999; 17% reported an income between $60,000 and $89,999; and 25.5% reported an income of $90,000 or

more. Of the participants, 24% reported being a member of the upper middle class, 38% of the middle class, 30% of the lower middle class/working class, 6% of the poor class, and 2% of not sure. In terms of geographical location, 62% lived in the West, 16% in the Northeast, 16% in the South, and 6% in the Midwest.

Procedures

An online survey was used to collect the data. Participants were recruited through an e-mail announcement of the study sent to lists that target members of the AA LBW community. These lists included the list owner of a variety of general LGB and AA and/or LBW related listservs, e-groups (e.g., YahooGroups and Facebook), community organizations, Internet resources, university LGB centers, professional groups (e.g., APA Division 35, 44, and 45), and Asian Studies and Women's Studies programs. Those who received the research announcements were asked to distribute the e-mail as appropriate. The e-mail announcement and the informed consent stated that "the purpose of the study is to provide an understanding of the experiences of AA LBW. More specifically, this study will explore the intersection of multiple minority identities including but not limited to race, gender, and/or sexual orientation." Potential participants were given a hypertext link to access the survey website. After reading the informed consent, participants completed the online survey. As an incentive to participate in the survey, all participants were given an opportunity to enter a raffle drawing for one of three $100 gift certificates to Amazon.com.

In order to effectively capture and describe the participants' experiences of intersecting minority statuses of racial/ethnic identification, gender, and sexual

orientation, participants were asked three open-ended questions; 1) "Please tell me about some of the day-to-day challenges that you face as an Asian American lesbian [or woman-loving-woman]/bisexual woman [or woman-loving-both man and woman]" adapted from Bowleg's (2008) study on African American lesbians, 2) "Please tell me about the ways that you cope with and/or resist the day-to-day challenges that you face as an Asian American lesbian [or woman-loving-woman]/bisexual woman [or woman-loving-both man and woman]" adapted from Bowleg's (2008) study, and 3) "Please tell me what you think the positive things are about being an Asian American lesbian [or woman-loving-woman]/bisexual woman [or woman-loving-both man and woman]" adapted from Riggle et al.'s (2008) study on LGB persons.

Data Analysis

Since there is little scholarly research on the experiences of AA LBW, a qualitative, exploratory approach was deemed necessary in order to develop a model to capture the complexity of this underrepresented and marginalized group (Creswell, 2007). Specifically, the responses submitted by participants to the three open-ended questions were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), to identify common themes of information among the participants.

The research team was composed of the researcher, the faculty advisor, and one counseling psychology doctoral student who were knowledgeable about qualitative methods and multicultural and sexual orientation issues. The research team participated in the entire analysis process, reviewing and discussing the data and their meaning,

arriving at major conclusions, and presenting the results. The research team members began the analytic process by independently reading through the survey responses. Each member of the research team kept records of the emerging categories and then participated in discussions to create the lists of domains and themes/subthemes for all three survey questions by comparing and reconciling referents to the data. As the process was repeated throughout the study and the lists of categories became more refined, and more abstract themes were identified.

To ensure standards of trustworthiness in qualitative research, steps were taken through credibility, transferability, and confirmability. In terms of credibility, for being an accurate reflection of what participants stated, some validation strategies were employed in this study, including having the study reviewed by peers through all stages of the study and examining the researcher's past experiences and assumptions. First, the three research team members independently identified their own codes and categories from the data before collaborating and seeking consensus. Second, disclosure of the researcher's past experiences, assumptions, subjectivity, orientations, and reflexivity is a significant component of rigor in qualitative research (Beckstead & Morrow, 2004; Creswell, 2007). In this context, the following reflexivity statement was prepared by the first author:

> I originally came from South Korea and an international graduate student in
> counseling psychology at a university located in southeastern area in the U.S. I
> also identify myself as an Asian feminist sexual minority woman. Having majored
> in psychology while an undergraduate and women's studies for a master's degree,

I had been actively engaged in various activities regarding women and gender issues, including my experience as a feminist counselor of women for seven years in Korea. In my long journey, feminist theory and approach gave me very meaningful insights on the importance of understanding how multifaceted oppressions and traditional gender role socialization strongly affect individuals' identity, psychological states, and well-being. I have lived in the U.S. since 2007, and I have experienced some kinds of discrimination based on my race, gender, sexual orientation, and language, and sometimes used to feel isolation, loneliness, low self-esteem/confidence, and tiredness. However, at the same time, my every course in and out of classes multiculturally-orientated, practicum training, and social support systems also helped me to cope with various acculturative stresses and those experiences through enhancing my understanding of the diversity and intersectionality of the culture, and broadening my knowledge of diverse societal and cultural subgroups including myself. In the context, I wanted to better understand about underrepresented LGB people of color and especially to explore living experiences of AA sexual minority persons including their challenges, coping resources and strategies, and resilience through a critical/feminist paradigm and intersectionality theory. My cultural background, theoretical orientation, training, and experiences regarding gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity, although there are various differences between AA group and myself as a Korean, gave me a good opportunity to better understand AA LBW's

experience of intersectionality. Thus, I was able to find numerous personal connections to many of the themes identified from the data.

Transferability was established by providing sufficient information about the participants and processes, as well as direct quotations from participants so that the reader is able to generalize the findings of the study to her or his own context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow, 2005). Confirmability was accomplished by an external auditor who was not part of the research team in order to examine whether or not the findings, interpretations, and conclusions were supported by the data (Creswell, 2007; Morrow, 2005). This individual, a Middle Eastern queer identified woman, read all of the raw data transcripts and a draft of the manuscript, including the survey questions, resulting themes and supporting quotations. She concluded that (1) the survey questions were appropriately broad enough to maximize participants' freedom to respond based on their own views of their experiences, and (2) the process by which the researchers developed the themes from the data is logical and that the themes/sub-themes are accurate, thorough, and seem to come out of the transcripts.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The data analyses revealed complexities associated with being an AA LBW including challenges, coping strategies used for dealing with these challenges, and strengths/positive aspects.

Challenges/Stressors

Concerning day-to-day challenges faced by AA LBW, three overarching domains were identified: living as an AA sexual minority woman in the context of Asian culture, experiencing heterosexism and bisexism, and living with multiple minority identities. Within the domains, a total of 13 themes, two of which included subthemes, emerged. Table 1 illustrates the overarching domains as well as the themes/subthemes that emerged and the number of cases that exemplified each theme/subtheme (All tables are located in the appendix). In addition, it is important to note that 6% of sample participants ($n = 3$) reported that it was hard to identify challenges or they felt there were no challenges associated with being an AA LBW.

Living as AA sexual minority women in the context of Asian culture. Many scholars have demonstrated that AA ethnic groups share a lot of common cultural values including conformity to traditional gender roles and cultural norms, family recognition through achievement, collectivism (i.e., putting the welfare of the group over individual needs or wishes), humility, filial piety (i.e., loyalty and obedience to the family), and emotional self-control (Kim, Atkinson, & Yang, 1999; Kim, Li, & Ng, 2005). In addition, homosexuality is regarded as deviant behavior associated with shame to one's family in

traditional Asian culture (Liu & Chan, 2003). Consistent with this cultural context, four themes emerged in this domain: cultural expectations concerning sexuality, conformity to traditional gender roles, intolerance of homosexuality in their AA cultures, and coming out challenges.

Cultural expectations concerning sexuality. Four of the participants in this study reported that they feel pressure from their Asian culture, family, and community to conform to traditional cultural expectations regarding hetero-normative sexuality. Participants described, within their Asian background, that their sexuality raises "conflict with traditional Asian beliefs and culture," and they have to deal with "the pressure of marriage and expectations found in typical Asian families." Another participant wrote,

> My parents would strongly prefer that I marry a man, and while they would never reject me because of who I am involved with (they know that I have been seriously involved with a woman), I am reluctant to be too "out" because they don't want the extended family/South Asian community to know about my sexuality. My mother cites her health problems/severe anxiety as the result of the stress she has about my not being "settled" (married with children). I have anxiety around my future if I wind up in partnership and parent with another woman (which is what I feel I mostly want).

Conformity to traditional gender roles. Related to cultural expectations regarding sexuality, seven participants also reported pressures related to gender roles. Some participants reported feeling pressure to "be more feminine," and feeling like "I must conform to more feminine styles of dress and hairstyles." Other participants reported challenges when choosing not to conform to traditional gender roles for women. For example, participants reported, "Getting looks from older generation of Asian folks when we are together or mostly my gender presentation that fluctuates from femme to

androgynous," or "I become nervous in certain settings, especially if I'm wearing gender

nonconforming clothing." Another self-described "very masculine" looking lesbian

reported that "people draw assumptions all the time about me based on the way I dress"

and she does not "fit in" when interacting with groups that adhere to traditional gender

roles. She also reported experiencing employment discrimination based on her non-

traditional gender role presentation.

Intolerance of homosexuality in their AA cultures. Thirteen participants

described AA culture as conservative and generally intolerant of homosexuality. Most of

them wrote about their sexual orientation and non-heterosexual relationships being

regarded as invisible and unacceptable in their Asian cultural contexts. For example, one

participant noted the "perception that Asians can't be lesbian (what my mom told me

when I came out to her)."

In terms of intolerance, a participant wrote, "I feel that Asians tend to be more

conservative, and as such they are more hesitant to accept homosexuality." Another

participant noted "There is also a fair amount of gay phobia within the several prominent

Asian communities in my town (Chinese and Korean)." Still another wrote,

> I cannot go into any establishment without the older generation of my own culture
> judging me for loving women and for loving a man of darker colour. It's
> expressed in gestures, body language, treatment. It's almost never out-right, and
> it's enough that if I weren't aware of myself, my culture, and wasn't strong in
> myself worth, I'd really think I was being paranoid.

Some participants also wrote about intolerance and ignorance of homosexuality

specifically in their Asian family and kinship. For example, one participant wrote "the

idea of family honor and pride, and the daunting realization that when an Asian comes out, the whole family can shun you."

This intolerance of homosexuality seemed to influence their public display of affections (PDA). For example, one participant noted, "My partner who is Korean, is uncomfortable holding my hand in Chinatown (2 blocks from where we live together)." Another wrote, "I notice when I am in my own environment (e.g., the state where I live), I am much less physically demonstrative with my lover (who comes from another country). When I am visiting her in her country, I have no problem showing public affection, but feel too self-conscious in my own state. I believe this is because I'm aware of people of my own culture seeing me and judging me."

Coming out challenges. This theme was the most common mentioned by the participants in this study. Two types of coming out challenges emerged from the data analysis: difficulties with disclosure of their sexual orientation to others and conflict with their AA parents/families.

Difficulties with disclosure of their sexual orientation to others. Twenty six participants reported that they have difficulties with disclosure of their sexual orientation to others including their "family, friends, relatives, (Asian Interest) sorority sisters, partner's family, coworkers, students, and/or community." Many participants mentioned distress regarding coming out issues, such as feelings of pressure, discomfort, difficulty, hurt, nervousness, stress, worry, fear, hesitancy, separation, and negativity. Thus, several participants decided just not to come out, as illustrated by "I simply do not tell anyone. I act normal most of the day so not a lot of people know about it," and "I am currently not

out." Additionally, several other participants noted that they were specifically not out to their family, as illustrated by "I would have to say the biggest challenge is keeping my identity and relationship a secret from my family," and "I am hiding who I am from my whole Chinese family." Decisions to not disclose to one's family appeared to be related to traditional Asian cultural values as evidenced in the following quote, "I can't tell my family, because if I did, their reaction would be much more drastically negative considering the kind of culture they are from." These findings are similar to the findings of AA gay men who reported that they avoided the topic of sexual orientation with their parents and found it difficult to come out to them (Chung & Szymanski, 2006). It is also similar to Chan's (1989) study of AA lesbians that found that many reported fears of parental rejection related to their sexual identity and only 26% of those surveyed had come out to a parent.

Other participants noted the stress associated with making decisions about sexual orientation disclosure, and about hiding one's sexual identity. For instance, one participant noted, "It's also a daily struggle to wonder if I should come out to people or not." Another participant wrote, "Not being out with extended family, for fear of being shunned or derogated. Means being very careful with social networking: who I friend on facebook and what I post or the pictures/places people tag me in." In these types of coming out challenges, some participants struggle with their "femme-y looking/looking straight" presentations or perform their "feminine styles" to hide their sexuality as evidenced in the following two quotes:

> Being partially in the closet is something that concerns me daily. While I'm out to some of my old high school friends and out to most of my college friends and the

community on campus, I constantly have to worry about if letting certain people know about my queer identity, I would be outed to my extremely homophobic parents who currently have no idea about sexual orientation and that fact that I currently have a girlfriend…. Being a relatively "femme-y" lesbian, coming out to people is a lot harder because I "look straight."

"Coming out" is a process that I must go through with everyone I meet, and I have to decide when or if it is ever appropriate to do so. I have to always wonder if my sexuality will threaten my working relationships or friendships. Everyone I meet assumes I am straight. In order to hide my sexuality, I must conform to more feminine styles of dress and hairstyles.

Maintaining silence about their same-sex attraction/sexual orientation and/or making themselves invisible seemed to be coping strategies used by many participants.

Conflict with their AA parents/families. Twenty three participants described experiences of conflict with their AA families regarding their sexual orientation, coming out process, or relationships. The level of disclosure about their sexual orientation to family and relational conflicts varied according to their parents' degree of awareness, openness, and acceptance. For participants who were not out to their family it seemed to create "pressure on the home front, being unable to be who I truly am with my parents." For others who were out to their parents, it seemed to create conflict and stress. For example, one participant wrote, "I would have to say the biggest challenge is keeping my identity and relationship a secret from my family. My parents are not only Christian but also traditional Koreans, so when I came out it was a disaster. I knew that they would kick me out of the house if they knew I continued this lifestyle." Another participant expressed how stressful it is for her to deal with her parents; she wrote "Although I'm really involved in the queer and Asian community on my university's campus and I work in places as a proponent for LGBTQ social justice, I feel like I lose my voice when

arguing with my parents about this subject. Sometimes I'm so hurt by their insensitivity that I just remain in shocked silence."

In a more open family, several participants wrote that their parents or one of their parents may acknowledge their sexual orientation or relationship but difficulties still remain:

> I am the first generation in my family to be born/raised here in America, the first to get a college degree, the first to get a master's degree, and an only child. My parents are survivors and veterans of the Vietnam War. They know of my white girlfriend and that she lives with me but they still struggle with bridging the gap and creating a relationship with her. My girlfriend worries about the impression she will make and how judgmental they'll be of her (since they are very critical of me).

> However, I recently found that my father would be okay if I brought home a girlfriend. My mom would find it gross, but my dad would not take love away from me if I was sincere.

Although their parents or one parent (totally or partially) accepted their sexual orientation, their coming out process still remains a big challenge in AA extended families and communities. For example, one participant wrote,

> Specifically as an Asian American lesbian I face day to day challenges when home with my parents. My father accepted my partner as my lesbian girlfriend but would not articulate that this was our relationship. When in public he allowed us to hold hands, hug, and kiss in front of him but requested that we not do it in Chinatown or when we visited Hawaii as a family, as there were many other Asians around.

Relatedly, another participant noted,

> My family won't accept my sexuality and my mother is hiding my lesbianism from my Chinese grandparents. Because I can't speak Cantonese, I can't tell them about it. My mother is withholding that from my grandparents because she thinks they'd be "heartbroken about what I've been doing." I am hiding who I am from my whole Chinese family because my mom won't help me explain it to them.

In addition, some AA bisexual participants also described their struggling in regards to their bisexual identity within the family although it can be a little "easier" for them to conceal their sexual identity from their family. One participant wrote,

> The challenge that comes to mind as a bisexual Eurasian girl is that my Japanese family is always asking me if I have a nice Asian boyfriend yet. Sometimes do, or I'm single, in which case the answer to the question is easy and painless. But they're rather conservative, and when I have a girlfriend I always immediately feel awkward and unhappy. My mother usually just changes the subject as quickly as she can (I'm out to my mother, but not to the rest of my Japanese relatives).

Experiencing heterosexism and bisexism. Consistent with the theoretical and empirical literature examining heterosexist oppression as risk factors among LGB individuals (c.f., Huang et el., 2010; Szymanski, Kashubeck-West, & Meyer, 2008), three themes emerged within this domain: experiencing heterosexism, internalized heterosexism, and stereotypes about bisexuality.

Experiencing heterosexism. Two subthemes of experiencing heterosexism emerged from the data analysis: overt forms of heterosexism and assumptions of heterosexuality.

Overt forms of heterosexism. Nine of the participants in this study reported feeling "constant fear," "hurt," and "uncomfortable" in dealing with "homophobia" or "homophobic messages from outer society." For example, one participant noted, "Sometimes I'm so hurt by their insensitivity that I just remain in shocked silence. I know a lot of this just comes from ignorance and a lack of access to education on queer issues, but it's hard for me to deal with the racism and homophobia that spews out of their

mouths every time I visit them." Another participant wrote about how hetero-normativity

and gender binarism affect her sense of "safety/inclusion" as follows:

> I also have issues in that living in the south and being non-gender conforming has always created an issue around safety/inclusion among the general public. Having been raised in the Midwest I can definitively say that the South is barely accepting/inclusive of Asian Americans but hardly accepting at all of LGBTQ people.

For some same-sex couples, PDA is a big challenge they have to deal with on a

daily basis. For example, one participant wrote, "I think with a partner that is a woman,

PDA could sometimes be a challenge in terms of when is it safe to do so and when is it

not." Another participant described her experience of heterosexist prejudice as follows:

> I live in Los Angeles and was previously in a four-year same-sex relationship with a woman of mixed race who presented mainly as African-American. We encountered problems mostly when we were not in L.A. Once after dinner in a restaurant in the Seattle area, a woman sitting nearby us told her children that "those people are called lesbians," pointed to my female partner, and said "that one's probably transgender." Unaware of her mistake she smiled at us like she was doing us a favor.

Assumptions of heterosexuality. Seven of the participants reported that they had to

deal with socio-cultural assumptions of heterosexuality in their interpersonal exchanges.

They discussed the prevalence of heteronormativity in their lives by writing statements

such as, "I face assumptions about my sexuality since I do not 'look' gay," "Everyone I

meet assumes I am straight," "Nobody would assume that I, as a Korean, would be a

bisexual," "I'm not visibly queer, which means everyone just assumes that I am straight,"

and "People sometimes ask me about a boyfriend."

Internalized heterosexism. Four participants described that they experienced some level of internalized negative messages and attitudes about their sexual orientation and identity. For example, one participant wrote, "Feeling like I'm hiding and that I need to hide one of my identities, which makes me feel as though being queer is shameful, when I know it shouldn't be that way." Another participant noted, "As a lesbian I just feel wrong. I see women around me with kids. I want kids and a normal family like the one I grew up in." Still another wrote, "While being attracted to various genders is becoming more and more okay, I still hesitate about being open and proud about being bisexual because it still feels unacceptable to some degree."

Stereotypes about bisexuality. Four participants reported facing challenges related to stereotypes about bisexuality. Generally, both heterosexual men and women and lesbians and gay men may have negative individual and societal stereotypes toward bisexuality. That is, bisexuality may be regarded as a transitional stage between heterosexual and homosexual orientations, not considered a valid sexual orientation. In addition, typical stereotypes toward bisexual people also include an inability to maintain a stable relationship based on a perception that bisexuals are promiscuous because of their attraction to both genders (American Psychological Association [APA], 2012). In this context, one participant wrote,

> Even though I have hinted to my family members that I am bisexual, they fail to take me seriously because they think sexuality is a choice. Bisexuality to them is a phase. Also, with male partners, sometimes they would suggest we invite another female to participate in sexual intercourse with.

Another participant noted,

It was traumatic and ironic being with a Latino man in my first relationship. We were both feminists and activists, so I did not expect his disappointment that I was more assertive and open than he expected an Asian woman to be and that I was also bisexual, which caused him to dread that I was promiscuous rather than socially conservative.

Living with multiple minority identities. Consistent with theory (c.f., Fukuyama & Ferguson, 2000; Greene, 1997) and emerging empirical studies (c.f., LGBT People of Color Microaggressions Scale by Balsam, Molina, Beadnell, Simoni, & Walters, 2011) suggesting that AA LGB persons may experience additional stress resulting from both experiences of heterosexism within the AA community and racism within the LGB community, some participants reported difficulties living with multiple minority identities related to racism, heterosexism, and sexism (e.g., invisibility, underrepresentation, marginalization, and sexual objectification). This domain included six themes: racism in the LGB community, invisibility in the LGB community, sexual stereotypes, fantasies, and fetishization towards AA women and/or lesbians, very limited representation of AA LBW, feeling marginalized by both the AA and LGB communities, and lack of an Asian LGB community.

Racism in the LGB community. Three participants wrote about racism that exists in the LGB community. They criticized the primacy of "whiteness," and "anti-Asian/white supremacist racism" within the LGB community. One participant described what she did to fight against racism and the primacy of whiteness:

Writing a thesis (which has become my sole day-to-day activity) that addresses racism in LGBT literature, scholarly work, policy, and communities. Destabilizing whiteness as the accepted norm for the LGBT experience.

Another participant wrote,

> Honestly, I'm not a huge fan of the fact that I only ever see white people in pro-lgbtq advertisements or campaign images. If they're not white, they're a token black person. I definitely never see Asian people represented.

Invisibility in the LGB community. Five participants reported facing challenges related to invisibility in the LGB community. For example, one participant wrote, "It is also difficult and tiring to be constantly invisible to other queer womyn in the community." Another noted:

> Having other lesbians/bisexuals not even considering that I might be interested in them because I am a Korean-American. Koreans are known to be Christians, conservative, and image conscious. Nobody would assume that I, as a Korean, would be a bisexual because of these factors.

Similarly, another participant wrote,

> When I come out to members of the LGBT community, they don't really take me seriously, since for most of them, I'm the first LGBT Indian they've ever met and they had never even conceived of the idea that Indians can have non-heteronormative sexualities.

Sexual stereotypes, fantasies, and fetishization towards AA women and/or lesbians. Past research has shown that a variety of cultural practices in a patriarchal society encourage sexual objectification of women such as the media depicting women as sex objects, encouragement of the male gaze, and unwanted sexual comments and advances (Moffitt & Szymanski, 2011). Moreover, heterosexual males have distorted perceptions of same-sex female relationships, which are often associated with "oversexualization" or eroticization (Hequembourg & Brallier, 2009). Eight of the participants in the current study illustrated how racism, heterosexism, and/or sexism

influence AA LBW's experiences in regards to sexual objectification and stereotyping,

particularly being "reduced to an exotic stereotype." For example, one participant wrote,

> There is a consistent expectation for the Asian woman to be overtly sexual and desirous of white men, and if not white men, white women. Day in and out, I face subtle innuendos, subtly sexually suggestive comments, etc.

Similarly, another participant wrote,

> There are a lot of sexual stereotypes about Asian women which emphasize exotic behaviors and people associate being a lesbian with those kinds of fantasies i.e. do not take Asian lesbians seriously as people with real lives.

Some participants wrote how/why they became more careful about "ethnosexual

mythology," that is the sexual myths the dominant culture has generated and holds about

women of color (Greene, 1995, 1996), in their relationships or dating as follows:

> I experience people fetishizing my race as well as my sexuality. I don't like the idea of "fulfilling" the freaky Asian woman stereotype that I often see in films so I am extra wary of choosing partners that won't expect certain things because of my race, gender or sexuality.

> I live in an area with a small Asian population and so I come across a lot of fetishization of Asians, usually in the form of telling me I'm exotic or look like Mulan. So every time I date someone, I have to take into consideration that it might be "yellow fever."

In terms of fetishization of same-sex relationships, another participant wrote, "I

am sick of the objectifying fetish-izing of lesbian relationships. While I guess it's better

than being hateful, it's still dehumanizing and it almost makes me want to not be out."

Although this participant may perceive that sexual objectification and fetishization would

be better than hostile attitudes towards same-sex relationships, at the same time she also

recognizes well that "it's still dehumanizing," and further it makes her stay closeted in a

culture that sexually objectifies the AA female body and same-sex relationship.

Very limited representation of AA LBW. Six participants reported that they

perceive very limited representation of AA LBW in society, including mainstream media.

For example, one participant wrote, "There are only a few people like me in the world –

"lesbian" is not within the expectations people have for Asian American women."

Another participant noted, "I feel like there are very few role models for me to follow."

In terms of media, one participant wrote, "I don't see myself represented in mainstream

media. There is already so little fair and accurate representation of Asian American

women to begin with, I'm not sure when there will be any for LGBTQ Asian American

women." Similarly, another participant eloquently wrote,

> The greatest day to day challenge is simply how invisible I feel whether it is what
> is shown on mainstream media, the books I read, or the most recent frustrating
> news about how Asian American stereotypes are still rampant and bisexual
> women are still underrepresented. For me, media has always been powerful. To
> put it simply, I always believed media can dictate who we think can be heroes,
> what our society currently believes about this current group of people, what ideals
> we perpetuate. I exist, I am a multi-faceted, complex individual and yet I am
> reduced to an exotic stereotype, to a sidekick or most of the time, to nothing. I am
> an invisible woman and I ache to exist.

Feeling marginalized by both the AA and LGB communities. Three of the

participants in this study reported that they experienced feeling marginalized by both the

AA and LGB communities. This finding is similar to those found in a qualitative study of

AA gay men who also reported feelings of marginalization and stress when trying to fit

into both AA and LGB communities (Chung & Szymanski, 2006). One participant

illustrates this:

Also, that my ethnicity is conflated with religion (i.e. Muslim), I get worried if I will be "found out" as queer and Muslim (doubly undesirable in this current society) — or in settings with Muslims and/or Asian Americans, if I will be found out as queer. Especially where I was raised where my parents are reliant on the local AsAm & Muslim population for community ties — me being out would be disastrous to their social standing. Within queer circles/gay and lesbian spaces (which unintentionally exclude transfolk, bi-folk, and other queer folk), being interrogated about my ethnicity and being told, when I rebuff someone by being evasive about the question, that I'm being too sensitive or "I was just curious"— and when I question their "curiosity," they might become hostile.

Relatedly, another participant wrote,

Sometimes, it is difficult finding other Asian Americans that identify as lesbian or bisexual. It is difficult being an Asian American due to a stigma amongst the LGBTQ community to Asian families. It raises conflict with traditional Asian beliefs and cultures. As an Asian American lesbian, we are a part of two minorities in society.

Lack of an Asian LGB community. Three participants expressed that they feel that there is a lack of an Asian LGB community and people, which makes them feel "disconnected" and "isolated." For example, one participant noted the challenge of "not being able to find other Asian American LGBT people to relate to in the area." Similarly, another wrote, "The number of openly gay Asian Americans are very few. Since I see so few openly gay Asian Americans, I feel more isolated because there seems to be fewer people like me."

Coping and Resistance

Similar to the findings of research on resilience and coping strategies that LGB people of color employ to cope with stigma and oppressive experiences associated with sexuality despite multiple minority stresses (Bowleg et al., 2003; Choi, Han, Paul, & Ayala, 2011; Emano, 2007; Poon & Ho, 2008; Wilson & Miller, 2002; Wilson &

Yoshikawa, 2004), a large majority of the participants in this study reported using various

coping strategies. Specifically, in regards to AA LBW's coping strategies used for

dealing with their day-to-day challenges, the data analysis resulted in three overarching

domains: dealing with stigma and prejudice, empowerment strategies, and engaging in a

variety of resilience processes. Within the domains, a total of 11 themes were identified.

Table 2 illustrates the overarching domains and the themes that emerged and the number

of cases that exemplified each theme. Additionally, six percent of participants wrote

"n/a" ($n = 2$) or left the answer to the question about their coping strategies blank ($n = 1$).

Dealing with stigma and prejudice. Over half of the participants in the current

study reported that they employed different forms of coping strategies to deal with stigma

and prejudice associated with sexual orientation as an AA LBW. In this domain, five

themes emerged: using cultural camouflage, avoiding any

confrontations/subjects/situations related to sexuality, identity management strategies:

hiding/de-emphasizing, ending relationship with parents/distancing themselves from

parents, and psychological distress.

Using cultural camouflage. Five participants reported that they used some

cultural tactics as ways of maintaining their same-sex relationship and concealing their

sexual orientation to cope with heterosexism. For example, one participant, who had

supportive parents about her sexuality, reported that there are no challenges for her

because she believes that culturally "most people would see females hugging as a

security reason (psychology) or simply a need for friendship." This participant assumed

that based on research, "females are more emotional than males therefore while other saw a simple hug as no meaning, the couple may see it as a sexual approach."

In Asian culture, there is a prohibition against defining sexual orientation/identity (Chan, 1997), and lesbianism and same-sex relationships are viewed as "Western concepts" (Pamela H., 1989) that do not affect their culture. In this cultural context, one participant described how her interracial relationship with a non-Asian made her same-sex relationship invisible and led other Asians to be more tolerant, and ultimately served as a cultural tactic to manage homophobic reactions in the following quote:

> I find that being in an interracial relationship and living in a cosmopolitan city has always shielded me from a majority of discrimination. I feel that other Asians greatly ignore the fact that I am visibly with a same sex partner and excuse it to the fact that my partner is not Asian. In that way I feel like typical homophobic reactions are reduced... perhaps it's the idea that non-Asians have "led me astray," and not that two Asians engulfed in Asian culture have turned their backs on it.

As discussed earlier, although some participants reported that they struggle with the pressure of marriage and cultural expectations as well as assumptions of heterosexuality (e.g., always ask about a boyfriend), another participant wrote how she could utilize the Asian cultural taboo against open discussion about sex or sexuality (Chan, 1992) in her relationship with her parents who mainly pay attention to her academic achievement:

> Because in the Asian culture it is not encouraged for children to date until past the age of 21(preferably after the 3rd or 4th year of college), it is easy to cover up my queer identity even if I don't have a boyfriend. Although I know this advantage is temporary and I will be pestered to get married around the age of 27, I'd like to relish in the fact that my parents care about my academic pursuits so much more than romantic/sexual relationships that I can basically hide in undergrad and later, in grad school (hopefully). It is also a stigma in the Asian American community

to not talk about sexual relationships, so the question and topic are never brought up and I never have to deal with the awkwardness of answering it.

In addition, while some participants reported that they have difficulty with being "femme-y looking/looking straight" or "feminine styles" to hide their sexuality in terms of coming out challenges mentioned above, others seem to consider these types of presentations or performances as effective coping strategies as AA LBW for managing heterosexism. For example, one participant perceived that her "invisible queerness is also a privilege" and she "will most likely never get assaulted for 'looking' like a queer woman, especially as an Asian woman."

Avoiding any confrontations/subjects/situations related to sexuality. Eight participants reported that they used avoidant coping strategies to deal with the prevalence of heteronormativity in their lives and relationships. For example, one participant wrote, "I try to avoid any confrontations and if the subject comes up, I skirt around the topic and try to change the subject." Another wrote, "In terms of the homophobia, I just try to avoid situations that could cause us trouble." Similarly, several participants reported avoidance of LGB related topics specifically with their family of origin. For example, participants noted, "just try to not say anything when they (family) start discussing gay rights and gay marriage," "Staying in the closet and avoiding topics about relationships with my family," and "When it comes to my family though, I keep silent. I avoid topics about LGBTQ issues if only to maintain the harmony within my family or to avoid stressing out my father."

Identity management strategies: hiding/de-emphasizing. As discussed above, many participants described the challenges associated with coming out to others. Since coming out to others is likely to increase the chances of encountering heterosexist prejudice, discrimination, harassment, rejection, and violence, decisions to come out to others need to be weighed against the possible negative consequences that may follow (Szymanski, 2008). In a similar context, nine participants reported that they employed identity management strategies through hiding or de-emphasizing their sexual orientation in their daily lives. For example, participants wrote, "I de-emphasize sexual or personal references to my life of any kind, I conduct myself very professionally, sometimes in a bit of an intimidating way," "Not much to do except be careful and have privacy settings that don't allow people to post without my permission. It also means not bringing significant others to family events, which is hard to deal with," and "I don't bring up my love life (and therefore my sexual orientation) in conversation unless the other person inquires about it directly." Others used identity management strategies by controlling the level of disclosure about their sexual orientation to others. They wrote "Only talking to folks I trust about my orientation. Sometimes, trying to be invisible when I don't feel safe," "I present a very limited version of myself to my family members," and "I separate my home life and my social/school life."

Ending relationship with parents/distancing themselves from parents. Four participants reported that they ended their relationship with parents or distanced themselves from their parents to cope with oppressive experiences within the family. For example, one participant directly noted, "Ended relationship with family/parents."

Another wrote, "I try to distance myself from my parents as much as possible." Still another, who had "extremely homophobic parents" wrote:

> I cope by staying at school and seeing my parents as sparingly as possible. Not the best method but it works. I also have lived lying to my parents about my personal life for so long that lying to them comes easily for me. It's strange because I'm so honest with my peers and almost everyone else.

Psychological distress. Two participants in the current study reported psychological distress as their coping strategies. They wrote "I have battled with depression for most of my life. I imagine that being both queer and Asian does have a great impact on it," and "I cry. A lot. I try to stay strong and find an Asian queer community, but it doesn't really exist in (state of residence), where I live."

Empowerment strategies. Not only were there many ways to cope with oppressive experiences as an AA LBW in heterosexist society as described earlier, but there were also empowerment strategies that the participants employed. Within this domain, five themes emerged: accepting self and one's sexual orientation, building social support systems/creating safe spaces, confronting/resisting, "It is their problem, not mine," and engaging in social activism.

Accepting self and one's sexual orientation. Five participants described that they used self-acceptance as a strategy for dealing with other people's prejudice. As one participant wrote, "I don't really mind that people don't take me seriously. As long as I take myself seriously and love myself for who I am, it'll be fine." Similarly, another participant wrote, "I try to be as comfortable as possible in my own skin and with my own sexuality." In addition, some participants felt that being honest about their sexual

orientation was a sign of self-acceptance and affirmation as evidenced in the following

two quotes: "Am out so try to be honest of who I am when asked" and "I do come out to

acquaintances who assume that I am straight. I tell men who hit on me in bars that I am

there with my partner and not interested. I am not ashamed of who I am regardless of

cultural stigma or not." Another participant who self-identified as "other" in terms of

sexual orientation recognized gender binarism as a form of oppression. She wrote:

> Around my gender identity, I cope by loving myself more. That I will not be
> confined by the gender boundaries set upon me. A big part of it is also being
> comfortable in my skin and finding what clothes and look is also comfortable for
> me and not just me wearing it because it's more accepted.

Building social support systems/creating safe spaces. Consistent with empirical

studies on African American lesbians (Bowleg et al., 2003) and African American,

Latino and AA sexual minority men (Chung & Szymanski, 2006; Emano, 2007, Wilson

& Miller, 2002), a large number of participants (*n* = 18) in this study reported various

ways of building social support systems. These included creating their own safe spaces

through their relationships, including "sisters," "(queer-identified) friends," "allies," and

"family," as well as their active involvement in "an Asian queer community," "online

support groups," "a women's group," "an Asian American LGBTQ group/club," and "a

few websites and tumblr pages for queer women of color." These participants reported

that they could effectively manage their challenges and oppressive experiences with

support, awareness, safety, normalization, acceptance, and empowerment. In this context,

one participant wrote, "I have a close group of queer-identified friends who face similar

challenges. Talking to them and creating safe spaces together are amazing and

empowering for me." Another participant wrote,

> Having the most amazing girlfriend and supportive friends/sisters helps me cope
> with any of the challenges I may face. Just knowing that there are people I can fall
> back on and who would support me no matter what, makes coping easy.

For some participants, making a change in their physical environment facilitated

building social support systems. For example, one participant wrote, "It helps that

queerness is normalized by most people in my community and workplace (in Northern

California as opposed to suburban Georgia, where I spent my adolescence)." Similarly,

another noted,

> It took me a few years to be comfortable in my own skin and I'm still figuring out
> what that means. Surrounding myself in a neighborhood/environment of APIs and
> Queer APIs makes me feel not alone. I moved to the West Coast from the
> East/Midwest and it's nice to have a supportive community in a new place.

Confronting/resisting. Consistent with the research on strategies for managing

racism and heterosexism among U.S. racial/ethnic minority men who have sex with men

(Choi et al., 2011), nine participants in the study reported using strategies of

confrontation or resistance when dealing with stigma and prejudice related to racism and

heterosexism. One participant wrote, "For PDA, I think I've just accepted it, people need

to see it. The more people see it happening, the more normalizing it is. Being visible is

the first act of resistance." Confrontation also came in the form of "calling out" others,

although this often depended on their relationships or relational closeness, as evidenced

by the following quotes:

I call people out. I will tell you to focus on your girlfriend/wife/boyfriend. Let you know that your relationship/workout/job/etc. would go much smoother if they focused less on me, and more on them.

I will call out my friends and partners on homophobic/transphobic things, but not my parents. I allow myself to feel angry and to demand accountability from those who are closest to me.

I try to speak up when I find other people's actions oppressive, unless they're my friends' parents or someone else that I don't have business speaking to about it. I try to "accept the things I can't change, change what I can, and have the wisdom to know the difference." This is really a process, but it helps me stay positive.

Another participant described how she struggled with the American beauty standard and body image issues as a mixed race bisexual woman as well as how she developed her coping strategy to deal with them by raising awareness of negative stigma and communicating with her friends:

When I was younger I used to think the fetishization of Asian women was positive, because the American beauty standard had given me so many body image issues. As a mixed race bisexual woman, I didn't know what I was supposed to look like, I almost wanted to fit any stereotype so that I would belong somewhere. So when pegged as Asian and not white, I was okay with that. Now, I've realized the derogatory nature of the comments and though I could get mad, I understand that a lot of usage of negative speech like that is used of out ignorance and I try to explain that to my friends.

Another form of resistance was trying to express oneself differently and make people perceive differences. One participant noted,

Trying to express myself differently from other Asian Americans by dressing differently, so that perhaps through my clothing people will perceive that there's something different about me; that I am not tied down by the standards of the Korean culture.

"It is their problem, not mine." Two participants described using strategies in which they refuse to let others' narrow-mindedness become their problem and instead place the need for change of mind on the part of the other. One participant wrote, "In response to rejection of homosexuality due to conservative attitudes, I cope by understanding that they simply disagree and it is their problem if they don't like it, not mine — I am a consenting adult in a loving relationship with another consenting adult, and I see no problem with that." Similarly, another participant wrote,

> This is going to sound immature, but I usually meet these situations with the following phrases, "People are dumb" and "It's not my problem." Other people's assumptions are not my problem. Not getting a job because I maybe didn't fit a certain mold is not my problem. And if people have a problem with correctly assuming I'm gay and having a problem with it, then 1) they're dumb and 2) it's not my problem. I've learned not to bother with other people's hang ups because it is a waste of my time and energy. I was in the closet for most of my life because I cared too much about how other people perceived me. But I ultimately learned that I cannot control how other people will feel and at that moment understood how to cope with people.

Engaging in social activism. Six participants reported that they engaged in a variety of activism activities to cope with and challenge multiple forms of oppression. Two participants described involvement in social activism in response to the third survey question about positive aspects of being an AA LBW but it was recoded here for ease of presentation and to decrease overlap between domains/themes. For example, one participant wrote, "Creating scholarly work that centers on lesbians of color's voices and integrates intersectional analysis that doesn't bolster gender essentialism that privileges the white lesbian experience and silences all others." Another participant eloquently stated,

I write myself into existence. I make my voice be heard whether it is on the internet or in the stories and poetry I write which, at the moment, I craft for myself. I also do research. Research, research, research into the LGBTQ Asian American community so that I know that I'm not alone and I can keep up with what kind of progress we're making.

Another participant described herself as being "one of the LGBT leaders in the community and at the university" but she was "also one of only 2 Asian American queer people who is outspoken, attends political events, and demands equality." Other participants wrote, "I get involved in my college's Asian American club and their LGBTQ club," or "I also take comfort in engaging with API activism and media criticism." Furthermore, some participants wrote about activism aimed at building an inclusive community, enhancing awareness of diversity, and increasing the visibility and representation of AA sexual minorities and communities. For example, one participant wrote, "Working to bring radical and loving change in my community that recognizes love in all of its diversities and complexities." Relatedly, another noted, "So I have the privilege to be an out-advocate and hopefully indirectly help educate more people to be as accepting as my family and play a small role in increasing the visibility of Asian American bisexual women."

Engaging in a variety of resilience processes. In addition to empowerment strategies, eight participants reported engaging in different kinds of resilience processes to manage their minority status including therapy and meditation, reading, writing, cultural pride and connections with one's culture of origin, sports and hobbies, vacation, and intimate relationships. For example, one participant wrote that drawing strength and

comfort from her reading activities as well as connections with her culture of origin offered a way for her to cope:

> I read things like comics and articles from other Asian women living in America or abroad to connect with social challenges and traditions I am familiar with. I also read stories of negative coming out stories for bisexual women because I find it comforting to know that other people go through the same things and survive. I feel a lot of pride for my culture that I didn't used to have as a kid but now have after trying hard to connect to an aspect of myself I usually ignore but obviously experience prejudice for nonetheless. So I resent anyone that tries to simplify my experiences or behavior. I find comfort in my father's teachings and anecdotes of Vietnam, its mythologies and what it's like to live there.

Positive Aspects

With regards to the positive things about being an AA LBW, two domains were identified: socio-cultural sources of strength and "insight into and empathy for self and others" (adapted from Riggle et al., 2008). Within these domains regarding the positive aspects, a total of 10 themes were identified (see Table 3). Surprisingly, 20% of sample participants ($n = 10$) reported that there was nothing positive about being an AA LBW or they were "not sure." For example, one participant wrote "Nothing, in this society, it is much easier to be Caucasian and male. There are so many things against us: race, sexual orientation, sex, appearance/looks, etc." Another noted, "I tried hard to think of something, but I honestly can't come up with anything positive."

Socio-cultural sources of strength. Many participants in this study described different sources of positive strengths in the socio-cultural context as AA LBW. Specifically, four themes emerged in this domain: belonging to a community, supportive family, Asian cultures/values as sources of strength, and freedom from constraints of heterosexuality and oppressive gender norms.

Belonging to a community. For some participants ($n = 11$), a sense of belonging to a supportive community and connections with people in the community were regarded as positive aspects of being AA LBW. The participants expressed their positive feelings regarding their sense of community such as feeling supported, "lucky," "grateful," understood, and accepted. The different kinds of supportive communities mentioned by the participants included AA women, AA LBW, LGBTQ persons and community, Asian friends and sister, and online community. For example, one participant wrote, "I find great comfort and strength in other Asian American lesbians and bisexual women." Another participant wrote, "There's a certain kinship I have with other Asian LGBTQ people, because only we can understand the specific things we go through. It's like I have my own little community." Some participants also described their community as "fun, creative," and "vibrant." Another participant noted, "I feel like we are all welcomed into the same family." Additionally, participants stated that the community offered good places for learning or self-empowerment/motivation:

> I've also learned so much and made many connections with other people in this community.

> There is a very supportive gay community. I feel that there are challenges that I am burdened with that I never asked to take on, but I do it anyway because it's a way to prove my own strength to myself and motivate myself further.

Supportive family. For some participants, having supportive family members was seen as a positive aspect of being AA LBW. Three participants reported that they felt supported from their families of origin in terms of their disclosure of sexual orientation. Past research has demonstrated that many AA sexual minority people choose not to

disclose their sexual orientation to their parents because of the overwhelming fear of

rejection and prejudice (Chan, 1989). In this context, one participant with a Chinese

family background wrote why she had a perception of family rejection in Asian culture

and how her (unexpectedly) positive experience of coming out helped open her mind

toward other Asian people:

> I have also really thought differently of Asian culture and specifically of my dad
> as an Asian because of how easily and willingly he accepted me as non-
> heterosexual when I came out to him. Before his positive reaction to my coming
> out, I had dismissed Asian culture entirely as archaic, homophobic, and socially
> irrelevant. After he reacted so well, it opened my mind to thinking that if my 56
> year old 1st generation Chinese father can accept me there must be many other
> Asians out there too who are radical thinkers and who believe in equality.

Another participant with a Filipino family background also described her fear of

rejection by her family of origin and unanticipated family support as follows:

> I think presence and exposure as an open lesbian in the Filipino community is
> immensely positive. I have been so very very (cannot stress this enough) fortunate
> to have a supportive and loving family. Growing up I thought my parents would
> hate me and kick me out and later I came to find out that they did the exact
> opposite (talk about assumptions). It was by no means an easy road for them to
> accept, but they handled that on their own and never presented their reservations
> to me. They always met me with support… My immediate and extended family in
> the states are all very supportive and accepting. They all know my wife and love
> her too. I think being gay, and being open about it is positive in an of itself
> because others have the chance to see that you're still the same person regardless
> of what your ethnic or religious culture dictates.

Asian cultures/values as sources of strength. Five participants reported that they

drew strength from their Asian cultures/values. For example, one participant wrote,

> I think everyone should be proud of their culture, whatever it is. For myself I love
> the fact that my cultures are ancient and have given many positive things to the
> world. I also appreciate the emphasis on education and respect for one's elders. I

like the consciousness of trying to be thoughtful of other people, and the idea that harmony of the group is just as important as individuality.

Another participant noted that her specific Asian cultures do not address homosexuality and her Asian language is free from gender binarism as follows:

> As a Chinese person I am very proud that China didn't really have a history of homophobia (at least not as serious as the West). And our language has always been non gender binary till Westernization.

Interestingly, while exploring sexuality and relationships was seen as a positive aspect for the majority of White lesbians and gay men (Riggle et al., 2008), another participant in this study described the way in which Asian culture (i.e., Asian father's discipline) helped her refrain from imprudent sexual exploration as bisexual in the following quote:

> I feel like the strictness of growing up Asian has balanced out how wild I may have been growing into myself had I simply only had bisexuality to deal with as my only minority status. I felt like bisexuality was an identity that required a lot of exploration and trial and error, and I definitely feel like being Asian kept me from too many trials, having my dad's voice in the back of my head reminding me to focus on school, which was literally what he said to me when I told him that I had a lesbian girlfriend.

Freedom from constraints of heterosexuality and oppressive gender norms.

Seven participants expressed that they felt a "liberating" sense of "freedom from constraints of heterosexuality and oppressive gender norms" and expectations toward AA women. For example, one participant wrote, "I find it beautiful to not be restricted to the heteronormative and gender-conforming." In terms of relationships or dating, another participant stated, "I am living by my own values, appreciating people and not being

confined to one gender or following prescribed gender rules when dating." For some participants, freedom from gender role expectations included freedom from cultural pressure to follow the traditional stereotypes about AA women; one participant wrote, "Feeling like I don't need to meet conventional expectations of Asian women." Another participant noted,

> As an Asian woman period, I'm expected to go with the status-quo, and to follow the trend of things. I am supposed to be obedient, docile and quiet. I go against the grain in so many ways that people often don't know what to do with me.

Insight into and empathy for self and others. Similar to the findings of research on the positive aspects of being a lesbian or gay man based on predominately White participants (Riggle et al., 2008), many participants in this study also reported positive aspects related to their personal insight and reflection as well as increased empathy with other AA LGB people and marginalized groups. In this domain, themes included unique/rare identity, "having a unique and/or intersectional perspective on the world," living authentically with self, positive sense of self/pride, and increased empathy and compassion for others/world.

Unique/rare identity. Six participants reported that having a unique/rare identity was a positive aspect of being AA LBW. Some participants stated that since there were very few AA LGB people, "Everybody knows me or has heard of me," "I get to be everyone's one and only favorite gay Asian friend," or "I get to proudly represent a small percentage of the LGBTQ community." Similarly, another participant noted,

> But then again, I guess uniqueness can be one. Not too many Asian American bisexuals/lesbians are out compared to other ethnicities, so there seems to be a rarity/uniqueness factor, which people tend to like.

Having a unique and/or intersectional perspective on the world. Nine

participants reported feeling that they had "a unique and intersectional perspective on the

world." This perspective allowed participants to "see society in a different way, more

critically and intelligently," and "find commonalities with a lot of different

communities." For some participants, having an "in-between" identity was a positive

aspect as evidenced by the following quotes:

> A positive part of being an Asian American bisexual woman has been the ability
> to appreciate the marriage between these two minority identities.

> I appreciate myself as someone who "walks between the worlds" and the
> emerging pockets of consciousness that I can be a part of.

> I think that we bring insight to each of identity groups, whether it be bringing an
> Asian American perspective to a queer community or a queer perspective to an
> Asian American community.

Living authentically with self. With regards to disclosure of their sexual

orientation, three participants viewed living authentically with self as a positive aspect.

For example, one participant noted, "All of it is embracing and loving who I am and who

I choose to be... and that brings me more peace than keeping in the closet and pretending

a life that I don't have or want." Still another wrote, "I am living the life that I want and

that is true to me, even though it breaks my heart sometimes to not have a family to talk

to."

Positive sense of self/pride. Six participants reported their positive sense of self

and pride as sources of strength. For example, one participant wrote, "I am comfortable

with my identity. I believe the different and diverse communities I come from are

strengths, not weaknesses." Another participant noted, "I think that I have a very strong

self-identity that came out of many years of questioning, understanding, disliking, and

eventually liking and appreciating my multiple identities." Similarly, another wrote, "I

really believe that people who belong to LGBT are more informative, creative, and

outgoing. I am very proud of who I am and who I can love."

     Increased empathy and compassion for others/world. Four participants reported

feeling that they had increased empathy for others in minority groups and that their AA

LBW identity helped them become more open to the world. Participants wrote, "Living at

the intersection has made me more empathetic and open to the world. I am politicized by

my identity. Because of it, I do the work that I do," and "I have greater empathy,

knowing what it is like to be a minority within a minority." Another participant noted,

> Understanding the intersections of discrimination and oppression across race,
> gender, sexual orientation, class and thus, greater room for coalition work. I
> understand this understanding does not apply to other Queer API women, but for
> me, my identities help me empathize more with other historically marginalized
> groups.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to shed light on AA LBW's experiences by examining challenges/stressors, coping strategies, and positive aspects of being an AA LBW. The results of the study provide insight into AA LBW's experiences of the intersection of multiple identities within the complex intersections of Asian cultural context, racism, sexism, and heterosexism, and reveal support for both risk and resilience perspectives (e.g., Meyer, 2003, 2010; Szymanski, et al., 2008).

In terms of risk, the results of the current study revealed that the majority of participants experienced several types of stress resulting from Asian culture's oppressive patriarchal and heterosexist aspects (Chan, 1989; Shrake, 2009; Liu & Chan, 2003), mundane oppression of heterosexism and bisexism, and difficulties living with multiple minority identities related to racism, heterosexism, and sexism such as invisibility, rejection, underrepresentation, marginalization, and sexual objectification in their daily lives. It was clear from the findings that many AA LBW experience a great deal of stress related to the coming out process and invisibility. These findings are consistent with research indicating that White gays and lesbians describe a greater level of outness than do their racial/ethnic-minority counterparts, particularly to family, and that outness is positively related to their use of and satisfaction with available social support (Faberman, 2003). These findings also resonate with current calls for challenging assumptions of heterosexuality and making sexual minorities of color visible in society (National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2005; Wilson & Miller, 2002). For addressing and challenging

heterosexism and changing social acceptance through visibility, it is important to combat negative stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination against sexual minority groups, as well as improve coverage of AA LBW by more widely and appropriately representing AA LBW within mainstream media and culture.

The results also revealed that participants used various coping strategies to manage multiple oppressions in their daily lives and relationships within complex and challenging contexts containing pervasive social stigma towards sexual minorities as well as invisibility and marginalization of AA LBW. Drawing from Boykin's concepts (1985) of mental colonization and resistance as coping strategies to deal with racism among African Americans, Wilson and Miller (2002) identified that their African American gay and bisexual male participants of the study used different coping strategies that "fall along passive-active and engagement-disengagement continua" (p. 387). Similarly, some participants in this study employed relatively passive strategies for dealing with stigma and prejudice, such as maintaining silence about their same-sex attraction/sexual orientation and/or making themselves invisible (e.g., using cultural camouflage, hiding/de-emphasizing). These coping strategies can be characterized as mental colonization since these strategies contribute to maintaining the status quo and do nothing to challenge oppression or instigate social change (Boykin, 1985; Wilson & Miller, 2002). In addition, some participants reported utilizing active coping styles of empowerment that challenge the oppressive status quo. These can be identified as individual/interpersonal resistance to oppression (i.e., accepting self and their sexual orientation, confronting/resisting, and "It is their problem, not mine") and "system

change/system defiant coping strategies" (Wilson & Miller, 2002, p. 387), such as building social support systems/creating safe spaces and engaging in social activism.

In terms of resilience, some positive aspects about being an AA LBW found in this study were consistent with the positive aspects of predominantly White LGB people (Riggle et al., 2008; Rostosky, Riggle, Pascale-Hague, & McCants, 2010), and common themes included belonging to a community, living authentically, freedom from oppressive gender roles and/or sexual expression, and increased levels of insight, empathy, and awareness. These similarities may indicate that regardless of race/ethnicity, LGB people strive to create their own positive identity, positive and active worldview, and meaning of complex experiences in a heterosexist society. However, our data also reveal that AA LBW have different positive aspects in the context of Asian culture and multiple minority identity, such as, Asian cultures/values as sources of strength, uniqueness, "in-between" identity, "living at the intersection" as a multiple minority person, and having a unique and/or intersectional perspective on the world.

In addition, there was little evidence of certain positive aspects found in past research, such as more flexible and adaptable views from exposure to both Asian and Western values (Liu & Chan, 2003), traditional religions that do not address homosexuality (Akerlund & Cheung, 2000), and fluidity of heterosexual versus homosexual behavior related to the East Asian culture (Chan, 1997). However, some of these aspects may be reflected in such themes as having an intersectional perspective and using cultural camouflage as a coping strategy. Furthermore, there is an assumption about the lower rates of mental health concerns among LGB people of color as follows: "the

skills learned in negotiating one stigmatized aspect of identity may actually assist the individual in dealing with and protect the individual from other forms of stigmatization" (APA, 2012, p. 20). This study, however, found no specific evidence of this assumption. This may be the case if some AA LBW perceive their multiple identities as being inseparable and interrelated, and others perceive their sexual identity as more salient or different than their racial/ethnic identity due to its invisibility and implicit cultural bias.

It is also important to note that 20% of the participants described that there was nothing positive about being an AA LBW or they were "not sure." On one hand, it may be associated with self-selection bias or general tendency to respond negatively. On the other hand, the greater challenges, greater multiple minority stress, and/or triple jeopardy may be outweighing any positive aspects (such as those reported by certain participants) which account for the "not sure" or "nothing" responses of some of the participants.

Limitations and Future Research

Collecting qualitative data through the Internet can enhance participant recruitment and ensure trustworthiness of data (Van Eeden-Moorefield, Proulx, & Pasley, 2008). That is, using internet-based surveys can provide a safe and less threatening place for a wide range of participants (i.e., marginalized and underrepresented groups) to share more thorough and personal responses including experiences, ideas, and feelings through heightened anonymity. In addition, a population of non-native English speakers can benefit from this method by submitting their written responses within their language proficiency. These advantages of internet-based surveys may result in larger sample sizes and also strengthen reliability. In this context, we were able to collect open-ended

responses via the Internet from a large number of participants for a qualitative study, and there was significant diversity of participants in terms of ethnicity, education level, and socioeconomic status.

However, there are several limitations that need to be considered when reviewing the present results. Although on-line surveys can be a valuable means to reach marginalized populations (Koch & Emrey, 2001), the non-probability sampling (i.e., snowball sampling) may be limited with regard to generalization due to using a web-based Internet survey and by recruiting all of the participants from AA and/or LGB related listservs, e-groups, community organizations, university LGB centers, professional groups, and Asian Studies and Women's Studies programs via on-line methods. Thus, these results may not be generalizable to a larger AA LBW population because there may exist AA LBW who have no Internet access and who are not able to seek out information regarding their multiple minority statuses through membership in a particular social group and/or social networking sites.

Furthermore, external circumstances such as geographical location (e.g., large cities such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Chicago, and New York City compared with smaller cities or rural areas) might affect the participants' accessibility to information, social support groups, and communities. It is difficult to collect a large and diverse sample of AA LBW but future research may use different sampling methods as well as more comprehensive/in-depth interviews with AA LBW. Additionally, replications of this study with other ethnic minority groups including Latina American, Middle Eastern American, and Native American LBW are encouraged to better

understand their stressors, hardships, coping strategies, and different positive aspects to their own identities.

Moreover, it is important to pay attention to the limitations of using "Asian/Asian American" as an umbrella term due to the diversity of the peoples it includes (Corpus, 2012). Although the AA population in the United States may share some common cultural values and views about homosexuality and sexual minority persons (e.g., a family's shame, a high degree of invisibility and intolerance against homosexuality in AA cultures, and less outness of one's sexual orientation to others), we need to consider that each AA subgroup has its own unique language, culture, values, historical and sociopolitical backgrounds, religious beliefs, economic and demographic features, settlement history, and social and health needs. For example, the most recent report based on a survey of 3,511 AA persons demonstrates that in terms of AAs' views about homosexuality, their responses were varied depending on several factors such as young vs. older generations, ethnicity, native born vs. foreign born, and religious affiliation (Pew Research Center, 2012).

While participants in the study were asked multiple demographic questions including age, self-identified gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, education, income, generational status, socioeconomic status, length of residence in the U.S., and geographical location, this study is limited by not addressing the intricate understanding of cultural differences/contexts among the "Asian American" LBW group. Although we attempted to reflect participants' experiences and complexities of intersection of multiple minority identities in the context of Asian culture, this study failed to construct the

meaning of intersectionality of each ethnic group within diverse socio-cultural/historical contexts. Furthermore, intersectionality researchers have argued that "simply asking questions about demographic difference or comparing different social groups does not constitute intersectionality research" (Bowleg, 2008, p. 323). Therefore, future research is needed to design, question, analyze, and contextualize intersecting identities within the structure of social power and inequality as well as socio-historical contexts (Bowleg, 2008; Warner, 2008).

Methodologically, future research might consider utilizing different methods to more effectively contextualize multiple identities within a social matrix and assess the processes of intersecting identities and development. For example, a longitudinal study, focus groups, or a case study in qualitative methods may be used (Warner, 2008), and the domains/themes identified in this study may be employed as part of an interview protocol for in-depth interviews (Rostosky et al., 2010). Additionally, using hierarchical multiple regression when adopting factorial designs in statistical techniques (c.f., Warner, 2008) may be recommended to capture the live experiences of AA LBW which is beyond the scope of the current qualitative study.

With regards to terminology, it is also important to recognize that there are limitations to using terms such as "lesbian," "bisexual," and "woman." Sexual minorities are a diverse group consisting of lesbians; gay men; and bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and asexual persons. In the recruitment of AA LBW for this study, eligibility required participants to self-identify not only as a "woman" but also as "lesbian" or "bisexual." Given that there are various cultural understandings of lesbian

and bisexual identity (e.g., no existence of terminology for a lesbian), having an experience of same-sex attraction was also implied in the recruitment. In this study, the experiences of participants who self-identified as "questioning," "not sure," and "other" regarding sexual orientation were not elaborately contextualized within the limited on-line responses. In addition, there were a few participants who self-identified as "transgender" but it was also difficult to deeply explore and contextualize their differing experiences of society's gender binarism due to the limitation of the on-line survey. Therefore, it may be valuable to examine the different experiences of AA sexual minorities who self-identify with other forms of non-heterosexual identity and more fluid gender identity.

Clinical Implications

The results of this study suggest that it is necessary for psychologists to make an effort to be aware of and understand the various ways in which societal norms and assumptions, explicit and implicit stigma, prejudice, discrimination, and Asian cultural contexts influence AA LBW's lives and experiences. In addition, the current study indicates that psychologists also need to evaluate the client's perception of her multiple minority identity or salient identity, as well as the client's presenting problems, level of acculturation, challenges, coping strategies and strengths, and the experience of positive aspects as a dimension of resilience through the lens of intersectionality. Given the fact that multiple forms of socio-cultural oppression (i.e., racism, sexism, and heterosexism) create AA LBW's complicated and marginalized experiences, it is important for psychologists to educate clients about the various effects and consequences of different

forms of oppression and the concept of intersectionality including "identity, difference, and disadvantage" (APA, 2012, p. 20). Furthermore, encouraging AA LBW to increase positive, healthy, and active coping strategies; to make a more positive identity based on deeper understandings of societal norms, oppression, power structures, inequality, and social justice; and to enhance the meaning of life and experience may be crucial interventions within multiculturally competent psychotherapy treatment.

With regards to the Asian cultural context, it should be noted that if the client experiences the struggles of coming out in her family of origin, psychologists need to be willing to develop alternatives to traditional coming out, for example, "introducing a partner as a friend or an extension of the family" (Bridges et al., 2003, p. 127). Finally, for incorporating these suggestions into practice, psychologists need to strive to recognize that their own bias, knowledge, skill, explicit and implicit attitudes, worldview, values, beliefs, and limitations may affect their work with AA LBW clients, and enhance their knowledge and understanding of sexual minority people of color's experiences through various channels (e.g., training, consultation, supervision, and education) (APA, 2012; Bridges et al., 2003). Moreover, psychologists are also encouraged to contribute to making sexual minority women of color visible in society based on sharing their experiences, understanding, knowledge, and skills in their professional areas.

In conclusion, with regards to multiple minority stresses, many AA LBW in this study faced some of the day-to-day challenges. They had to live as AA sexual minority women in the context of Asian culture, experience heterosexism and bisexism, and live with multiple minority identities related to racism, heterosexism, and sexism. While AA

LBW had the mundane experiences of the oppressed, they employed various coping strategies to deal with stigma and prejudice, utilized empowerment strategies, and engaged in a variety of resilience processes. Furthermore, the positive aspects about being an AA LBW as a dimension of resilience were associated with socio-cultural sources of strength and insight into and empathy for self and others, but 20% of sample participants reported that there was nothing positive or they were "not sure."

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APPENDIX

Table 1

Themes and number of cases of the day-to-day challenges that AA LBW face

Theme	n of cases
Living as AA sexual minority women in the context of Asian culture	
1. Cultural expectations concerning sexuality	4
2. Conformity to traditional gender roles	7
3. Intolerance of homosexuality in their AA cultures	13
4. Coming out challenges	
Difficulties with disclosure of their sexual orientation to others	26
Conflict with their AA parents/families	23
Experiencing heterosexism and bisexism	
5. Experiencing heterosexism	
Overt forms of heterosexism	9
Assumptions of heterosexuality	7
6. Internalized heterosexism	4
7. Stereotypes about bisexuality	4
Living with multiple minority identities	
8. Racism in the LGB community	3
9. Invisibility in the LGB community	5
10. Sexual stereotypes, fantasies, & fetishization towards AA women and/or lesbians	8
11. Very limited representation of AA LBW	6
12. Feeling marginalized by both the AA and LGB communities	3
13. Lack of an Asian LGB community	3

Table 2

Themes and number of cases of the ways that AA LBW cope with and/or resist the day-to-

day challenges

Theme	n of cases
Dealing with stigma and prejudice	
1. Using cultural camouflage	5
2. Avoiding any confrontations/subjects/situations related to sexuality	8
3. Identity management strategies: hiding/de-emphasizing	9
4. Ending relationship with parents/distancing themselves from parents	4
5. Psychological distress	2
Empowerment strategies	
6. Accepting self and one's sexual orientation	5
7. Building social support systems/creating safe spaces	18
8. Confronting/resisting	9
9. "It is their problem, not mine"	2
10. Engaging in social activism	6
Engaging in a variety of resilience processes	
11. Engaging in a variety of resilience processes	8

Table 3

Themes and number of cases of the positive things about being an AA LBW

Theme	n of cases
Socio-cultural sources of strength	
1. Belonging to a community	11
2. Supportive family	3
3. Asian cultures/values as sources of strength	5
4. Freedom from constraints of heterosexuality and oppressive gender norms	7
Insight into and empathy for self and others	
5. Unique/rare identity	6
6. Having a unique and/or intersectional perspective on the world	9
7. Living authentically with self	3
8. Positive sense of self/pride	6
9. Increased empathy and compassion for others/world	4

VITA

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