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Identity Development of Latino Gay Men

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Identity Development of Latino Gay Men

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of
Antioch University, Southern California in partial
Fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctorate of Psychology in Clinical Psychology
Specialization and a concentration in Family
Forensic Psychology

By
Manuel Montoya Tajón

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Abstract
Identity Development of Gay Latino Men
By
Manuel M. Tajon

Much has been written on gay identity development and ethnic identity,

but research conducted that examines the cross-section of both identities is very

limited. Several theories have been proposed which detail gay and lesbian

identity development, which involve a conversion of attitudes, values, beliefs, and

behavior from a dominant heterosexual culture to those of the minority gay and

lesbian culture. Likewise, ethnic identity models propose similar stage sequential

processes and conversion from a dominant Anglo culture to those of a minority

ethnic culture. Both the ethnic and gay identity development models function and

are based on two dichotomous variables (e.g., Latino and Anglo, gay and nongay)

and have been considered constructs on a continuum with two mutual endpoints.

As a result, gay and lesbian people of color may end up rejecting one side and

accepting the other.

Morales (1990) suggested that Latino gay men live their lives in the gay

community, the Latino community, and in the predominantly heterosexual white

mainstream community, and that all of these communities have different

expectations. The differences and stress often force Latino men into conflict as

they attempt to meet the pressures, expectations and challenges. For many Latino

gay men, managing these differences may determine how they choose to self-identify and how they identify with each of their other respective identities.

This qualitative study examined and analyzed transcripts of interviews with Latino gay men, as they told their unique and heartfelt stories and experiences of being Latino and gay. It also examined the psychological stressors, and how they were instrumental in the manner in which they managed and maintained their identities in the Latino community, the gay community, and in the heterosexual community.

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Coming out to family is considered to be a significant event in gay identity development in various stage themes (Cass, 1979, 1996; Coleman, 1982). Literal subscription to these models has often produced an interpretation that not coming out is limited to an early stage of identity development. The concept of personal identity refers to the consistency, continuity, and unity of the individual's self perception (Erikson, 1959). According to Minton & McDonald (1984), as cited in Weinberg (1985), an individual's ability to achieve a healthy, stable identity is referred to as "identity synthesis." Conversely, failure to achieve identity synthesis will leave person identity fragmented. Homosexual identity formation, or coming out, is conceptualized as a developmental process that is part of the general maturational process of achieving a sense of personal identity for gay men (p.80).

Several older and the most cited theories have been proposed detailing gay and lesbian identity development (see Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982; Troiden, 1989). These authors have proposed stage sequential processes involved in the identity development for gay and lesbian people. The processes involve a conversion of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behavior from a dominant culture (heterosexual) to those of the minority culture (gay/lesbian). Gay/Lesbian identity becomes an aspect of a person's internal definition and social presentation of self.

In previous years, much has been written on the psychological, social, and political processes of ethnic identity development (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1979; Cross, 1978; Parham, 1989). Likewise, these authors have proposed stage sequential processes in the identity development of people of color. There is a similar conversion of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behavior from a dominant culture (Anglo) to those of a minority culture (ethnic). The end result is acknowledging, accepting, and valuing ethnicity as a positive aspect of self and identification with a primary culture group.

Both the ethnic and gay identity development models function and are based on two dichotomous variables (e.g., Latino and Anglo; gay and nongay). The models have been considered constructs on a continuum with two mutual endpoints. Ethnic gay identity development may therefore result in rejecting one side and accepting the other.

Most research in the area of racial and ethnic minority identity development has focused on delineating the stages that individuals appear to move through in defining themselves as members of single racial and ethnic minority groups. Root (1990), as cited in Koegel (1996), discussed the minimal amount of research by which individuals with other identities (e.g., biracial, gay/lesbian) arrive at a positive sense of self-identity or maintain a positive identity. According to Reynolds and Pope (1991), as cited in Koegel (1996), there is a need to investigate the identity development of persons with multiple

minority identities, that is, membership in two or more minority groups, and to explore with-in group differences among them.

Additional research has focused on identity development which involves ethnicity and sexual orientation. Icard (1986) and Loiacano (1989) studied and examined the identity development of African American gay men, Chan (1989), Wooden, Kawasaki, and Mayeda (1983) studied Asian American gay men and lesbians, and Espín (1987), studied Latina lesbians (D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995). As a result of these studies, gays and lesbians expressed a need to be validated in each community (ethnic and gay/lesbian) and a need to integrate both cultural identities. Many gay and lesbian people of color reported feeling stressed and pressured to make a decision when presented with an "either-or" choice of preference and/or dominance of one culture over another.

According to Vera and Quintana's (2004) meta-analysis of relevant empirical studies (Aboud, 1987; Bernal, Knight, Ocampo, & Costa, 1990; Bernal, Knight, Ocampo, Garza & Costa 1993; Phinney and Chavira, 1995; Pizarro & Vera, 2001; Quintana, Ybarra, Gonzalez-Doupe & DeBaessa, 2000; Rotherman & Phinney, 1987), researchers suggest that Latino ethnic identity formation involves a unique integration of self-identification, phenotypical features, primary and secondary cultural variables, interethnic and intraethnic interactions and attitudes, and a consciousness of one's ethnic group (Smith & Montilla, 2006).

In an analytic search, Cervantes and Sweat (2004) conclude that several factors including interethnic and interracial relations, as well as encounters characterized by racism and prejudice, determine the development of ethnic and racial identity in Latinos (Smith & Montilla, 2006).

The United States of America is composed of many cultural, ethnic, and national groups. Although this country is considered multicultural by many, the dominant culture is primarily the product of Eurocentric philosophies and values; therefore, the psychological literature, research, theoretical paradigms, and practice are imbued with Eurocentric cultural biases (J.H. Katz, 1985; Sue & Sue, 1990, as cited in Smith & Montilla, 2006). According to Rodriguez (1991), the inclusion of culturally diverse groups has been conspicuously absent in these domains; when included, they are frequently characterized as defiant, deviant, and inferior. Most identity models of development are based on a single social identity (e.g., race, gender, or sexual orientation), which tends to overlook two important dynamics that may exist for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people of color: the visibility or invisibility of identity and the saliency of identity. Theorists have generally discussed and examined a specific social identity as if the group members were homogenous, monolithic, and lacking multiple identities. LGBT people of color may be coping with feelings of visibility and invisibility in at least two communities in which they live and

function: the mainstream LGBT community and their respective ethnic communities (Morales, 1989).

Morales (1990) stated that Latino gay men often live three different lives among three different communities: the gay community, the Hispanic community, and the predominantly heterosexual White mainstream community. These communities have different expectations, norms, and cultures, which force Latino gay men to balance a set of often conflicting challenges and pressures. As a result of the many conflicting pressures, Latino gay men often model their behaviors to correspond with society's expectations of how gay men should behave (Morales, 1990). Gay-identified Latinos may conform to the idea that gay men want to be women and act stereotypically effeminate, and/or Latino men who have sex with men but are not gay identified may model their behavior after society's expectation of how men should act and behave in a stereotypically masculine manner (Morales, 1990). Carrier (1976, 1985) noted this phenomenon in Mexico. Specifically, he found that the dichotomized gender roles in Mexico played major roles in the stereotyping of the gay community. Further, he noted that those that were identified as gay had the tendency to be effeminate and play a passive role sexually, where those who played the active role or inserter role were not gay-identified.

The confluence of factors that affects the development of one's identities may also affect the way in which individuals integrate these identities. According

to Fukuyama and Ferguson (2000), the contexts of family, community, cultural norms and expectations, and oppression can inhibit the expression, salience, and acceptance of one or more of these identities. As defined by Fukuyama and Ferguson, "coming out", an indicator of identity development, is the recognition of sexual identity in self and gradual disclosure of this identity to others. It has been recommended that the models of identity development that emphasize coming out to family members and others as a sign of health do not necessarily apply to all LGBT people of color (A. Smith, 1997). How then do individuals understand these identities relative to their personal and collective group identity development, group membership, and personal and collective mental health?

Identity models can be used to facilitate understanding of these dynamics by assisting individuals to explore the impact of oppressions in their lives which relate to ways in which they feel more or less accepting of their respective multiple identities, and becoming aware of their respective attitudes, feelings, and beliefs related to their multiple cultural identities.

An alternative identity model developed by Oetting and Beauvais (1990) suggests that individuals may identify with more than one cultural group and that these identities may function independently of each other. They also suggested that one may have unicultural, bicultural, or multicultural identities. Morales (1983, 1990) offers a model which centers around five different states of cognitive and lifestyle changes. This model is not linear, and therefore, it is

possible for persons to experience several parts or states simultaneously. In each state, the individual is challenged to manage the social anxiety and stress related to varying degrees of conflict in allegiances to their multiple reference groups. Root's Biracial Identity Model (BIM) challenged the linear Eurocentric perspective of most traditional minority identity development models and proposed more than one possible healthy identity outcome for biracial individuals. Following Roots' (1990) paradigm, as cited in Koegel (1996), Reynolds and Pope (1991) proposed four possible identity-resolution options for individuals with multiple-oppressed identities, which was the Multidimensional Identity Model (MIM), an extension of the BIM, as cited in Koegel, 1996).

In 1975, the American Psychological Association (APA) adopted the official policy statement that "homosexuality per se implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or general social or vocational capabilities. Similar resolutions supporting the removal of "homosexuality" from the official list of mental disorders and deploring discrimination based on sexual orientation had been passed before that time by the American Sociological Association, the National Association for Mental Health, the National Association of Social Workers, and the American Psychiatric Association.

Therefore, with homosexuality no longer being considered pathological, Troiden (1979), Cass (1979), and Coleman (1982), have attempted to develop a better understanding of typical and/or normal gay identity development by

introducing and proposing stage models of homosexual identity. However, these linear, stage sequential identity development models have left researchers, as well as clinicians, searching for modalities that would also incorporate people of color. These models were not intended to look at both ethnicity and sexual orientation together. Although limited, present research does exist that examines ethnicity and sexual orientation collectively (see Carballo-Diéguez, 1989; Espiń, 1987; Icard, 1986: Morales, 1990; Rich & Arguelles, 1985). A recurring theme in these models of identity development is the need for minority gays and lesbians to find validity in each community, both ethnic and gay/lesbian, and the need to integrate both identities as well. Because of these pressures, many gay minorities are faced with choosing between one identity group over another, which tends to lead to valuing part of one's identity while devaluing the other.

Cass (1979), Coleman (1982), Troiden (1979) all acknowledge individual differences and propose that gay identity is a fluid, ongoing process which can be affected by sociocultural factors and influences, individual genetics, and/or environmental events, and that "coming out" to self or others is necessary in achieving healthy development. Cohen and Stein (1986), as cited in Rodriguez (1991), stated that "Coming out" has been defined as a developmental process whereby an individual acknowledges an awareness of homosexual thoughts and feelings at a psychological level and suggest that "coming out" involves a process where individuals must reclaim disowned or devalued parts of the self.

Morales (1990 & 1996), believes that there may be differences in how homosexuality is viewed and practiced by people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Other researchers have also acknowledged differences (Caraballo-Diéguez, 1995; de Monteflores 1986 & Espiń, 1987). Because of these differences, the phenomenon of "coming out" as described by Cass (1979), Coleman (1982), Troiden (1979), and Cohen and Stein (1986), may or may not be true for Latinos.

Latinos and Latinas are a multicolor and diverse ethnic group of human beings with an array of cultures, beliefs, and traditions that defy simplistic explanations and categorization. They are seen as a policulture representing more than 20 countries and more that 500 million people living in South America, Central America, North America, the Caribbean, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia (Brea, 2003 as cited in Arias, 1998). The United States Census Bureau (2004) reports that, as of July 1, 2003, 39.9% Hispanics were in the United States, representing 13.5% of the entire population of the country. Two thirds (66.9%) are of Mexican origin, 14.3% are Central and South American, 8.6% are Puerto Rican, 3.7% are Cuban, and the remaining 6.5% are of other Hispanic origins. Demographically, Latinos are one of the fastest growing minority groups in the United States (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1993; Peŕez & De La Rosa Salazar, 1993; Ponterotto & Casas, 1991) as cited in Arias (1998).

As the Latino population in the United States increases, the number of gay Latino men will as well. Studies of the sexual behavior of adults in the United States have estimated that between 2% and 8% of males are exclusively gay (Friedman & Downey, 1994). Assuming that these percentages of gay males is constant across national, cultural, and ethnic groups, the number of gay Latino men relative to other ethnic minority gay men in the United States may be growing as the Latino population in the general United States population increases.

Morales (1989) summarized the process for the Latino gay man in the following manner:

"Within mainstream society, Hispanic gays experience prejudice and discrimination based on their ethnic identity and sexual orientation. Such a dual-minority status makes it difficult to become integrated and assimilated. Discrimination in employment, housing, education, and friendships is much greater for ethnic-minority gay men than for either White gays or for 'straight' ethnic minorities" (p. 214).

"Many gay Hispanics drift into underemployment because of racism within mainstream society and homophobic attitudes among Hispanic employers. Access to community resources may be limited by the level of acculturation, use of language, level of assertiveness and persistence in dealing with bureaucracies, and immigration status and the threat of deportation. The need to respect the

family and its value system may lead persons to maintain the roles expected of them in the family, which reinforces the need to rigidly separate sexual orientation from their family interactions. Conflicting religious value systems may also reinforce the need for sexually conservative value systems" (p. 217).

Psychologists, as well as other mental health professions my be faced with new, as well as old, challenges in assisting and better serving Latino gay men who seek counseling. According to Morales (1989), "More research and theoretical models concerning minority gays and lesbians are sorely needed" (p. 237). Because of the multiple-oppressed identities within the population of Latino gay men, a better understanding of Latino gay identity development for men is warranted.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The study of identity development among ethnic minority lesbians and gay men has tended to draw upon models of ethnic minority identity or lesbian and gay identity (see Morales, 1983; Chan, 1992; Espiń, 1987). These models propose means for understanding the development of either gay/lesbian identity or ethnic minority identity.

Very little has been written on the identity development process for men who are both Latino and gay. "Little has been written about the experiences of Hispanic gay and bisexual men. Literature on Latino gays and bisexuals has been limited to research conducted in Mexico or among Mexicans in the United States

which has focused on sex roles practices and descriptive ethnographic reports"
(Morales, 1990; p. 215).

Some literature on the mental health issues of relevance to gay men and
lesbians has highlighted concerns about their personal and group identities. With
the Latino population rapidly increasing in the United States, psychologists and
other mental health professionals will be faced with Latino gay with multiple-
oppressed identities seeking services.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the identity
development process for a sample of gay Latino men, as well as to investigate and
examine their perceptions of their process in defining self as gay and Latino. The
research questions for this study were: How did you develop your identity as a
gay Latino Male? As well as, "What strategy (ies) have you used in order to
maintain and manage your identity as a gay male in the Latino community, the
gay community, and in the heterosexual community?"

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

The review of the literature will address clarification of terms and
definitions that this study made reference to. Following is an explanation and
discussion of gay and lesbian identity models and their limitations. The review
will then turn to an explanation of and discussion of ethnic identity models and
their limitations. Following is a discussion of identity development of gays and

lesbians of color leading to an explanation and discussion of Latino gay and

bisexual identity development. The final section of the review will address the

psychological stressors, identity management, and maintenance for Latino gay

men.

<u>Terms and Definitions</u>

Although the terms "gay" and "homosexual" have been used

interchangeably for a long time, many researchers have acknowledged that there

are subtle variations in the usage of these terms. A review of the literature has

revealed that the term "homosexual" describes a person's sexual orientation and is

primarily based or focused on sexual behavior. Whereas, the term "gay" implies

that one's orientation is an aspect of a larger self.

The literature illustrates that the term "Latino" is used to describe

individuals living in the United States who come from or share a common

ancestry, from Latin American countries that include Central America, South

America, the Caribbean, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Dominican Republic.

The term "Hispanic," according to Rodolfo Acuña (1988), was popularized by

President Nixon during the 1960s Chicano movement as a way to squelch

dissenting political alliances and co-opt middle class Mexican-Americans by de-

emphasizing and/or minimizing their Native heritage. As a result, the word

"Latino" arose as a way to protest the ethnic cleansing and unite all Spanish

speaking people of Latin and Central American origin living in the United States.

There is no clear consensus within the Latino community about the usage of these terms, and because of the diversity between people within the Latino culture, not all groups accept these terms. Other groups, as well as studies, have used the terms, "Chicano," "Mejicano," "Mexican American," "Spanish," or "Spanish American" as their preferred identity. For the purpose of this study, the terms mentioned will be used interchangeably.

Some Latino men, who identify as gay, take more pride in their Latino ethnicity and identify with their ethnicity first. Some Latinos identify themselves as gay first, and recognize their ethnicity as equally important, but are more involved in the gay lifestyle, culture and community. Therefore, "Latino gays" and "gay Latinos" will be used interchangeably.

"Ethnic Identification" refers to the self-identification among members as well as their attitude toward affiliation with one ethnic group and culture as opposed to another" (Keefe & Padilla, 1987, p.8).

"Coming out" refers to the recognition of sexual identity in self and gradual disclosure of this identity to others. "Out of the closet," and/or "Out" refers to having already gone through this gradual disclosure and is in recognition of their sexual identity.

"Maricon", "Joto", "Malfloro" refer to "Faggot", "Queer" or "Sissy"

Gay/Lesbian Identity Models

Cass (1979)

Cass (1979) assumed that "identity is acquired through a developmental process" (p. 219) and that "stability and change in human behavior are dependent on the congruency or incongruency that exists within an individual's interpersonal environment" (p.220). Cass asserted that consistency or inconsistency between how individuals see themselves and their perception of how others see them shapes the course of identity formation. Cass proposed six stages of development through which sexual minorities pass on the way to fully integrating a gay or lesbian identity within an overall self-concept (Ritter & Terndrup, 2002). According to Cass (1979), growth occurs for individuals when they try to resolve the inconsistency between perception of self and others, thus moving from the lower stage of gay identity formation to a higher stage.

Cass (1979) proposed a linear model of six stages through which individuals move when integrating a gay identity into their overall concept of self. These six stages are: Confusion, Comparison, Tolerance, Acceptance, Pride, and Synthesis.

Stage 1: Confusion

According to Cass (1979), the actual process of the gay-identity development process begins with identity confusion. Individuals become consciously aware that information regarding homosexuality acquired directly or indirectly somehow applies to them. As individuals begin and continue to personalize this information, the heterosexual identities they have assumed for

themselves and conformed to begin to feel discordant, creating emotional tension often in the form of anxiety and/or confusion. According to Cass, experiencing these unpleasant emotions affects individuals in such a manner that it creates confusion in their private and public lives. In private, individuals may label their thoughts, feelings, and fantasies as possibly gay or lesbian.

Within Stage 1, Cass (1979) described three ways in which individuals evaluate the accuracy/acceptability of defining themselves and their experiences as gay or lesbian, relieving inner conflict, and resolving their crisis: *1) correct and acceptable, 2) correct but undesirable, and 3) incorrect and undesirable.*

Correct and acceptable is when individuals begin to question their heterosexual identity and ask themselves if they are gay or lesbian. Individuals may reject a correct but undesirable self-definition by adopting "inhibition strategies" such as restricting homosexuality information, denying personal relevance, becoming celibate, and/or morally crusading against lesbians and gay men. For individuals where their self-definition of homosexuality is incorrect and undesirable, redefining the meaning or the context of their experience by adopting a "personal innocence strategy" may be implemented in order to resolve this crisis. To disclaim responsibility for their homosexual behaviors, individuals may use statements such as, "I was only experimenting," "I was drunk," "It happened by accident," and/or "He took advantage of me" in order to reframe the context in which their same-sex contacts occurred.

According to Cass (1979), successful efforts to restructure confusing and otherwise threatening cognitions using personal innocence strategies has the potential to enable individuals to reject being gay/lesbian, thus foreclosing the process of identity formation. However, individuals seeking information regarding homosexuality to reduce confusion enhance the discordance between their previously assumed and emerging identities, thus increasing cognitive and affective dissonance which motivated individuals to proceed to the next level.

Stage 2: Comparison

The second stage of the process occurs when individuals attracted to members of their own sex accept the possibility that they might be homosexual. According to Cass (1979; 1990), their ability to admit that they may be gay or lesbian reflects a significant decrease in the confusion they sought to reduce during the first stage of identity formation and marks an initial step toward committing to a lesbian or gay self-image. Individuals become less confused about themselves and their experiences and begin to feel alienated from others. According to Cass (1979, p. 225), individuals develop "a sense of not belonging" to society as well as to specific subgroups such as family and peers.

Within Stage 2, Cass (1979) identifies four approaches or paths that individuals may use to "reduce the feelings of alienation." The manner, in which individuals view themselves, as well as their perception of how desirable being gay or lesbian is, determines the approach or the path taken. The four approaches

identified by Cass are: *1) devalue the importance of others but present a public image of heterosexuality, 2) reduce the importance of a gay or lesbian self-image, 3) reduce the fear of others' negative reactions and inhibit same-sex behavior, and 4) devalue homosexuality and esteem heterosexuality.*

Individuals who react positively to the notion of being different are able to *devalue the importance of others but present a public image of heterosexuality*. Cass (1979) identified three groups of individual who react positively within this group. First, those who sense that they have always been different because of their thoughts, feelings, and fantasies about members of their own sex, which consequently lead to an awareness that there is a group of people (gay/lesbian) that they belong to. Second, includes those who attribute their feelings of being different to their noncompliance with heterosexist socialization. Third, includes those who consider being different exciting, extraordinary, or special, which like the first two groups, the felt difference between themselves and others is given a positive evaluation.

Adjusting to their gay/lesbian identity takes time, and while discounting the significance of others, individuals will continue to present and pass as heterosexual to avoid the negative reactions from others regarding homosexuality. According to Cass (1979), four "passing strategies" individuals attracted to other individuals of the same sex are: *1) avoiding situations that threaten to expose their lack of commitment to heterosexist social and gender roles, 2) controlling*

information about themselves, 3) intentionally exaggerating and flaunting the image of heterosexuality or celibacy, and 4) role distancing, detaching, or dissociating from behaviors commonly associated with lesbians and gay men.

The second approach to reducing feelings of alienation is *reducing the importance of a gay or lesbian self-image,* where Cass (1979) identified four strategies that allow individuals to redefine the meaning of their same-sex experiences while rejecting a gay or lesbian identity. First is the *special case strategy,* where individuals consider their same-sex experience as an isolated, one-time experience. Second is the *ambisexual strategy,* where individuals perceive themselves as attracted and oriented to both sexes. As long as these individuals acknowledge their personal potential for heterosexual behavior, they can exclude themselves from heterosexual relationships. Third is the *temporary identity strategy,* where individuals explain that their same-sex experiences are temporary stages or phases of development, and leave the option open for heterosexual behavior or identity in the future. Finally, fourth is the *personal innocence strategy,* where individuals acknowledge their erotic attractions, but deny personal responsibility for their same-sex experiences (e.g., "I can't help it, I was born this way").

The next approach is to *reduce the fear of others' negative reactions.* Individuals attracted to other individuals of the same-sex often anticipate negative reactions from family, peers, or religious groups, and will not adopt strategies to

conceal or inhibit their sexual behavior. The fear of these disapproving responses may lead individuals to move to a different city, leave their churches or seek professional help to repress their same-sex impulses.

The final approach is to *inhibit same-sex behavior, devalue homosexuality, and esteem heterosexuality.* Individuals who feel extremely alienated from significant others because of their same-sex feelings frequently wish to change their attractions, behaviors, and self-images by seeking psychotherapy to redirect their homosexual impulses or seek religious conversion to heterosexuality. In their attempt to rechannel their same-sex urges to the other sex, individuals reject the possibility of being gay or lesbian, which can turn to an intensified self-hatred if unsuccessful.

Stage 3: Tolerance

The third stage of the process occurs when individuals attracted to other individuals of the same sex can admit that they are probably gay or lesbian. Individuals are more tolerant of being gay or lesbian, which alleviates some of the confusion about their identities. However, due to the increased commitment of admitting the probability of being gay or lesbian, individuals still struggle with the discrepancy of how they see themselves (e.g., probably gay or lesbian) and how they perceive others seeing them (e.g., probably heterosexual). In order to reduce their isolation due to increased feelings of alienation, individuals seek out gay and lesbian community and role models. It is important that their perception

of these encounters is favorable in order for positive identity development to be

established. According to Cass (1979), poor social skills, shyness, fear of

exposure and low self-esteem may be factors that can contribute to a person's

negative perception to those communities and individuals. When these

encounters are perceived as negative, the gay and lesbian subculture is devalued,

but when they are seen as positive, further identification with the gay and lesbian

subculture is intensified, self-esteem is raised and ongoing contact with the gay

and lesbian community is reinforced. "Socialization with homosexuals, at

whatever level, allows for the rehearsal of the homosexual role, which then

encourages others to identify the individual as a homosexual" (Cass, 1990, p.

249).

Stage 4: Acceptance

Stage four is characterized by an individual's ongoing and additional

greater contacts with other gay and lesbian individuals. Validating and

"normalized" encounters lead individuals to accept (rather than tolerate) gay or

lesbian self-images. Individuals begin to form friendships as their contacts with

others in the gay and lesbian community increase.

Subgroups' attitudes and beliefs that an individual socializes with in the

gay and lesbian community strongly influence the manner in which they progress

through the remaining stages of the process. Some groups' attitudes and beliefs

fully legitimize a same-same orientation (e.g., being gay or lesbian is valid both

privately and publicly), or attitudes and beliefs advocate a partial legitimization
(e.g., being gay or lesbian is valid privately, but not publicly).

According to Cass (1979), attitudes and beliefs that only legitimize partial
homosexuality emphasize "fitting in," thus relieving and preventing feelings of
incongruency with the heterosexual majority. Cass identified three strategies for
maintaining partial legitimization: *Passing, Limited contact, and Selective
disclosure.*

Passing includes strategies and maneuvers an individual use in
compartmentalizing a gay and lesbian way of life and decreasing negative
confrontation or reactions from heterosexual others. In order to diminish feelings
of difference from the majority culture, individuals *Limit* contacts with
heterosexuals and utilize *Selective disclosure* of their gay and lesbian identities to
alleviate feelings of incongruency with significant heterosexual others.
Successful application of these strategies leads individuals to manage or reduce
their level of inner tension, and results in identity foreclosure. Failed application
of these strategies to relieve inner turmoil may result in either re-application of
the strategies or a rejection of the partial legitimization philosophy, which results
in a full legitimate perspective.

According to Cass (1990), socializing with affirming peers helps
individuals clarify a more positive self-image and to feel greater security with
being gay or lesbian. Individuals may experience a difference in how they see

themselves (e.g., positive) and how they perceive society as seeing them (e.g., negative). Individuals may also encounter prejudiced attitudes toward sexual minorities which become incongruent and offensive, thus leading them to reject angrily the secrecy and negative status that passing for heterosexual carries with it. To resolve these feelings of anger toward a homophobic and heterosexist society, individuals proceed to the fifth stage.

Stage 5: Pride

According to Cass (1979), gay and lesbian individuals enter the fifth stage of identity formation with a strong sense of the incongruency between the positive manner in which they have come to accept themselves and society's devaluation of their identities. Strategies are implemented to depreciate the importance of lesbians and gay men. Individuals accept and prefer their new identities to that of a heterosexual self-image, allowing them to generate feelings of group identity, belonging, and pride.

Feelings of anger, frustration, and alienation toward homophobic and heterosexist attitudes, combined with feelings of pride lead individuals into becoming activists for the gay and lesbian community, which puts them in positions where "passing strategies" are no longer practical and disclosure is adopted as a coping style.

According to Cass (1979), disclosure has two possible positive outcomes, depending on its nature and the circumstances. First, the more others know about

an individual's same-sex orientation, the more their gay and lesbian lifestyle is reflected and reinforced. Second, disclosure allows public and private identities to converge and consolidate into a single self-concept. However, with disclosure, individuals face negative reactions from others (e.g., derogoratory attitudes and behaviors), which leads to a "them versus us" philosophy. The fears of rejection or excessive shame are potential factors that lead to identity foreclosure in these cases. Discordance and cognitive dissonance occur when negative reactions are anticipated and positive responses from others are received, which lead to unexpected outcomes. Individuals move on to stage six of identity formation to relieve the inconsistency.

Stage 6: Synthesis

Individuals enter the sixth stage, and the final phase of identity development with a sense that their previous adopted philosophy of "them versus us" no longer applies, and feelings of anger and pride become less overwhelming. Rather than focusing on the sexual orientation of another individual, lesbian and gay men discriminate on the basis of perceived support. Individuals place trust in supportive heterosexuals and devalue those who are unsupportive. Public and private aspects of self become synthesized into an integrated identity, which leads to self-disclosure automatically. Individuals progress through these stages at different rates, but once accomplished, they are at peace with themselves and free

to proceed with the typical developmental tasks of adulthood (Berzon, 1988, as cited in Cass, 1979, 1996).

Troiden (1989)

Troiden (1989) viewed identity formation as "taking place amongst a backdrop of stigma" (p. 47), developing over an extended period, including a number of critical transitions, and involving eventual self-labeling as gay or lesbian. Troiden's four-stage model assumes that recurrent themes recalled by lesbians and gay men cluster according to developmental phases in their life histories. Age-specific themes provide the content and characteristics of each stage of identity development, and because they are not linear, they build on one another, sometimes recur, and often overlap. Troiden's stages of identity development include: *Sensitization, Confusion, Assumption, and Commitment.*

Stage 1: Sensitization

According to Troiden (1989), "the sensitization stage occurs before puberty" (p. 50) and is characterized by childhood feelings of difference from same-sex peers. These children may feel socially "different" or "isolated" from their peers and perceive themselves as outsiders, and often engage in stereotypically gender-inappropriate behaviors (e.g., girls describe themselves as not being interested in boys and/or interested in sports; boys describe themselves as being interested in the arts and/or playing with dolls), and lack interest in stereotypically gender-appropriate activities.

Troiden (1979, 1989), contends that feeling socially different during childhood for gender-inappropriate interests sensitizes "pre-homosexuals" for subsequently defining themselves as gay or lesbian. According to Troiden (1989), childhood experiences of social differences are later reinterpreted as indicating a homosexual potential, which are necessary conditions for the eventual adoption of a gay or lesbian identity. And that the meanings attached to them are critical variable in the process of identity development.

Stage 2: Confusion

Troiden's second stage of identity formation borrows insights from Cass' first stage and adopts many concepts and strategies from her second stage, identity confusion. Both models allege that by middle to late adolescence, people attracted to their own sex come to suspect that they might be gay or lesbian (Schäfer, 1976; Troiden & Goode, 1980). Adolescents begin to wonder whether they are gay, however, conflicts occur because of the stigma associated with being gay or lesbian, which creates problems of shame and secrecy. The societal emphasis on gender roles may lead to self-imposed isolation, where children may consider themselves as probably gay or lesbian but still portray themselves as non-gay to family and friends. The fear of being ridiculed and abused if others discover that they are gay or lesbian, societal stigma, ignorance, and inaccurate knowledge of a homosexual orientation intensify the identity confusion.

Similar to Cass' model, Troiden (1989) contends that people respond to this discrimination by adopting the following possible strategies: *Denial, Repair, Avoidance, Redefinition, and Acceptance. Denial* involves rejecting the personal relevance of same-sex feelings, fantasies, or behaviors. *Repair* involves attempts to eradicate gay feelings or behaviors, which may include psychotherapy. *Avoidance* involves avoiding exposure and stimuli that may confirm their fears and suspicions about being gay or lesbian. It also includes inhibiting behaviors or interests associated with being gay or lesbian and adopting those associated with being heterosexual. Oftentimes, lesbians and gay men will immerse themselves in heterosexual relationships and impose a non-gay lifestyle (e.g., getting married, getting pregnant, having sex with an opposite sex partner). People will often turn to substance abuse to temporarily relieve pain and confusion over their feelings about being gay or lesbian. Finally, some people will take an anti-homosexual stance, distancing themselves from their homoerotic feelings, and will often attack and ridicule gay men and lesbians. *Redefinition*, similar to Cass' model, involves applying a special case strategy; adopting an ambisexual strategy, assuming a temporary identity strategy, and taking a personal innocence stance strategy (see Cass' stage two for strategy descriptions). Individuals may seek social support and more information to learn more about their sexuality once they have acknowledged and *accepted* their same-sex feelings, fantasies, and behaviors.

This acceptance and process of belonging to a social category diminishes the sense of isolation and allows an individual to move to the next stage.

Stage 3: Assumption

According to Troiden (1989), identity assumptions occur during or after late adolescence and after individuals have moved through the first two stages of identity development. The tasks of this stage are tolerating and accepting new identities, associating with other gay men and lesbians, exploring this new subculture, and experimenting sexually. Identity assumption incorporates the phases of identity tolerance and identity acceptance described in the Cass model.

Initially, being gay or lesbian is tolerated and it is not considered permanent or desirable. The quality of interactions with other gay men and lesbians will determine the acceptance of their new identity. Troiden (1989, p. 59) states that "lesbians and gay males typically define themselves as homosexual at different ages and in different contexts." Humphreys (1972) proposed four possible stigma-evasion strategies which Troiden borrowed from to describe how individuals manage the stigma associated with homosexuality with the assumption of a gay or lesbian identity. The four strategies are: *Capitulation, Minstrelization, Passing, and Group Alignment.*

Capitulation involves individuals internalizing and experiencing gay arousal and desire, but avoiding same-sex behavior. Individuals may experience self-hate due to accepting the negative views of homosexuality. *Minstrelization*

involves adopting and/or expressing homosexual roles according to popular cultural stereotypes (e.g., males appearing and acting effeminate; females appearing masculine or "butch"). *Passing* is possibly the most popular strategy where individuals lead "double lives" and portray themselves as non-gay to non-gays, and gay to other gays. *Group Alignment* involves immersing oneself completely in the gay and lesbian community (e.g., social, political, professional) and avoiding antagonistic and stigmatizing heterosexual contexts. The resistance of the dominant group and immersion into the gay and lesbian culture may lead many individuals to accept, resume, and eventually commit to their positive gay and lesbian identities.

Stage 4: Commitment

Becoming a committed gay man or lesbian eventually becomes very difficult while attempting to function as a heterosexual. According to Troiden (1979, 1989), commitment itself has a variety of both internal and external indicators individuals are faced with.

Internal indicators include sexual and emotional fusion into a significant whole, which legitimizes the same sex as a source of love, romance, and sexual gratification. Also, being a gay man or a lesbian is no longer a form of behavior or sexual orientation, it is considered a "state of being" and a "way of life' and reconceptualized as natural, normal, and valid for the self. Self-esteem and happiness increases and gay identity is accepted as more than just tolerable as

individuals gain a sense of identity and clarify their sexual desires and emotional needs. External indicators involve integrating sexuality and emotions in an individual's commitment in entering a same-sex relationship. As the gay or lesbian identity is reconceptualized, individuals have the desire to disclose and come out to larger audiences, involving heterosexual others. Stigma management strategies for individuals shift from passing and group alignment, to *Covering, Blending, and Converting.*

Covering involves assimilation with the heterosexual majority to maintain respectability. Individuals may admit their gay identity to select heterosexuals if asked, but do not openly display their identity. *Blending* involves neither acknowledgment nor denying being gay or lesbian and perceptions of sexual orientation are irrelevant to their interactions and activities with heterosexuals. Individuals may come out to other gay men, lesbians and select non-gays. *Converting* involves transforming the gay or lesbian identity, in that being a gay man or a lesbian is a strength and something to be proud of, as well as a mark of self-respect as opposed to a mark of shame.

Troiden (1989) contends that the identity itself "is emergent: never fully determined in a fixed or absolute sense, but always subject to modification and further change" (p. 68). Because commitment may vary across time and place, gay and lesbian identity formation is an ongoing, lifelong process.

<u>Coleman (1981, 1982)</u>

Coleman (1981, 1982) proposed a five-stage model of identity development. His model assumes the individuals enter the identity formation process at different stages and that not all individuals pass through each stage. Coleman believes that identity synthesis depends on the mastery of tasks at all previous levels and that some individuals are challenged by developmental tasks of more than one stage at a time. Coleman (1981, 1982; p. 32) states that some individuals "become locked into one stage or another and never experience identity integration."

<u>Stage 1: Pre-Coming Out</u>

Coleman's first level of identity formation proposed similarities to Troiden's (1989) initial stage of sensitization during which young girls and boys, even in childhood, know they are different than their peers. These feelings of difference lead to these children feeling alienated and alone and often developing low self-esteem. Admitting their same-sex attraction would mean rejection and ridicule, thus leading to keeping their thoughts and feelings private. According to Coleman (1981, 1982), various defense mechanisms such as denial, repression, reaction formation, sublimation, and rationalization are utilized by these young people to protect themselves. In many cases, young people only communicate their conflict through behavioral problems, exhibiting psychosomatic illness, and in some cases, they may have suicidal attempts. Coleman contends that these

individuals are ready to move to the next level when awareness breaks through their defense and same-sex attractions surface to the level of consciousness.

Stage 2: Coming Out

The first developmental task of Coleman's (1981, 1982) second stage of identity formation involves acknowledging thoughts, feelings, or fantasies indicative of their same-sex attractions. Individuals do not necessarily have a clear understanding of what it means to be gay or lesbian and are often feeling confused, and are not ready to label or verbalize these feelings.

According to Coleman (1981, 1982), once these individuals acknowledge and identify these feelings of being gay or lesbian, the next developmental task involves telling others, or "coming out," which can be "risky" when disclosing to significant others. Negative or positive responses will determine the level or coming out at all, that the individual decides. Negative responses can reinforce low self-esteem, therefore stalling identity development. Positive reactions allow an individual the ability to begin resolving the existential crisis in a positive direction.

Acceptance by significant heterosexuals is validating to an individual's new identity as heterosexuality is the more valued orientation. Acceptance from gay and lesbian individuals has little significance as the perception of the societal statues of gays and lesbians is typically low. Coleman (1981, 1982) contends that individuals who first find acceptance from heterosexual significant others, in

addition to other gay men and lesbians, generally are able to withstand negative responses from family members.

Stage 3: Exploration

Individuals who receive positive reactions from significant others are motivated to experiment with their new sexual identities. According to Coleman (1981/1982), this stage marks "the first major experience of sexual and social activity with others" (p.35), and "are definitely understood to be homosexual" (p. 36). Three developmental tasks occur during the exploration stage: *1) Develop interpersonal skills, 2) Develop a sense of personal attractiveness and sexual competence, and 3) Develop positive self-concepts.*

Because individuals have been socialized to behave as heterosexual with their own and individuals of the other sex, these individuals need to *develop interpersonal skills* necessary for establishing same-sex relationships. Prior to the exploration stage, gay men and lesbians have not been developmentally ready to experiment sexually with same-sex others. Individuals need to *develop a sense of personal attractiveness and sexual competence* with regard to being sexual with same-sex others. The third task is for individuals to *develop positive self-concepts.* Some individuals may view their activities as immature, immoral, or promiscuous, but if these individuals are able to view their behavior from a developmental framework, they will complete this stage and move to the next stage with positive images of themselves.

Stage 4: First Relationships

Coleman (1981/1982) describes first relationships as being "characterized by intensity, possessiveness, and lack of trust. The intense need for intimacy can easily create desperation" (p. 38). The search for emotionally and physically attractive intimate relationships are due to an individual's increased need for intimacy once he begins to develop interpersonal skills, sexual competence, and self-esteem.

The lack of same-sex experience may bring idealistic, as well as unrealistic expectations to the relationship, with some ending turbulence. Coleman believes that this is due to individuals forming partnerships out of desperation before consolidating their own gay or lesbian identities. Also, learning how to function in a same-sex relationship will often prepare individuals for the final stage of identity development.

Stage 5: Integration

Coleman's (1981/1982) final stage is similar to Cass' (1979) stage of Identity Synthesis. According to Coleman, "Here individuals incorporate their public image and private identities into one self-image" (p. 39). Some individuals with integrated identities choose to remain uncoupled, but other individuals will commit to relationships now characterized by mutual trust and psychological health. At this stage, individuals are better prepared to handle tasks of midlife and

maturity than those individuals working through the earlier stages of gay and lesbian identity development.

Limitations of Gay Identity Development Models

Cass's (1979, 1983, & 1984), Troiden's (1989), and Coleman's (1981/1982) models of identity development have been presented, discussed and summarized. Although there are numerous other stage models, the previous authors stand as the most often cited models in the sexual identity literature. Although the presented linear models are valuable for defining a gay and lesbian developmental process, the limitations observed in these stage-sequential theories will be discussed without intentionally disrespecting or attempting to discredit the authors.

First of all, the samples from which the date was gathered to develop these theories may not necessarily be representative of all sexual minority individuals. Oppressed, stigmatized, and hidden populations are factors which pose a problem for research studies, in that the participant must be identifiable and available for research purposes. Individuals in the first stages of identity formation often are underrepresented in research which attempts to validate the identity development models because they do not yet see themselves as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (Brady & Busse, 1994). Most studies of gay men appear to under represent those 45 years of age or older who are relatively inactive in the subculture, and those individuals recruited for these studies from gay and lesbian communities or from

psychotherapy clients may be different form those acquired through the general media, or from invisible, but more representative samples (Harry, 1996, as cited in Brady & Busse, 1994).

The linear, stage-sequential framework for defining gay and lesbian identity is another limitation. Eicherg (1990), as cited in Bell and Weinberg (1978), stated that, in part due to antihomosexual prejudice and discrimination, progress through stage-sequential models is not linear but cumulative. Bell and Weinberg (1978) used a social psychology perspective to critique the stage models, and claimed that they ignore alternative pathways to the same identity and ignore the possibility of multiple identities by presupposing a uniform developmental process.

The definition of sexual orientation is problematic with different researchers assessing the construct in various ways (e.g., by sexual behavior, self-definition, or membership in gay organizations), (Krajeski, 1984), Chung and Katayama (1996) reviewed 144 studies published in the *Journal of Homosexuality* from 1974 to 1993. They concluded that the most typical method for assessing sexual orientation was self-definition; therefore an individual's sexual orientation was assumed and not assessed. Cass (1979) and Coleman (1982) defined homosexual identity in relation to sexual identity, which limits a gay identity to a sexual identity and does not acknowledge nor incorporate critical cultural values and concepts that affect identity formation differently. However, according to

Espiń (1987), Latino men in Latin America and the Caribbean, it is not infrequent for sexual contacts to include same-gender sex as a sign of masculinity. Therefore, to understand sexual orientation, one needs to look at the social construct, the culture, and the norms in a specific society.

Self-acknowledgment, communication and support of a person's gay identity are directly related to that individual's positive gay and lesbian identity. According to Espiń (1987), being able to openly communicate one's homosexuality to others without fear of rejection or remorse significantly affects the psychological development of gays and lesbians. Understanding the identity development of Latino gay men would mean moving beyond the foundational models of homosexual identity (e.g., Cass 1979 and 1984; Troiden, 1979) and expanding the basis for understanding gay and lesbian identities beyond those represented by white, Western men.

Ethnic Identity Development

In the last 20 years, ethnic and racial identity development studies for minorities have significantly increased, where attitudes toward self, one's minority group, and the majority group are examined. Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1979) reviewed the literature and proposed an inclusive minority development model on racial and ethnic identity development. According to Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1979), their model is not a comprehensive theory of personality

development, but of a means to understand minority attitudes and behaviors within existing personality theories.

Minority Identity Development (MID)

The Minority Identity Development (MID) model of Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1993) propose a five-stage schema designed to understand the behaviors and attitudes of individuals of color living in a White majority society, "as they struggle to understand themselves in terms of their own minority culture, and the oppressive relationship between the two cultures" (p. 28). The stages of the MID are not to be considered mutually exclusive, but are meant to be experienced "as a continuous process in which one stage blends with another and boundaries between stages are not clear" (p. 28). The five stages of the MID are: *Conformity, Dissonance, Resistance and Immersion, Introspection, and Synergetic Articulation and Awareness.*

The *Conformity* stage, is the stage when an individual is both self-deprecating and depreciates his or her own minority, but appreciative of the majority, or dominant group. Individuals may admire, respect and idealize members of the dominant group and accept the group's cultural values without question. Individuals may consciously view their own distinguishing characteristics as a source of shame, and view members of their own minority group according to the dominant group's beliefs about minority strengths and weakness.

The *Dissonance* stage proposes that an individual is in conflict between self and group depreciation and appreciation for the minority group the individual belongs to and the majority, dominant group. Individuals gain awareness that not all of the dominant group's cultural values are beneficial to them and become more aware of their minority group's cultural strengths. Individuals alternate between their feelings of pride and shame in regards to their distinguishing characteristics and begin to question the dominant group's views of minority strengths and weaknesses. Individuals begin to question the dominant group's minority hierarchy and start to feel the appeal of their minority group's cultural values in their process of resolving conflicting attitudes toward themselves, other members of their minority group, as well as the dominant group. Suspicion toward members of the dominant group increases as their solidarity with other oppressed people increases.

In the *Resistance and Immersion* stage, individuals may have a critical personal or social event that challenges their frame of reference, which in turn leads to a reinterpretation of identity. Individuals in this stage begin to explore and discover their history and culture and therefore gain admiration, respect and pride in their distinguishing characteristics. Individuals experience a growing sense of solidarity with members of minority groups and replace the dominant group's minority hierarchy with an ethnocentric stratification that values cultural

similarity. At this stage, individuals distrust and dislike all members of the group and totally reject their society and culture.

In the fourth stage, *Introspection,* individuals experience dissonance between feelings of responsibility and loyalty to their minority group. Individuals experience conflict with completely distrusting the dominant society and culture and selectively trusting members of the dominant group based on demonstrated attitudes and behaviors. Individuals will acknowledge the usefulness of many cultural values, yet remain uncertain about integrating them into their minority culture.

The final stage, *Synergetic Articulation and Awareness,* individuals are both self-and group-appreciating, but selectively appreciate the majority group. Individuals experience a strong sense of self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-reliance as consequences of having developed their identities as individuals, members of a minority group, and members of a dominant society or culture. Individuals experience strong feelings of pride as members of their minority group without necessarily accepting its values, as well as an increased understanding and support for all oppressed people, regardless of cultural similarity or dissimilarity to their minority group. Individuals will selectively trust and appreciate members of the dominant group, who seek to eliminate its oppressive attitudes and behaviors and will open themselves to constructive

elements of the dominant society and culture (Atkinson, Morton, & Sue, 1979, p. 39).

According to Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1979), not all minority individuals experience the entire range of stages. The process is also reversible and individuals may move from a higher to lower level at different points in their lifetimes. Also, achievement of higher levels is not necessarily based on experiencing a lower stage level.

Ruiz's Five Stage Model (1990)

Ruiz (1990) proposed a five-stage model which was formulated from a clinical perspective using case studies of Chicano/Latino individuals. Ruiz believes in a culture-specific explanation of identity for Chicano, Mexican-American, and Latino individuals. He also believes that other ethnic identity development models were helpful, but lacked characteristics specific to Hispanic cultures. Ruiz (1990) also contends that the marginal statuses of Latinos is highly correlated with maladjustment and the negative experiences of forced assimilation and are considered destructive to Hispanic individuals. The five stages of Ruiz's (1990) model include: *Casual, Cognitive, Consequence, Working Through, and Successful Resolution.*

In the *casual* stage, individuals fail to identify with their Latino culture. Individuals may experience traumatic or humiliating experiences related to ethnicity, and affirmation that their ethnic identity is lacking. In the second stage,

cognitive, three erroneous belief systems regarding Latino/Chicano heritage become incorporated into mental sets as a result of negative or distorted messages they have received. These include association of ethnic group membership with poverty and prejudice, assimilation to White society as the only means to escape, and assimilation as the only possible road to success. In the third stage, *consequence,* individuals feel ashamed of or embarrassed by ethnic markers such as skin color, name, accent, or cultural customs, which lead to estrangement from and rejection of Chicano/Latino heritage. According to Ruiz (1990), two major dynamics distinguish the fourth *working through* stage, where individuals reclaim and reintegrate disowned ethnic identity fragments, resulting in an increase of ethnic consciousness. Individuals become increasingly unable to cope with the psychological distress of ethnic identity conflict, and the individual can no longer "pretend" by identifying with an alien identity. With the last stage, *successful resolution,* individuals experience greater acceptance of their own culture and ethnicity, self-esteem improves, and ethnic identity represents a positive and success-promoting resource.

Kim (1981)

After a review of the literature, and in response to criticisms of Asian American development models (Kim, 1981; Lee, 1991; Sadowiski, Kwan, & Pannu, 1995), Kim (1981) proposed a five-stage model which incorporates the influence of acculturation, exposure to cultural differences, environmental

negativism to racial differences, personal methods of handling race-related conflicts, and the effects of group or social movements on the Asian American individual. The five stages include: *Ethnic Awareness, White Identification, Awakening of Social Political Consciousness, Redirection to Asian American Consciousness, and Incorporation.*

Stage one, *ethnic awareness,* begins at the age of 3-4, where family members serve as significant ethnic group models. The amount of ethnic formation is dependent on the amount of ethnic exposure conveyed by the caretakers. Stage two, *white identification,* begins when children enter school where peers and the surroundings become powerful forces in conveying racial prejudice which negatively impacts a child's self-esteem and identity. These differences a child begins to notice lead to a desire to escape his or her own racial heritage and identify with the White society. In stage three, *awakening of social political consciousness,* individuals adopt a new perspective, often associated with increased political awareness, abandon identification with the White society, and establish an understanding of oppression and oppressed groups. In stage four, *redirection to Asian American consciousness,* individuals begin to reconnect with their own Asian American heritage and culture. Recognition of White oppression may lead to anger against White racism, which increases Asian American self and group pride. In the final stage, *incorporation,* individuals develop a positive and

comfortable Asian American identity and a respect for other cultural and racial heritages, and identification for or against White culture in no longer important.

Ethnic and racial identity models have been proposed that describe a person of color's development of an identity as an ethnic person separate from the dominant racial group. Although these models examine key concepts such as attitudes towards self, the minority group, and towards the majority group, one must also take into account and be aware of possible limitations in the formulation of racial and cultural identity models.

Limitations of Ethnic Identity Development Models

One concern or limitation is that almost all cultural identity development models begin at a point that involves interaction with an oppressed society (Sue & Sue, 2002.) It is possible that culturally different individuals may exhibit conformity characteristics in some situations, but they also exhibit resistance and immersion characteristics in others. These situations and types of presenting problems may make some characteristics manifest more that others.

Another concern is whether cultural identity development models establish that identity in a linear process. According to Sue & Sue (2002), the minority and majority individuals in this society do tend to move through the identifiable stages, with some moving faster than others, some stay predominantly at one stage, and some regress. The question of whether individuals can not begin at one of these stages, or skip a stage altogether needs to be tested empirically through

research (Constantine, 1998; Fisher, Toker, & Serna, 1998, as cited in Sue & Sue, 2002). According to Constantine (1998), as cited in Sue & Sue (2002), there is a strong need to understand and refine these models, in that the roles of class, age, gender and so forth, may have not been addressed adequately in these models.

Another limitation is that these models of minority identity development presume that all minorities have only one racial or ethnic identity to develop. The weakness is the failure to accommodate the process by which people with multiple racial, ethnic, and/or sexual preference group form and maintain a positive identity (Myers, 1991, Reynolds & Pope, 1991, Root, 1990, as cited in Koegel, 1996).

Ho (1995), as cited in Koegel (1996), states that a limitation of ethnic minority identity models is that they overlook subcultural variations due to factors such as age, gender, and socioeconomic class. They also fail to address with-in group differences in the extent to which culture is internalized by group members. Myers (1991), as cited in Koegel (1996), pointed out that the models appear to be based on a Eurocentric worldview which may not be applicable to a specific minority group, and disregard commonalities across worldviews that could be used to formulate a universal identity development model. Root (1990), as cited in Koegel (1996), states that identity development models do not respect racial, ethnic, or cultural differences and that there is a need to develop new theories of

minority identity development that move from the traditional linear models and that accommodate more than one positive option of identity organization.

<u>Yarhouse (2001) Five-Stage Model</u>

Yarhouse's (2001) five-stage model includes the following stages: *(1) Identity Confusion or Crisis, (2) Identity Attribution, (3) Identity Foreclosure versus Identity Expansion, (4) Identity Reappraisal, and (5) Identity Synthesis.*

I.   *Identity Confusion or Crisis*

It is proposed that a person who experiences same-sex attraction experiences a time of *identity confusion/crisis.* According to Yarhouse (2001), a person's confusion is in response to his/her experiences of same sex attraction.

This confusion can also lead to crisis. According to Nichols (2000), as cited in Yarhouse (2001), this is occurring less often, as there is a more concentrated effort to accept experiences of same-sex attraction, and integrate them into a lesbian, gay or bisexual identity. However, due to one's personal beliefs and values, or those or one's cultural group or religion, a person may experience same-sex attraction as a crisis.

II.   *Identity Attribution*

According to Yarhouse (2001), the experiences of crisis and attribution may go hand in hand because of the attributions the person makes. Individuals who understand their experiences of same-sex attraction in relation to a valuative frame of reference (e.g., religion), come to recognize these experiences as

proclivities or inclinations, but they do not make a self-defining attribution (e.g.,

"I am gay").

III.   *Identity Foreclosure versus Identity Expansion*

According to Yarhouse (2001), those who adopt a tentative gay identity go

through similar stages to what Cass (1979), and others have described. Sexual

activity seems especially important for synthesis of a gay male identity, more so

perhaps than for a lesbian identity.

Yarhouse (2001) stated that while some people find their same-sex

experiences satisfying and move toward identity synthesis, others reject a gay

identity and attempt to expand alternatives to same-sex behaviors, attractions and

identification.

IV.   *Identity Reappraisal*

According to Yarhouse (2001), identity reappraisal refers to the response a

person has to difficulties they experience with either of two trajectories: (1)

adopting a gay identity, and (2) dis-identification with same-sex feelings.

Yarhouse (2001) stated that a person may enter a stage of identity

reappraisal if they have difficulties with developing an alternative identity.

Personal satisfaction, peer group support, family support, culture and religion may

be factors why a person enters a stage of identity reappraisal. Those who are

dissatisfied during this stage may return to identity confusion or crisis.

V.   *Identity Synthesis*

According to Yarhouse (2001), those who are satisfied during the identity reappraisal stage move in either of two broad directions: (1) They pick up with other broader models of gay or lesbian identity development (e.g., sexual exploration, disclosure), or (2) they resume with broader models of personal development articulated within a valuative frame or reference (e.g., religion, culture).

Richard A. Stevens Jr. (2004) Grounded Theory Methodology

Using the grounded theory methodology in a study titled, "Understanding Gay Identity Development within the College Environment," Stevens (2004) used the experiences of 11 self-identified gay male college students to explore and understand how environment contributed to exploration and development of gay identity. From his research, one central category (finding empowerment) and five integrative categories (self-acceptance, disclosure to others, environmental influences, individual factors and exploring multiple identities) emerged. According to Stevens (2004), the findings suggested that one's sexual identity is complexly integrated and often at odds with other aspects of the individual's identity.

Stevens (2004) stated that previous models of identity development provide a broad understanding of the development process for gays and lesbians, however, do not readily address religious, cultural, ethnic or racial dimensions as

they relate to the development of a gay identity. Stevens (2004) believes that environmental contexts are important to fully understand gay identity exploration.

According to Broido (1999), as cited in Stevens (2004), many people choose to hide parts of their identity, which depends on their assessment of the environment and how welcoming or not it seems to be.

I.   *Self-Acceptance*

According to Stevens (2004), self-acceptance, self-acknowledgment and an initial incorporation of one's gay identity, or coming out to self was one entrance point into the emerging model. Part of the process included recognizing being different, assuming it was a phase, which included lies and secrets, abandoning heterosexual privilege and coming to terms with one's gay identity.

II.   *Disclosure to Others*

Disclosure to others is the verbal or written acknowledgment of one's gay identity. According to Stevens (2004), the term "coming out" refers to the process of disclosure to others, but often includes both self-acceptance and disclosure to others and the often hazy line between the two.

Stevens (2004) stated that disclosure to someone who was gay reduced the fear of rejection, and that first disclosures were "never" with family members, unless the member was also a sexual minority. "Fear of rejection from family, a part of one's core identity and sources of unconditional support, hounded these men" (Stevens, 2004. p. 193).

III.   *Individual Factors*

According to Stevens (2004), individual factors were defined as the assessment of personal supports and liabilities (e.g., perceived support networks, confidence and self-assurance, feelings of rejection, isolation and internalized homophobia). He added that the participants held stereotypes about their environment and their perceptions of what they believed others thought about gay men played an integral role in disclosure, finding empowerment and exploring gay identity with other dimensions of who they were.

Fear of rejection was often associated with negative reactions to disclose and often meant emotional disconnection from close friends and family. According to Stevens (2004), students of color also felt rejection within the gay community and that the racism attached to the stereotype of the "ideal" gay man did not fit the description of a man of color.

IV.   *Environmental Influences*

Stevens (2004) concluded that environments influences manipulated and set a context for individual factors, which included relationships, locations, signs, symbols, discrimination and stereotypes. Influences varied from person to person, but was often measured in trust and power perceived by the participant himself and demonstrated by words and actions. The greater the trust, the more influence the person had in the life of the participant.

"Discrimination from personal experiences and stories from other men in the cay community were also powerful environmental influences for the participants" (Stevens, 2004. p. 197).

V.   *Exploring Multiple Identities*

According to Stevens (2004), the men in the study needed to have a sense of empowerment before they were able to explore how their sexual orientation intersected with other dimensions of their identity. He stated that exploring multiple identities was a consequences or result of experiencing empowerment, and then a consequence due to interaction of empowerment and exploring multiple identities. In this study, men of color spent more time exploring their race and sexual orientation.

In summary, according to Stevens (2004), sexual identity is not linear, and noted that participants often moved back and forth and through the grounded theory multiple times and expressed varying degrees of empowerment given the contextual nature of the environment. He went on to add that people go between the stages depending on the situation, and who they are dealing with.

Although much identity research has focused on adult identity, one must also take into account adolescents and how they develop both their ethnic and sexual identities as they develop their overall adult identity. According to Adams, Gullotta, & Montemayor (1992), Erikson, (1980), Marcia, (1966), as cited in Jamil, Harper & Fernandez (2009), adolescence has been characterized as a time

when the bulk of one's identity is developed. During this time, adolescents face important challenges in developing a sense of identity at school, work, in their sex roles, and much of their future is shaped by their experiences and development during that time.

Jamil, Harper, and Fernandez (2009) conducted a study entitled, "Sexual and Ethnic Identity Development Among Gay-Bisexual-Questioning (GBQ) Male Ethnic Minority Adolescents" to study the dual identity development processes related to ethnic and sexual identity among Latino and African American male adolescents. Overall, the process of ethnic identity development involved becoming aware of one's ethnic and cultural heritage, whereas sexual identity development involved fining one's own relevant sexual orientation label and connecting to that community.

Previous literature has suggested that because of heterosexism in ethnic minority communities, the sexual identity development of sexual minority youth of color may be delayed or hindered, thus not reaching developmental milestones at developmentally appropriate ages. However, according to Dube and Savin-Williams (1999), as cited in Jamil et al (2009), in a study conducted to examine the timing of sexual identity development milestones for lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) youth, they found that regardless of ethnicity, all participants met their sexual identity developmental milestones at developmentally appropriate ages, with differences notes in the ages of their first sexual experience. Rosario,

Scrimshaw, and Hunter (2004), as cited in Jamil et al (2004), found similar results in regards to the timing of identity development milestones, sexual orientation, sexual behavior or sexual identity. However, they did find differences related to identity development, in that when compared to White youth, African American youth participated in fewer social activities within the gay community, and both Latino and African American youth disclosed their sexual orientation to fewer people compared to White youth.

According to Jamil et al (2004), although the majority of the theoretical models for ethnic identity development are stage models, several models are fluid or nonlinear. Smith's (1991) model, as cited in Jamil et al (2004), is less defined by categories and stages and focuses more on the fluidity of ethnic identity, specifically through relationships one has with the majority and minority group members. Parham (1989), as cited in Jamil et al (2004), also suggested that development is an ongoing process, and that individuals may normally re-cycle through stages without implicating regression of identity development.

The results of Jamil's et al (2004) concluded that the key developmental concepts that arose from the participants' descriptions of their sexual and ethnic identity development processes were: (1) timing and contexts of identity awareness, (2) process of identity development, (3) different experiences of oppression, and (4) connection to the community. According to Jamil et al (2004), both ethnic and sexual identities are forming during early to late

adolescence, a time when youth are developing their unique adult identities, and did not experiences delays in timing of specific stages in their identity development because they were both an ethnic and sexual minority, which occurred at similar times periods, and for most of the youths, concurrently.

As opposed to previous theories of sexual development which suggest that individuals link with more adult-oriented gay or lesbian venues, (e.g., bars, clubs), according to Jamil et al (2004), much of the exploration youth reported was covert and often did not involve the more public exploration.

The participants in this study stated that they remained connected to both their sexual and ethnic communities throughout their identity development process by embracing the resources that supported their development. According to Jamil et al (2004), youth maintained connections to their ethnic communities through cultural traditions and elements, as well as family and friends, and were able to maintain these connections amid experiences of oppression from both communities.

Identity Development of Gays and Lesbians of Color

Previous studies of gay and lesbian identity development focused on mainly on the experiences of European Americans, and attention has been given to the effects of race or ethnicity on this development process. Generally, it is believed that gay men and lesbians have difficulties forming positive identities due to the stigma assigned to being homosexual. This stigma must be managed

by a process of disclosing to some, while concealing from others (Cain, 1991, as cited in Rodriguez, 1991). Even if the "coming out" process is portrayed as a positive step for gay men and lesbians, it is always perceived as a difficult process for people of color to form healthy gay and lesbian identities while at the same time, maintaining a positive ethnic identity. This multiple minority status has been described in the literature as problematic for gays and lesbians (Eliason, 1996; Snider, 1996, as cited in Rodriguez, 1991). Therefore, gay men and lesbians are faced with two identities, one pertaining to ethnic cultures and the other pertaining to sexual orientation, in a society that does not fully accept either one (Greene & Boyd-Franklin, 1996, as cited in Rodriguez, 1991).

In many cases, the values and behaviors of one culture create conflict with the values and behaviors of another. Latino gays come from a culture where family is the primary unit and where being a man means a struggle to find himself and make peace with the many conflicts that arise from being gay. According to Chan, 1989, Icard, 1986, Morales, 1990, and Padilla, 1987, as cited in Koegel, 1996), the family is the basic unit where development of values, beliefs, and behavior occurs, and is the main source of support in ethnic communities. Rejection from the family and cultural community are major fear factors for gay men and lesbians who contemplate publicly acknowledging their sexual orientation.

Latino Gay/Bisexual Identity Development

Morales (1983, 1990)

Morales (1983, 1990) proposed a five-"state" model in an effort to help explain how Latino gays develop a healthy identity and positive integration. The five different states center around cognitive and lifestyle changes. Each state describes processes for managing anxiety and tensions, and because the model is not linear, it is possible for individuals to experience several parts or states simultaneously. The five states include: *Denial of Conflicts, Bisexual versus Gay, Conflicts of Allegiances, Establishing Priorities in Allegiances, and Integrating the Communities.*

Denial of conflicts is the state in which individuals manage the social anxiety and tension related to their visible minority status by minimizing the reality of discrimination they experience as a person of color. An individual's sexual orientation may not yet be defined, thus denying that it has a significant impact his or her life experiences. In the process, individuals manage the anxiety related to their invisible minority status, or their gay or lesbian identity.

Bisexual versus gay is the state where individuals prefer to identify as bisexual instead of gay. Upon examining their sexual behavior or lifestyle, individuals conclude that there may be no difference between those who identify as gay or lesbian and those who identify as bisexual. According to Morales (1983, 1990), this middle-of-the-road identification is a means of managing the

anxiety and tension related to the possible loss of family and ethnic group support one may encounter with open acknowledgement of an individual's gay or lesbian identity.

Conflicts of allegiance is the state where individuals become consciously aware of their dual minority status and is torn between the two (e.g., being Latino or being gay), creating anxiety and the need for the two lifestyles to remain separate. An individual also feels anxiety about betraying one or the other when preferences are put forth to one over the other. According to Morales (1983, 1990), anxiety and tension management due to this conflict becomes the major social and psychological challenges of this state.

Establishing priorities in allegiance is the state where individual primary identification is to the Latino community; however they also experience feelings of resentment concerning the lack of integration between the Latino, and the gay communities. Individuals also experience feelings of anger and rage due to their rejection and discrimination within the White gay community. The conflictual feelings and struggle to integrate both a racial or ethnic identity lead the individual to the fifth state.

Integrating the various communities is the state where individuals come to terms with both minority identities and develop a multicultural perspective or design for living and interpreting reality. Individuals begin to adjust to limited options available to gay Latinos, which often leads to seeking out ways to

associate with others like themselves with whom they can celebrate both or all aspects of their identities.

In addition, Morales (1990) stated that many Latino men choose to think of themselves as bisexual even though their lifestyle would be considered gay-oriented by others. He also suggests that some ethnic minority gay men may not have developed a complete awareness and realization, thus not completing their "coming out" process.

Psychosocial Stressors for Latino Gay Men

"Psychosocial stressors directly are related to how strongly the individual is identified with three cultures/lifestyles (Hispanic, Gay, and White)" (Morales, 1990, p. 214). Morales (1990, 1996), believes there may be differences in how homosexuality is viewed and practiced by people from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Among gay White men, sexual orientation identity is viewed largely as a matter of self-definition, as the culture tends to value highly the autonomy of the individual (Trianis, 1995, as cited in Zea, Reisen & Poppen, 2003). Latino culture, on the other hand, is collectivist and alocentric, because individuals tend to view themselves as members of larger social groups which give more importance to interpersonal relationships than do members of individualistic cultures (Kim, Triandis, Kagiticibasi, Choi & Yoon, 1994; Mills & Clark, 1982, as cited in Zea, Reisen, & Diaz, 2003). According to Matsumoto, (1997) as cited

in Zea, Reisen and Poppen, (1999), in alocentric cultures, "overt separateness" of individuals is not highly valued; rather, the individual is expected to adjust to the expectations of the social group. Almaguer (1991), as cited in Zea, Reisen & Diaz, 2003), added that among Mexican immigrants whose culture is more alocentric, sexual categorization is based on a relational category within the dyad, as either the active or the passive role. Carrier (1985) stated, "Heterosexuality is considered superior to homosexuality in Mexico. A Mexican male's gender identity, however, is not necessarily threatened by his homosexual behavior as long as he is masculine and plays the inserter role" (p. 84).

Latin Americans are family oriented with values of "family unity, welfare, and honor" (Garcia-Preto, 1996, p. 151). The role of the family in the overall social structure of an individual's life is another possible psychosocial stressor for gay Latino men. With family being the basic unit of society, Caraballo-Diéguez (1989) and Morales (1990) believe that homosexuality may be seen as the rejection of that role. A common thread of commonality for Latinos is *Familismo* (Morales, 1992; Yee, 1990; Marin & Marin, 1990, as cited in Smith & Montilla, 2006). According to Smith and Montilla (2006), they agree the Familismo is the most important value for Latinos, which includes intense feelings of loyalty, reciprocity, and solidarity. They also include a strong sense of identification and attachment to the nuclear and extended family.

Another psychosocial stressor Latino gay men may struggle with is their religion. The influential role of the Roman Catholic religion within the Latino community has been well documented by many researchers (Acosta, 1984; Burgas& Diaz-Perez, 1986, Cervantes & Ramirez, 1992, Hayes-Bautista et al., 1992, & Sue, 1987, as cited in Smith and Montilla, 2006). Hayes-Bautista (1992), as cited in Smith and Montilla (2006), estimated that at least 85% of all Latinos in California identify as Catholic, and the official stance on homosexuality within the Catholic religion since the mid-1970s is that to be homosexual is not in itself morally wrong, but to engage in homogenital acts is wrong.

Religion informs all Latino interpersonal behavior through a strong belief in sacrifice, and charity, as well as a strong belief to endure all wrongs done against you. It is believed that Latinos may have difficulty asserting themselves because it is perceived as precipitating social tension, which can lead to conflict. According to Yamamoto & Acosta (1982), as cited in Smith and Montilla (2006), Latinos tend to believe that all problems or difficulties are meant to be destined (el destino) and cannot be changed.

When a person believes that they or their behavior is a sin or abomination, they are unable to love themselves. Because religion mediates several internal processes in the development of identity or self-acceptance, the conflict between religion, sexual identity and acceptance may affect an individual's self-esteem. According to Weinberg (1985), research indicates that

homosexuals who are religious may experience more conflict between their

sexual orientation and religion, may be more worried about passing as straight

and be more socially involved in the heterosexual community and less socially

involved with other homosexuals.

Another psychosocial stressor Latino gay men face is the level of, or lack

of *Respeto* (Respect) an individual exhibits toward the family, as well as the

extended family and within the Latino community. Studies have shown that the

Euro-Caucasian meaning of respect reflects an unconnected, self-confident

egalitarianism, whereas the Latino meaning of *Respeto* is loaded with a sense of

emotional dependence and obligation to authority figures (Diaz-Guerrero, 1975).

As a result, Latinos will typically seem submissive or timid in interactions with

others or authority figures (Caraballo-Dieguéz, 1989).   Because *Familismo*

within Latino Families is one of the most important values, Latino males must

decide whether or not they disclose their sexual orientation to their family. Latino

gay males who disclose (come out) risk being accused of lacking *Respeto* for their

elders, thus seen as rejecting the family, culture, religion, and not meeting one's

expected roles. The Latino gay male who comes out and rejects the family may

also face being seen as bringing "shame" to the family.

The shame brought to the Latino family as a result of coming out may be

quite stressful as it creates a deep concern about *"Que Dirań?"* (What will they

say?). Latinos will often sacrifice individual needs for those of the family system

in order to avoid conflict with the extended family, which for Latino gay men is a double bind. If he is open about his sexual orientation and/or decides to separate from his family, he may be perceived as rejecting the family system and his expected role (Caraballo-Dieguéz, 1989; Sue, 1987; Morales, 1990). If a Latino gay man is not open and/or moves away, he may still experience himself as being disloyal or disrespectful, and consequently suffer a loss of esteem in addition to his fears of *Que Dirań?* (Caraballo-Dieguéz, 1989). Morales (1990) stated that revelations of perceived negative personal affairs are usually viewed as a reflection of the entire family. Latino gay men who are open about their gay orientation risk bringing shame to the entire family, and jeopardize their strong association with their entire ethnic community. According to Morales (1995), fear of isolation, shame, ostracism, discrimination and violence keeps Latino gay men from coming out in their own communities.

Acculturation and assimilation may also be psychosocial stressors Latino gay men face when choosing to come out. Many authors have suggested that there is an inherent danger in trying to isolate the 'true nature" of the Latino culture because each person's attitude is a direct function of his or her degree of acculturation (Padilla & Ruiz, 1973). Keefe and Padilla (1987) state that acculturation refers to "social, economic, and political integration of an immigrant or ethnic minority group member into mainstream society" and in order for someone to assimilate, he or she must have become acculturated to some extent,

but this does not ensure assimilation. Assimilation implies that ethnic groups should relinquish traditional ethnic values and norms in favor of the dominant or Euro-Caucasian values and culture (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1980). A person's level of assimilation and/or acculturation will affect how they self-identify, and many studies indicate that this is not a static or linear process (Cross, 1970, Hall, Cross, & Freedle, 1972, Jackson, 1975, Parham, 1989, as cited in Koegel, 1996). Latinos in the United States must struggle to develop a positive sense of identity and must identify in many different ways, which for Latino gay men becomes twice the struggles as they belong no only to one minority group, but to two.

Identity Management and Maintenance for Latino Gay Men

Morales (1990) noted that ethnic gays and lesbians are both a visible and invisible minority. Dealing with society's racist attitudes is the visible status individuals face due to their ethnicity, and as Latinos. A Latino's sexual orientation is the invisible status. Gay Latino men may choose to be discrete and hope to minimize conflict and/or fear of discrimination if their sexual orientation is made public.

Morales (1990) suggested that Latino gay men live their lives in the gay community, the Latino community, and in the predominantly heterosexual White main stream community, and that each of these communities has different expectations. These differences often force gay Latino men into conflict as they attempt to meet the pressures, expectations, and challenges of each of these

communities. For many Latino gay men, managing these differences determines how they choose to self-identify. The relative amount of stress experienced by these conflicting norms will determine how strongly the individual identifies with each of his or her respective communities (Morales, 1990). According to Atkinson, Morton, and Sue (1980), and Espiń (1987), some Latino gay men will identify more with the mainstream White culture, which results in minimizing their culture, while others will identify more with the Latino community.

Latino gay men often model their behaviors to correspond with society's expectations of how gay men should behave (Morales, 1990). According to Morales (1990), gay-identified Latinos may conform to the idea that gay men want to be women and act stereotypically effeminate, and/or Latino men who are not gay-identified may model their behavior after how men should act and behave in a stereotypically masculine manner based on society's expectations.

Summary

This review of the literature has examined older versions of various models of gay and lesbian identity development (Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1980; & Coleman, 1982), ethnic identity development (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1979; Cross, 1971; Ruiz, 1990, & Kim, 1981), Identity development of gays and lesbians of color, and Latino gay/bisexual identity development (Morales, 1990). Included in this review of the literature is a discussion of the limitations of gay and lesbian, as well as minority identity development models, and potential

psychosocial stressors and identity management and maintenance for Latino gay men.

METHODOLOGY

<u>Introduction</u>

The proposed study is concerned with the perceptions of adult gay Latino men, as they reflected on their development and maintenance in their process in defining self as gay and Latino.

The nature of gathering information for this proposed study came from inquiries related to the unique experience of each participant, where they spoke of their life, experiences related to their culture and sexuality, as well as the struggles they endured along the way. The participants were encouraged to speak freely about what they believed and understood of their development, therefore, no yes-no questions were investigated. A qualitative research strategy was implemented utilizing the process of naturalistic inquiry proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

<u>Participant Sampling and Inclusion Criteria</u>

The focus of this proposed study was to identity development and maintenance for Latino gay men. The intention of this study was to interview Latino males who identified as being gay.

In order to provide as much information as possible, the proposed sample of individuals was sought from three specific areas: a border town, a major city,

and from a rural, agricultural community. Three gatekeepers, one from San

Diego County, one from Los Angeles County, and one from Santa Barbara

County were identified to help distribute recruitment statements to potential

participants. The gatekeepers also assisted this investigator in setting up

informational meetings with the various Latino gay organizations in their

perspective or surrounding communities. This investigator provided versions of

the recruitment letters in English, as well as in Spanish (Appendix A). Contact

information for this investigator was provided on the recruitment letters, and the

gatekeepers were instructed to inform potential participants to contact the

investigator directly.

This investigator also utilized individuals known to him, who had

knowledge of potential participants who qualify for the study, to distribute

recruitment letters. The potential participants interested in the study, were

informed to contact the investigator directly via the contact information provided

on the recruitment letters.

In addition, gate keepers and known individuals assisting this investigator

were not informed of who contacted this investigator, who did not, and who

actually participated in the study. This investigator insured the confidentiality of

potential participants, as well as actual participants, and provided a respectful and

safe environment throughout the interview process for the participants.

Pre-Interview Procedures

Potential participants who were interested in being interviewed for this study, or who wanted more information regarding the study were contacted by the investigator via the contact information they provided on the recruitment letter. I clarified and provided information regarding the study and the process of the interview, as well as answered any questions potential participants had regarding their role as a participant during the initial contact. This investigator stressed the importance of their confidentiality, comfort, and safety, as well as asked them for suggestions regarding their choice of location for the interview. At the conclusion of the initial contact, the investigator reviewed and confirmed the date, time, and the location of the interview.

Prior to beginning the actual interviews with the participants who committed to participate in the study, this investigator conducted several pilot interviews. The purpose of these pilot interviews was to become familiar with the interview process and to make revisions and/or adjustments accordingly. Because they were pilot interviews, the results were not included in the actual data analysis.

Interview Procedures

The goal of the interview was to achieve lengthy and thoughtful responses from the participants based on their perceptions, thoughts, and feelings regarding their development and identities as gay Latin men.

To begin with, my first goal was to provide a safe and comfortable environment for the participants, from the initial handshake during introductions, to the closing handshake at the termination of the interview. During this initial phase, emphasis was placed on creating a relaxed, home environment of an agreed upon location, where participants were free to partake in the refreshments I provided, to utilize the facilities (restroom) without hesitation, and to feel comfortable in asking any questions they had regarding the process of the study. Although I already spoke to the participants prior to the interview, I asked each participant about their preferred language during the interview, and made it clear that a combination of both the English and Spanish language was perfectly fine.

Participants were reminded that the interview ranged in length from 45 to 90 minutes, and that the interview would be audio taped. The investigator explained to the participants that the tapes would be transcribed immediately following the interview by the investigator, and that the names of the participants would be replaced with a code name known only to the investigator to insure confidentiality of the identity of the participants. Participants were provided with a consent form giving the investigator permission to audiotape the interview, in their preferred language, which the investigator explained and discussed it with them. Participants signed the consent form which was the bottom portion of the recruitment letter, which included a statement of permission to audiotape the interview (Appendix A). The participant was then asked to complete a

background sheet containing basic demographic, social, and familial historical information, which was also provided in English, as well as in Spanish (Appendix B).

The interview opened with general questions to begin a general discussion, as well as to establish rapport. This investigator conveyed to the participants that they were the experts in their stories, and that the "platica" (conversation) was their opportunity to tell their story in their own way. To insure that respect was shown and honored, the investigator asked each participant about their ethnicity (e.g., If someone were to ask you what ethnicity you are, what would you say?), and to use the participant's preferred term throughout the interview (e.g., "Yo soy Mejicano", "I am Mexican").

This investigator conducted the interview in phases to insure that the participant had the opportunity to include important factors in his life important to his development as a gay Latino man. The first phase included questions related to the participant's ethnicity, family and experiences while growing up In this phase, this investigator began with questions such as, "Where were you born and raised?", and "What was your life like growing up?" The investigator then turned to questions related to sexual orientation, such as, "When did you first believe that you were attracted to men?", "How did your family view homosexuality?" and "What was it like growing up gay in your family and in your community?"

The next phase of questions was related to the participant's decision to remain at home, or to leave and to be on his own. Questions included, "What made you decide to leave your family and live on your own?" (If that were the case), "If your family is not aware of your sexual orientation and if you are still living at home, what is life like for you?"

The next phase dealt with questions related to identity development as far as the participant's ethnicity and sexual orientation. Typical questions included, "How important is being gay and Latino to you as a person." and "What is your definition of being gay?"

The final phase dealt with questions related to how the participant viewed Latinos who were gay, and how they perceive their treatment in the various communities (i.e., Latinos in gay communities; gay in Latino communities). It entailed questions related to levels of participation within these communities, as well as coping strategies utilized in all three communities: Latino, gay, and heterosexual.

This investigator moved through the phases in a flowing manner, rather than created a list of questions. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the flow of the interview is describes as an emergent process, where new questions will emerge as new information is obtained from each participant in the study.

<u>Terminating the Interview</u>

The investigator, having gone through the intended phases, questions and procedures, summarized statements and clarified points the participant made during the interview. The investigator then asked the participant if he wanted to add anything he felt was important, as well as to describe what the interview process was like for him.

The investigator finally explained "preliminary conclusions" and informed the participants that they would receive a copy of the findings of the study for their review and input (Appendix C). They were informed that their input was important to ensure the accuracy of what was said, as well as to provide them with the opportunity to correct, or suggest additional statements. They were instructed to return their portion of the form in the self-addressed envelope that was provided to them at that time. The participants were thanked for their time and willingness for taking part in the study, thus terminating the interview.

It was this investigator's responsibility to determine when sampling was terminated. Originally 12-15 participants were sought for this study, but this investigator was only able to acquire 10 participants who were willing to commit to following through with the interview. This investigator had numerous "potential" participants, but due to no-shows and last minute cancellations, as well as backing out once they arrived to the designated location, the number of original participants sought was not achieved. This investigator had the

opportunity to talk several of the participants regarding their decision not to go

through with the interview. Several of the reasons given for not doing the

interview included the fear of someone finding out that they were gay, not sure if

they could handle telling their painful story and not wanting others to know about

their private lives. However, during the interview process, this investigator began

to notice a repetition of information beginning at approximately the 6 or 7th

interview. Termination occurred once the investigator began to notice that the

participants were not producing any new information. According to Lincoln and

Guba (1985), sampling is terminated when the sampling has been expanded to the

point of redundancy of the information. "It is usual to find that a dozen or so

interviews, if properly selected, will exhaust most available information; to

include as many as twenty will surely reach well beyond the point of redundancy"

(pp. 234-235).

<u>Data Analysis</u>

This investigator utilized the constant comparative method of qualitative

date analysis described in Lincoln and Guba (1985) to analyze the data obtained

in the proposed study. The investigator analyzed statements from verbatim

transcripts (constructions) provided by the participants interviewed for the study.

The investigator engaged in a constant comparison of each construction with

constructions of the previous participants.

The investigator chunked information which included phrases, paragraphs and sentences, in order to categorize and code information given by the participants. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), "chunks of information should satisfy two criteria: 1) The statement(s) should be heuristic, aimed at some understanding or some action that the investigator should have or take, and 2) The statement(s) are that smallest pieces of information about something that will be able to stand by itself, interpretable in the absence of any additional information. Thus, the investigator satisfied the requirements of the criteria in the interpretation and coding of the transcripts.

RESULTS

Ten Latino men from rural, agricultural areas and from suburban areas of a California city were interviewed for this narrative study of Identity Development of Latino Gay Men. The mean age of the participants was 39 years. With the exception of one participant who recently came out at the age of 54, the mean age at which the remaining nine participants came out was 26.6 years. The mean length of the interviews was approximately 70 minutes, with five of the interviews being conducted in Spanish and five in English. Numerous interviews were scheduled, however, many of the potential interviewees elected to withdraw from the interview process and cancelled prior to the scheduled time, several did not show to the interview without notice, and many backed out at the last minute after arriving at the designated location. All of the participants chose fictitious

names, which were used in the following profiles and throughout the discussion section.

Experience of the Researcher

Using self disclosure as a means of allowing participants to understand a shared frame of reference between themselves and the researcher, I disclosed to the men in the study that I am also a Latino gay male.

During the research design portion of the study, I anticipated that my own issues with my sexual identity experience would provide a degree of deep empathy for the lived experience of the Latino men who were gay. As the interviews progressed and I began to analyze the data, I was also on guard for personal biases based on my own experience. I was also aware of the possibility that these biases might unintentionally distort the participant's narrative as well as my interpretations of the narratives.

The experience of being with 10 Latino gay men throughout the interview process ranged from being difficult and disturbing, to being deeply moving and extremely rewarding. The experiences that I attributed to my involvement in the research project were a frequent topic of self-exploration; I also processed my responses with my dissertation chair and several members of my committee. When the study concluded, I felt that my capacity to empathize with other Latino gay men was not in any significant way an impediment to remaining impartial and

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objective. On the contrary, I believe that it served as a gateway for a deeper

understanding of the narrative content.

<u>Participant Profiles</u>

Prior to the interview, each participant was offered an explanation of the

purpose of the study and was given the opportunity to ask any questions he had at

that time. The length of interview was explained and a location was decided

upon, giving preference to the participant's suggestions. At the interview, each

participant was offered the opportunity to ask any additional questions he had,

and was reminded that if for any reason he felt uncomfortable with any question

being asked, he was free to inform the interviewer that he did not feel comfortable

answering that question and his request would be honored. The participants were

also reminded that they were free to stop the interview at anytime. The

participant profile names were chosen by each participant (not their real name)

prior to the interview in order to maintain confidentiality. The following brief

participant profiles provide contextual orientation for the discussion of themes

that follows. Some of this information is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Background

NAME	AGE	GENERATION	PRIMARY LANGUAGE	RELIGION	AGE OF COMING OUT	PERSON PARTICIPANT CAME OUT TO	CONSIDER HIMSELF TO BE
Raul	54	III	English	Catholic	54	Wife	Mexican - American
Arturo	33	II	English	Catholic	21	Mother	Hispanic
Alejandro	45	IV	Bilingual	Catholic	29	Mother	Mexican - American
Vicente Fernandez	39	II	Spanish	Catholic	28	Male Friend	Mexican
Ritchie Valens	48	II	English	Catholic	18	Male Friend	Latino
Temo Nario	38	I	Spanish	Catholic	23	Sister	Mexican
Juan Carlos	41	I	Spanish	Catholic	27	Sister	Mexican
Pablo	32	I	English	Catholic	18	Male Friend	Mexican
Enrique	31	I	Spanish	Catholic	25	Male Friend	Mexican
Javier Solis	29	I	Spanish	Catholic	23	Male Friend	Mexican

Raul

Raul is a 54-year old, born and raised in the United States, and the child of migrant farm-worker parents. He recently, 2 months prior to this interview, "came out" to his wife, his parents and his 3 adult children and is currently going through the divorce process. Raul is a successful agricultural farmer, owner of several produce companies and a successful Latino recording artist.

From an early age, Raul sensed that he "was different" but believed that it was all a part of growing up. At the age of 7, he was a victim of sexual abuse which lasted until the age of 16, when his family decided to uproot to a different part of the state. Although he never spoke to anyone about the abuse, Raul believes that the emotional strain and stress, along with the guilt for feeling "different", were reasons he suffered from depression and two suicidal attempts, the last attempt being five months prior to this interview.

Raul stated that the support of his children, his parents and his ex-wife were reasons that he is alive today. His last recorded CD contained all "goodbye" songs dedicated to his children and mother describing the love he had for them and the pain he was suffering because he wanted to be "who I am" but was afraid that he would be rejected by all of them.

Arturo

Arturo is a 33 year-old fitness trainer with a very popular chain of gyms. He was born and raised in a major city in California and recently moved to a

smaller rural city. Arturo's parents are both educators and encouraged their children to do "whatever made them happy" as long as nobody was hurt in the process. He came out at the age of 21, and stated that people's attitudes and perceptions of gay people are very different where he lives now, as opposed to where he came from. He stated that people around him now make him feel like he needs to go back into the closet, thus believing that coming from a larger city where a person's sexuality is more accepted and/or tolerated has its advantages. Arturo has been in a relationship for the past 6 years and at the time of this interview, he was in the process of joining the ranks of the many gay couples who were intending to marry legally in the state of California.

Alejandro

Alejandro is a 45 year old, native Californian who resides in the same house and agricultural town that he was raised in. He is currently a successful mortgage lender and very active in the gay community. Alejandro came out to his mother at the age of 29, and to the rest of his family shortly-after. He felt that he had "feelings for men" at a very young age, but was not aware of what those feelings actually meant. Alejandro is the youngest of eight children, but is the only one to follow his parents' desires for their children to obtain an education. He was always active in the church, but stated that he always felt bad attending church or being a volunteer because of the person that he knew he was. Alejandro

is currently in a relationship, but stated that his partner has a different view on "coming out," as well as "being out," which makes it very difficult for him to be open about his status to everyone.

Vicente Fernandez

Vicente is a 39 year-old born in Mexico. He came to the United States three years ago and is a cook in a restaurant. Vicente is the oldest of 6 children, all of whom no longer have anything to do with him because of his sexuality. His parents kicked him out of the home when he was 15 years old, after receiving a severe beating from his father. Vicente stated that someone from his church went "chismoliando" (gossiping) to his mother, and that is how he was "outed." He was homeless for over a year, until he was able to get on his feet, live on his own and eventually make his way to the United States. Although he was "outed" at the age of 15, Vicente stated the he came out to some people at the age of 28. He is currently dating, but stated that because of the language barrier, it has been difficult for him to meet others whom he may be interested in getting to know. Vicente stated that coming to the United Stated was very difficult for him to do because despite the "rechaso" (rejection) from his family, he knew that he at least had people who would be able to help him with his depression in Mexico. Although he has been here for three years, it is still very difficult for him to discuss his "private matters" with strangers, and that he cannot discuss this with a

priest in the manner in which he was raised, because of their views on homosexuality.

<u>Ritchie Valens</u>

Ritchie is a 48 year-old born in the United States. He is the oldest of nine children and an office manager by trade. He first came out at the age of 18 and stated that he believes that coming out for the younger generations is a lot easier and more tolerated than it was when he was growing up. He stated that his parents and family had their issues with him when he came out, and that it was not very easy for him to deal with not being accepted by his own family. Ritchie is out to his co-workers and stated, "they accept me more than my own loved ones." Although he was out at the age of 18, Ritchie mentioned that he still had to be very creative about how he presented himself to different groups of people because he did not "want to get the shit knocked out of me." He mentioned that the encouragement and support of a close circle of friends and his re-established relationship with a couple of family members has been instrumental in helping him "be okay" with himself without the "guilt."

<u>Temo Nario</u>

Temo is a 38 year-old born in Mexico who came to the United States one year ago. He is the oldest of six children and works as a cook at a resort hotel.

He stated that he came out to his youngest sister at the age of 23, but was very reluctant to come out to the rest of his family. He stated "ella lloró y lloró" (she cried and cried) and initially had a very difficult time accepting who he was. Now, he states that she is his best friend, and that their relationship is much stronger. He mentioned being sexually abused by the neighbor at age 8 and by an uncle at age 10; however, he never mentioned it to any of his family. Temo stated that his father will have nothing to do with him and refers to Temo as "la hija de su madre" (the mother's daughter) and says his mother "le resa a Dios que me arregle" (prays to God that he will fix me). Temo stated that his father said that he would beat it out of him, and he tried, because no son his was going to be a "pinche maricón" (fucking queer). Although he has come to live a new life in the United States, Temo believes that he has brought shame to the family and therefore cannot ever go back to make amends. Temo stated that he fears being rejected by others, as he has been rejected by his family, thus is very careful about how much he discloses about himself.

Juan-Carlos

Juan-Carlos is a 41 year-old born in Mexico who works as an HIV-AIDS Counselor. Juan-Carlos is the ninth of thirteen children and the second to come to the United States. He stated that he came here to work for about a year when he was 26 years-old to help his family back home, but eventually ended up

remaining here. Juan-Carlos stated "mis padres son muy tradicionales" (my

parents are very traditional) and a lot was expected of the men in the family.

Being gay was very difficult for him, as he did not want to disappoint, bring

shame or disrespect the family in any way. Juan-Carlos came out to each one of

his siblings individually after coming out to his sister. "Mi hermana lloro, y mi

hermano vomito" (my sister cried, and my brother threw-up), but the rest of his

siblings handled it much better. Juan-Carlos has "divorced" the Catholic Church

because several of his friends committed suicide because they were gay and were

denied by the church. He does not understand how what he was taught about God,

Faith and Love was not extended to everyone. Juan-Carlos is now in a committed

relationship of 10 years but does not feel that it is necessary to let others know his

business. He was excited about the marriage initiative in California, and stated

that things may change for him in regards to being completely out if he and his

partner decide to make it official.

<u>Pablo</u>

Pablo is a 32 year-old, born in Mexico but raised in the United States. He

is second of two boys, and was raised by his mother. Pablo is currently a student

and is interested in becoming an elementary school teacher, and he believes that

being "too open" may hurt him if the families of the children he works with find

out. Pablo came out to a male friend when he was 18 years old, and to his mother

when he was 20, but is very selective about whom he tells. He stated that his

mother did not accept nor acknowledge his homosexuality until he was

approximately 29 years old. He mentioned that it was very difficult growing up

with family that would constantly make "fag" jokes knowing that he was gay.

Pablo stated that he was sexually abused from the age of five, up until the age of

thirteen. He mentioned that he could not say anything to anyone, because he

believed at that time that he would have brought shame to the family because it

would have been his fault for "being gay." Pablo stated that talking about his

personal life is not something "nuestra gente" (our people) usually talk about

freely, but he felt like this was his opportunity to "vent" or "get some things off

his chest" that he has wanted to for sometime now.

Enrique

Enrique is a 31 year-old born in Mexico, who came to the United States

when he was twelve years old. He is the third of five children, and was raised by

his grandmother for his first ten years, and lived with his mother the next eight.

He is a college graduate and is currently employed as a computer technician.

Enrique stated that he has always felt different than what was "expected" of him

in regards to relationships, and that he went along with that expectation but

"hated" every minute of it. He came out to a male friend when he was eighteen

years old, and to his mother when he was twenty. He stated that his mother

"damned him to the devil" and that he was not welcomed in her home after that moment. To this day, Enrique's mother refuses to have anything to do with him. Enrique is only out to those he feels that need to know, and anyone else "can assume or say what they want." Enrique believes that his family in Mexico had an idea about his sexuality, but it was something that was just not talked about while living with his grandmother.

<u>Javier Solis</u>

Javier is a 29 year-old born in Mexico, who has been in the United States for approximately a year and a half. He is a field-worker and is currently trying to save up enough money to get a place of his own. He stated that his living arrangements make it very difficult for him to "be himself" and that it is very stressful on him. Although he came out to a close friend in Mexico when he was twenty three, as far as he knows, "nadíe mas sabe" (nobody else knows). He stated that because of the traditional values and the "machismo" philosophy his family lives by, he is certain that they would disown him, and his friends would abandon him if they found out that he was gay. Javier stated that he was molested by a priest when he was an alter boy for the Catholic Church in Mexico, and because of his resentment toward the priest, his ability to pray to God to help him through these times is very difficult. Javier stated that "pasando como hombre

derecho es mas trabajo de lo que hago en el field" (passing for a straight man is more work than what I do in the fields).

Identity

The initial title of this study was "Identity Development of 'Gay' Latino Men." However, beginning with the first interview and ending with the final interview, a theme that was very important that came up for each participant was how he identified. For the participants in the study, being referred to as a "Gay Latino Man" was difficult for them, and they did not agree that "Gay" should be the first thing one should identify them as. The combination of these two words within the title made a difference in their definition of themselves and how every participant felt and wanted to be addressed. Thus, a change in the title was made to "Identity Development of 'Latino' Gay Men."

As the interviews and themes began to emerge, several common categories took shape that could be said to fall under the development of the Latino gay male experience. These include: (a) Identification and questions related to whether they were Latino or American, Latino and gay, or gay and Latino, (b) Religion and the degree in which Latino gay men experienced themselves as gay and going against what was taught to them as "bad", (c) Parental and family relationships and how they experienced rejection, shame and fear within the family as a result of their sexual preference, (d) Physical and

emotional abuse as experienced when "coming out" or being "found out", (e)

Sexual abuse as related to childhood trauma and their sexuality, and (f)

Maintenance and management and how they learned to "pass as straight" and

maintain an image in various environments.

The information gathered for this study did not come easy for this

investigator, as the narratives included accounts of verbal, physical and emotional

trauma that these men endured in their own processes of coming to terms and /or

dealing with their sexuality. The data collected does not necessarily mean that all

Latino men who are seeking to make meaning of their Latino Gay identity will

experience the same trauma. However, it did play a major role in the lives of the

participants for this study. The sad and tragic accounts did perhaps play an

integral part as to why numerous participants did not follow through with study.

The process of making meaning of how Latino men identify comes into

play when questions are asked such as, "What would you prefer to be called?

What would you say is your preferred ethnicity term? What is your definition of

Gay? And how important is it to be "Gay" and "Latino" or "Latino" and "Gay?"

Alejandro, for instance, described with much emotion, how he felt about

the emphasis always being placed on sexuality as opposed to the person coming

first:

"As far as my identity, being Mexican, American and Gay, it's all of me. I am very proud of my Mexican heritage, and this is the person that people meet first, and being gay is a part of me, not all of me. There is a lot more to Alejandro other than just some gay, because a lot of people think, 'Oh gay,' you know, they just look, think the sexual part. They don't look at you as far as a person of beliefs, morals, and professionalism"

Although he has come to a point in his life where he is able to state "proudly" that he is Mexican first, his experience while growing up want not always this simple for him. He went on to state:

"I can remember being told at school that because I was born here, I was American. However at home, I was told that I was Mexican and should not be ashamed of my heritage. I was called, um (pause) um… 'A fucking spic, wetback and was told to go back to Mexico.' I used to get so mad and fought a lot because I hated being told that I was a wetback. I, um, it made me feel like I did not belong here, but damn, I was born here. For many years, I was confused and angry and began to reject the Mexican side of me, and many times even had trouble saying the word. It was especially hard being Mexican at home, and then feeling forced to be, or better put, needed to learn to act and be white. It's like, um, I had to give up a very important part of who I was to satisfy people from both sides."

Identification explanations for Latin gay men ranged in intensity and complexity, as well as in the outcomes of their experiences. Narrative accounts of the differences in how one identified also varied. For instance, Raul spoke of his experiences of knowing he was "different" than other kids while growing up, "not only from the color of my skin, but because of my attraction to other boys." In this excerpt, Raul seemed to attribute the confusion of who he felt he was with how he felt that he was being "forced" to identify with the dominant "white" culture:

"Want to talk about confused? While growing up, I knew my heritage was Mexican and Indian. I looked different that others, which I was reminded of daily. Kids used to call me Geronimo, and the teachers always fucked up my name. They would call me "ROL" as opposed to Raul. When I tried to correct them, they would tell me that I was in the United States, and that is how it was said here. I would identify myself as Mexican American, but I was constantly reminded and told to say that I was American. On all forms, I had to put in "white" and it was not until much later that I felt okay with marking 'other,' even though sometimes I did not know who the 'other' person was. At home, I was considered a 'pocho' (term used to indicate the inability or having minimal proficiency, to speak Spanish) due to my inability to speak Spanish. This inability was more of refusal on my part, as it was reinforced in school that English was the only language spoken in school. As difficult and frustrating as it was back then, today I can proudly say that I am Mexican/Indian. And, as sad as it may seem, I can also proudly say, that I reject being 'American.' As I just recently came out, I know it will take time for me to be comfortable saying that I am gay, 'out loud.'"

Emigrating from another country, as described by half of the men in the study who came from Mexico, adds another dimension as to how Latino gay men identify. When asked to describe his identity and sexual orientation, Javier stated:

"La cosa se me ha hecho muy complicada. En primer lugar, de donde vengo, somos Mejicanos. Llegando aquí, yo he notado que hay varias maneras en cómo uno nos consideran. Si no somos Latinos para algunos, somos Hispanos para otros. Toda mi vida me he considerado Mejicano, pero ahora, no estoy my seguro en cual palabra usar. Y para los gavachos (white people), se parece que no les gusta ninguna palabra porque no los quieren aquí. En terminos de mi sexualidad, bueno, en la manera en que yo lo pongo es, soy un 'hombre' que prefiere tener relaciones con otros gays en la privacidad de mi casa. Nadie tiene que darse cuenta de mi vida privada, o en mis preferencias sexuales. Si yo fuera el que recibiera, (con verguenza) um, um, la verga, yo no pudriera decir que soy hombre, pero como yo soy el que la da, si lo puedo decir. En total, yo soy un 'hombre' Mejicano que tambien es gay."

"This has been very complicated for me. First of all, where I come from, we are Mexicans. Coming here, I have noticed that there are various ways

in how one considers us. If we are not Latinos for some, we are Hispanics to others. All my life, I have considered myself Mexican, but today, I am not sure what word to use. And for the white people, it is as though they don't like any of the terms, because they do not want us here. In terms of my sexuality, the manner in which I will put this is, I am a 'man' who prefers having sex with other gays in the privacy of my home. Nobody needs to know about my private life or my sexual preference. If I were the one that was receiving (states with embarrassment), um, um, the cock, then I would not be able to say that I am a man, however, since I am the one that gives, then I am able to say so. Summing it up, I am a Mexican man who is also gay."

Similar accounts where identity encompassed ethnicity, gender, then sexual orientation were described with passion, and for some, with some frustration and anger. One such account was described by Vicente in the following manner:

"Yo soy un hombre Mejicano, y si soy gay, porque les importa a otras personas? No nos dejan vivir nuestras vidas felices porque piensan que lo que dicen ellos, lo tenemos que segir y vivir. Para mi, esa parte de mi no decide la persona quien soy, o lo que otros dicen que soy (dicho con mucho coraje). Solamente es una parte de mi ser."

"I am a Mexican man, and if I happen to be gay, why should others care? They don't let us be happy and live our lives because they think that what they say, we have to follow and live. For me, that part of me does not determine the person that I am, or what others say I am (said with much anger). It is only one part of my being."

Vicente, in a frustrating tone, went on to say:

"Me da tanto coraje que la gente se enfoca tanto en que digamos que somos 'gay,' como si fuera tan fácil. Para mi, cuando me preguntan esto, require que tambien diga qué posición tomo en términos de el hombre, o la mujer. Es como...es mas lo que hacemos en cama, y no las personas que somos. ¿Porque tengo que decir? Otra vez, soy un hombre, y Mejicano, y lo demás, pues……a la Chingada con todos!"

"I get so mad that people focus so much on us saying that we are 'gay,' as if it were so easy. For me, when they ask me this, it requires also stating what role I take in terms of the man, or the woman. It is as though it is

more about what we do in bed, and not about the people that we are. Why do I have to say? Again, I am a man, and Mexican, and the rest, well….Fuck them all!"

In this study, it was clear that all the men identified as Mexican, Mexican-American and Mejicano. When asked about the differences, the manner in which one identified oneself, as well as how they pronounced the word (Mexican) varied. Pablo stated:

"I was born in Mexico (Mex-ih-coe), but raised in the United States. I understand and know that my roots and family are of Mexican (Mex-ih-can) descent and I was raised saying it this way. I assumed that since this was how everyone else said it, then this was the way it was. It was not until much later when, um, I, um, got older, that I started getting shit from others for 'disrespecting' my culture by using the 'white version.' I never really gave it much thought until then, but it was very frustrating, and it pissed me off. I never imagined that the pronunciation of a word could hold such negative reactions for some people, and more importantly, make me feel like shit. I was very confused, and as a result found myself pronouncing it one way for some and another way for others. I did not know who I was. It's like, um, I had to please people in several ways, which almost made it phony for me."

For Arturo, who was born and raised in California, identifying as Mexican (Mex-ih-can) or American first depended on the group he was with at the time.

"When I hung out with my stoner or surfer buds, I was 'All-American.' I used to joke a lot and say that I was just darker due to being in the sun more. When I was with my family, or friends of my parents, I was Mejicano (Me-hee-cah-no), as this is the way they pronounced it, but I never felt comfortable saying it that way. It was not that I was embarrassed or anything, but it was just how it was, and I did not think I would have been accepted by others if I displayed my culture and way I was at home with them. As sad as it may seem, I did feel awkward saying I was just 'Mexican' and would normally say 'American-Mexican,' or just 'American.' I identified more with my 'white' friends than anything else. Today, I have been learning about my heritage and my family, and it has been a struggle. Coming from a family where English was spoken, and

living in a neighborhood where the majority of the people were 'white,' I guess I did my best to 'blend' in with language and activities, and never gave it much thought. That is until I moved to a rural town, where the majority of the people were Latino, Hispanic or 'whatever' the term is now."

Temo, a native of México (Me-hee-coe), found the conflict of identification as feeling as though he had to change the person he was/is now that he lives in the United States, including how he pronounces the terms. He angrily stated:

"Yo soy, y segiré siendo Mejicano (Me-hee-cah-no). No sé porque tengo que cambiar mi lenguaje, mi forma de ser, y cómo decido hacer las cosas. Estos Mejicanos de aqui no saben como daňa cambiar a los gustos de otros a nuestra gente. Para mi, eso no es bien. En cambiar una cosa se comienza a cabiar otra, y luego ¿qué falta? Nuestra cultura, nuestra identidad y el orgullo de ser Mejicano ya no existira. Para mi, no lo permitiré, y nunca lo cambiaré."

"I am, and will always be Mejicano. I don't understand why I should have to change my language, the person that I am, or how I choose to do things. The Mejicanos from here do not know how damaging it can be for our people by changing because they want us to. For me, this is not ok. In changing one thing, one begins to change another, and then, what is left? Our culture, our identity and the pride of being Mejicano will no longer exist. For me, I will not permit that to happen, and I will never change."

Religion

To what degree do Latino gay men experience themselves as "sinners" and/or the "devil's children," and what meaning is held in the degree to which Latino gay men feel or view themselves as being "Catholic" and "gay?" For clarification purposes, all of the participants in the study were raised Catholic, and all but two participants continue to practice Catholicism at different levels. For some of the men in the study, what they were taught from an early age continues

to instill fear and shame in them should they go against what is expected. For others, following their desires to be with other men has not come without living their lives in secrecy and constant thoughts and doubts about what kind of people they are according to what the church says. Yet, others have made decisions that come with consequences while here on earth, as well as when they pass.

Enrique was born and raised in México and came to the United States at the age of 12.

> "Fui bautisado, hice la primera comunión y me confirmé bajo los ojos de Dios."

> "I was baptized, I made my first communion and I was confirmed under God's eyes."

When queried as to whether religion/Catholicism was a conflict in his development as a Latino man who happened to be gay, he explained in the following manner:

> "Yo siempre pensé que Dios quería y perdonaba a todos, no importaba porque. Cuando me di cuenta que me gustaban los muchachos, bueno, los hombres, sabia que si todo era cierto, yo tambien iba ser perdonando. Jamás, me comencé a sentir un poco diferente cuando noté que la gente de la iglesia, las monjas, los padres, mis padres, todos mandaban al Diablo a hombres como yo. ¿Cómo puede ser? Nos dicen una cosa en los estudios, y actuan y dicen cosas al contrario."

> "I always thought that God loved and forgave everyone, it did not matter what the reason was. When I discovered that I liked boys, well, men, I knew that if this were true, I too would be forgiven. However, I began to feel somewhat different when I noticed that at church, the nuns, the priests, my parents, would damn men like me to the devil. How could this be? They tell us one thing in our studies, and then they act and make contradicting statements."

Visibly shaken, Enrique was offered water and given the opportunity to gather his composure. Continuing, Enrique stated:

"Discúlpame, es que así he vivido mi vida desde joven cuando supe que me gustaban los hombres. Vivía con miedo de que otros se dieran cuenta de mi, y que me mandaran al diablo por pecador. La cosa máó peor para mi…(se agacha la cabeza y comienza a llorar)…um….Es, es, cuando le dije a mi madre que era gay (llorando y con las manos al cielo), 'perdóname Dios; perdóname madrecita.' Yo tenía 18 aňos, y no he hablado con mi madre desde ese entonces. Ella me mandó al diablo, me dijo que era un sin verguenza y me iba ir al infierno. Jamás no quiso nada que ver conmigo."

"Sorry, it's just that I have lived this way since I was young, and that I was aware that I liked men. I lived with the fear that others would find out about me, and that they would damn me to the devil for being a sinner. The worst part for me..(He bows his head and begins crying)…um…was, was, when I told my mother that I was gay (crying and raising his hands up to the sky). 'Forgive me God; forgive me my dear mother.' I was 18 years old, and I have not talked to her since then. She damned me to the devil, she told me that I had no shame, and that I was going to hell. Nevertheless, she did not want anything else to do with me."

As with Enrique, this "sin" was carried with him, as well as by others in the study, throughout his life. Although they are now adults, the sense of being portrayed as "bad" and "evil" was/is very difficult to deal with, and a feeling they struggle with daily. Enrique's exchange illustrates some of the issues and challenges regarding the extent to which Latin men, who are Catholic and gay, experience inner conflict. Alejandro was, and is currently, actively involved with the Catholic Church, but stated that he always feels "dirty" and "bad" attending church or volunteering because God knows the person that he is and does not approve. He goes on to say:

"At a very young age, I think it was about 7 years old, I knew that I was different. During my catechism class, we were taught about Adam and Eve and the forbidden fruit. Well I know there is the saying that God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve, but for me, the way I see it is God created Adam, Eve and Steve, and….um…(chuckling)….I tasted Steve's forbidden fruit and liked it. However, this does not mean that I

have not committed a sin in the eyes of God and the church. This is why I feel, and have felt, and carried with me all these years the guilt, shame and dirty feelings when I have been with another man. Have I sinned? Um…Am I bad? Well, according to the bible, the pope, God's word and the people in the church, the answer would be yes. Will I go to hell? Probably, but if we all (gay people) go, then it should be a 'hot' place to be."

For several of the men, to change one's faith is unacceptable and a bigger sin than being gay, regardless of their discontent or difference of opinion due to sexual orientation. For those men, they state that they would remain Catholics until they are put to rest. Javier stated:

 "Me iré al infierno por ser gay, pero sería más pecado en renuciara mi Dios y a mi religion." ("I may go to hell for being gay, but it would be more of a sin to renounce my God and my religion'). Ritchie added, "I was born a Catholic, and due to my decision to live as a gay man and not follow what was taught to me while growing up, right or wrong, I will die a Catholic."

For the majority of the men, being a Latino, gay Catholic man meant living a life of sin, deceit and shame, which they stated they would have to answer for on judgment day. They also shared the view that this is the way it is, and equated sinning to "having" to suffer while on earth. However, for several of the men, this view did not always hold true for them. "Although the shame, disrespect and guilt were "drilled' into me," as described by Ritchie:

 "I chose to become a non-practicing Catholic and now consider myself to be 'spiritual.' I lived my life feeling guilty of loving another man and believed that I was going to pay later. But today, after the trauma and drama, I live life to its fullest."

When queried further, Ritchie went on to explain that when he came out, his mother "disowned" him and told him that he brought shame to the family, God and the church. "It was hard to grow up feeling like I was bad for being gay,

and not only was I not welcome at home, but according to what I was told by my mother and others of the Catholic faith, I could not show my face in the house of God."

For one participant, the decision the leave the Catholic Church came out of anger, disbelief, disgust and sadness. Juan-Carlos chose to use the term "Divorce" to describe the separation. He stated:

> "Toda mi vida, seguí la palabra de Dios y los deseos de la iglesia. Cuando tuve deseos de estar con otro hombre, no lo hice porque tenía miedo de pecar, y tal vez ir al infierno por lo que nos decian en la iglesia, y en la casa. Por muchos años, pelié con mis pensamientos, y en mi deseo de estar feliz con otro hombre, y sufrí mucha depresión. Me dediqué a la palabra de Dios y a la iglesia. Unos pocos años atrás, un amigo fue a pedirle ayuda a la iglesia porque era gay, y contrató el VIH virus. En ese momento, el padre, el mismo quien yo serví, le dijo que no habia nada que podia ser para él porque Dios no aceptaba la gente gay, y contratando el virus es el castigo por no creer en la palabra y en el. En ese momento, el padre le dijo que las puertas de la casa de Dios no estaban abiertas para el. Esa misma noche, mi amigo me llamó llorando, contándome le que pasó y se despidió de mí. Las últimas palabras que me preguntó fueron, '¿Tu piensas que soy una persona pecadora y mala?' El sigiente día, encontraron a mi amigo colgado en su cuarto con una nota que decía, 'Que Dios me perdone.' Yo no entiendo como Dios y los que se dedican a la palabra de él pudieron rechasar a una persona que buscaba ayuda. Es por eso que yo decidé divorciarme de ser Católico, y es algo que siempre viviré, en que mi vida a sido una vida de mentiras, decepción y mucha confusión."

> "All my life, I have followed God's word and the expectations of the church. When I had the desire to be with another man, I did not do it because I was afraid of sinning, and perhaps going to hell for what they tell us in church, and at home. For years, I fought with my thoughts, and my desire to be happy with another man, and I suffered with a lot of depression. I dedicated myself to God's word and to the church. Several years ago, a friend of mine went to the church to ask for help, because he was gay and had contracted the HIV virus. At that time, the priest, the same one that I served, informed him that there was nothing that he could do for him because God did not accept gay people, and contracting the

HIV virus was a punishment for not believing in the word, and in him. At that time, the priest told him that the doors to God's house were not open to him. That night, my friend called me crying, telling me what had happened and said goodbye to me. His last words he asked me were, 'Do you think that I am a sinner and a bad person?' The next day, they found my friend hanging in his room with a note that said, 'May God forgive me.' I do not understand how God and those who dedicate themselves to his word could reject a person who was looking for help. That is why I decided to 'divorce' myself from being Catholic, which is something I will always live with, in that my life has been a life of lies, deceit and a lot of confusion."

For one participant, it was not so much what he learned in the church while growing up, it was what he heard from others, and what he learned as an young adult when he was seeking answers to his questions regarding his sexuality. Rudy and Ritchie shared similar experiences, in that their families did not attend church regularly when they were young, so what they learned about their religion came from their own desire to understand God and Catholicism as it related to being gay. Raul stated:

 "Early on, my mom and dad didn't go to church, but I know they believed in God, in their own special way. Religion was not a big issue for them, but it became an issue for me when I started high school. In my search for who that God is, I've come to terms with this. I dealt with it for a long time, I mean, you hear things, you read in the bible about homosexuality and what that, what that means, you know. It's really you're condemned."

 Ritchie experienced similar accounts and stated:

 "For me, in me search to find answers to what I was being told by others, I don't know. I am totally confused. I just felt like, you know, you were condemned to hell, you know. Just condemned to hell and that's kind of like the bottom line, you know, you do this and you're you know, you're worse than a murderer."

Both Rudy and Ritchie had very similar attitudes in their conclusions in their search for an understanding of who that God was for them. Rudy stated:

"The bible has been rewritten so many times, and the translations in many bibles are different. I think that God, in my viewpoint, that way I understand who God is, is that if He can create all the, everything that's here on earth, and all the universe that are out there, every single one of them, and if Adam and Eve had it made and they fell, you know, I think God can deal with homosexuality. So today, I do not feel 'as' condemned, but still wonder what will become of me when I die."

Ritchie summed it up in a similar manner, stating:

"You know, when you think of murderers that are forgiven, you know, and people that have committed like pedophiles (sic) and you know, sexual acts, crimes, you know, and God can forgive them, then I believe that God is that way, and then I can be forgiven….hopefully."

<u>Parental/Family Relationships</u>

To what extent did/does the role of the family, the expectations of the parents and the traditions of the culture play in determining how a Latino gay man identifies and lives his life? For the majority of the men in the study, deviation from what was expected came with consequences of punishment, rejection and abandonment, oftentimes leaving the participants feeling guilty, shameful, depressed and with the fear of being alone. The role of the Latino man in the majority of the cases in this study held no room for one being gay, or as Temo stated that he was referred to by his father, a "Pinche Maricón" ("Fucking Queer"). Family traditions and the expectation to carry on the family name meant marrying and bearing children, working and providing for the family and teaching the traditions and values of the culture to be followed by one's own children.

Family for the Latinos in this study encompassed following traditions, adhering to rules and roles, honoring and respecting parents, but it did not allow for disrespecting of bringing shame. Being gay, for the majority of the participants in the study, was equivalent to not only bringing shame and disrespecting the family, but living with the guilt and being ashamed of themselves for being gay. Due to this, many of the men in the study grew up with extreme fear of what their parents would do if they found out they were gay, which was a fear that followed them to their adult years. Vicente stated:

> "Me acuerdo oir a mi padre decir, que si alguno de sus hijos salía 'Maricón,' lo mataba. Mi padre era el 'Jefe' (the boss) y pobre de nosotros si le cruzamos la linea o si alguien de la comunidad se quejaba de nosotros."

> "I remember hearing my father say, if one of my children came out 'Queer,' he would kill him. My father was the 'Boss' and poor us if we crossed the line, or if someone in the community complained about us."

A similar account was described by Temo:

> "Yo siempre tenía miedo que se diera cuenta mi padre, y cuando alguien le 'chismolió' (gossiped), le dijo a mi madre que me lo qitaba a golpes. Lo trató, y casi me mata, y al fin, me mando al diablo, me sacó de la casa y se refiere de mí como 'La hija de mi madre.'"

> "I was always afraid of my father finding out, and when someone went gossiping to him, he told my mother that he would beat it out of me. He tried, and nearly killed me, and in the end, he damned me to the devil, he kicked me out of the house and he refers to me as 'My mother's daughter.'"

Juan-Carlos stated that his family is very "traditional" and a lot was expected of the men in the family. "Siendo gay he sido difícil para mi, en que

no quería traerle verguenza o culpa a mi familia en esa manera." ("Being gay

has been difficult for me, in that I did not want to bring shame or guilt to my

family in that manner"). As with many of the participants in the study, Juan-

Carlos grew-up fearing how he would be treated should his secret come out, and

what that would do to the relationships with their siblings. Juan-Carlos went on

to say:

> "Mi hermana lloró, y mi hermano vomitó. Mi hermano mayor me dió una chinga (beating), y los demás no me hablan. Eso me duele mucho, y he tenido que vivir en este país solo sin mi familia. Mi padre no me quire ver la cara, y mi madre sigue resando que cambia."

> "My sister cried, and my brother threw-up. My old brother gave me a beating, and the rest of my siblings do not talk to me. That hurts me very much, and I have had to live in this country all alone without my family. My father does not want to see my face, and my mother continues to pray that I change."

Javier has come out to one person and as far as he knows, "nadie más

sabe, especialmente ni mi familia." ("Nobody else knows, especially not my

family"). He, along with the majority of the participants in the study reported

that by keeping their sexuality a secret, their families would not have to feel

shamed, thus living with the belief that being gay is shameful and wrong. Javier

goes on to say:

> "Por tal de las costumbres tradicionales y la filosofía 'Machista' en que vive mi familia, yo estoy seguro que me rechazarían mis amigos y mi familia, y no tendran nada más que ver conmigo si se dan cuenta que soy gay."

> "Because of the traditional values and the "Machismo" philosophy that my family lives by, I am sure that my friends and my family would reject me, and that they would have nothing to do with me if they find out that I am gay."

For several of the participants, their upbringing was not as traditional as

most of the participants, however, the fear and shame they experienced came from

what they learned from others, and what they experienced later in life. For one

participant, growing up in a liberal household where alternative lifestyles were

accepted became problematic for him later in life when he moved to a more rural

part of the state where being gay, and more importantly, Latino and gay was not

accepted. Arturo stated:

> "My parents were not very traditional in there expectations of us as they
> were born and raised here, and were much acculturated. They are both
> professional educators and raised us to love all. I came out at the age of
> 21, and coming from a big city, it seemed to be more tolerated. My
> parents were happy for me as long as I was happy. However, after
> meeting my partner and moving to where he lived, I was in for somewhat
> of a huge shock. I was living in a culture that I did not quite know or
> understand and where everything, according to my partner, was about
> 'shame' and 'guilt' for being gay. It was also about having to hide our
> relationship, though we never needed to do this when we were in Los
> Angeles. Although I am proud of who I am, I had to change a lot about
> how I presented myself for his sake, and in some cases, for mine. Where I
> live now, people around me make me feel as though I should go back 'into
> the closet' and hide who I truly am. It's as though I have to be ashamed
> that I am gay and that I am a bad person if I don't."

Alejandro, who was brought up in a more traditional household, but with a

'more accepting' attitude, experienced a similar experience in regards to having to

hide his sexuality from those outside the home in order to avoid "bringing shame"

to his family. He stated:

> "My family never made a big deal about sexuality, but made it a point to
> always be supportive of what our choices were. I believe my family knew
> about me, but it was never talked about. Later, when I did come out to my
> mother, she informed me that she and the family already knew, and that

they never brought it up as to not make me uncomfortable. Because of the things that we were told in church and at school, what others would say on television and in the news…um.. um…I was afraid that my family would not be welcomed at church, or in the small community we lived in, and that something would happen to me. Yes, I was afraid to get the crap knocked out of me, as this town was full of gangsters, and it was not okay to be gay. I was more concerned that my familia would not feel ashamed of me, so I hid it for a long time.”

For several of the participants, their fear came from what they would have to deal with in regards to their relationships with their siblings. Pablo went on to explain that he not only had to hide who he was from his mother, but knowing that his brother “hated” gay people, he lived with constant fear that “something bad” would happen should he discover that his brother was a “fag.” Several of the participants expressed similar feelings stating that “losing” their entire family because of sexual preference would be the “worst” thing that could happen. Ritchie, extremely emotional, stated,

“My bros were my world. We used to do everything together, and I would do anything to protect them. I ‘thought’ they felt the same. But I found out when I eventually informed them that I was gay that this did not hold true. It was as though I was fighting a stranger on the street, or better yet, being jumped by many strangers on the street. I was normally able to take care of myself, but this was very different. I lay there, took a beating, hoping that at some point they would stop and say, ‘it’s okay, we still love you.’ However, that was 20 years ago, and when they told me that I was ‘not their brother’ any more, along with a lot many hurtful statements about bringing shame to the family, they meant it. I have not spoken to my family since that day when I left, although I have tried, I had to realize that I was alone with nobody to turn to.”

Vicente stated that being rejected by his family, afraid that he would be condemned by God and having nobody to turn to, he left Mexico and came to the

United States hoping that he would be able to start a new life in a place that was more "accepting" of homosexuality; or at least he thought it was. Several of the other participants reported coming to the United States for the same reason, however, their experiences thus far have been hindered by their fears of the same rejection experienced with their families of origin, as well as by their religion and their community. Vicente stated:

> "Yo soy el mayor de 6 hermanos, el cuall ninguno de ellos me hablan. Cuando se dió cuenta mi padre que era gay, me golpeó muy duro, mis hermanos no fueron permitidos hablarme y me sacó de la casa. Vivía en las calles, comiendo lo que me encontraba en la basura, la gente de mi pueblo no me ayudó por no faltarle el respeto a mi 'familia' y no podía ir a la iglesia porque no aceptaban a los homosexuales. No se cómo lo hice, pero me vine a los Estados Unidos, creyendo que las cosas iban a mejorar, y si se han, más de los que fueron. Pero hasta la fecha, me dá mucho miedo de dicirle a otros que soy gay por miedo de ser rechazado de vuelta. Y de cosas que oí de que han golpeado a la gente gay aquí en estas partes, me da mucho miedo de que me golpean a mi tambien….como lo hizo mi padre."

> "I am the oldest of 6 children, which none of them talks to me. When my father found out that I was gay, he beat me severely, my siblings were not permitted to talk to me, and I was kicked out of the house. I lived on the streets and ate what I could find in the trash, the people in my town would not help me in order to not disrespect my family, and I could not go to the church for help as they do not accept homosexuals. I don't know how I did it, but I came to the United States, believing that things would be better, and they have been better than they were. But up until now, I am still very afraid to tell others that I am gay for fear of being rejected all over again. And from things that I have heard about others being hurt for being gay in these parts, I am also afraid that they will hurt me as well….Just as my father did."

For many of the participants, having no family to turn to for support, love and understanding, they often turned to the community, or others like them that

would understand and be able to help them get through difficult periods of their lives. However, the results of what was reported by many of the participants led to feelings of anger, frustration and most importantly for them, feelings of fear and rejection. The experiences varied, in particular from those who came from Mexico, to those who were born and raised in the United States.

The "straight" Latino community has not been very supportive of the gay lifestyle, in particular when it comes to being openly out, as reported by Alejandro: "It's as though 'they' know who we are, we are talked about, but heaven forbid that we express ourselves in front of them."   Raul stated: "Our people are just not ready for us to come out and be open. I have heard people stating that we bring shame to our culture, and it is not right." Ritchie, in an angry manner, voiced his opinion, and stated: "Our culture is very critical of the traditions, and values that we 'should' follow, in particular, the male role. But what really pisses me off, is that we are 'bad' and not accepted in our own community, yet, those same people have children who are in gangs, kill each other, rob and hurt others, and they have the balls to get them lawyers and fight for them. Now how fair is that? Damn hypocrites."

In Mexico, the majority of the participants who came from there reported "no support" or understanding of their lifestyle, often giving them the feeling that they needed to hide who they were. "Si no se ven, no sabemos nada. Si salen y

demuestran su sexualidad, es una gran vergűenza a nuestra gente." ("If they are

not seen, we don't know anything. If they come out and exhibit their sexuality, it

is a big embarrassment to our people") stated Javier. Temo goes on to say,

"Nuestra gente no nos apoyan. Aunque somos hijos, familia de uno, o amigos de

la familia, la cosas que dicen son muy dolorosas. Es como tengo que tener

vergűenza de quien soy con la gente con que me crié, y conviví." ("Our people do

not support us. Although we are their sons, family members, or friends of the

family, the things they say are very hurtful. It is as though I have to be ashamed

of who I am with the people that I was raised with, or with who I lived with).

Making the journey to the United States has been very difficult, if not more, than

the life they were living in Mexico. For all the participants, being rejected by

their families was relived in the United States as they felt that same rejection in

several areas: (1) The Latino Community, (2) The Latino Gay Community, (3)

The Anglo Community, and (4) The Gay Anglo Community. The feeling of

rejection was experienced because of the inability to speak English, especially

when venturing out and seeking the support and acceptance for their sexuality.

Juan-Carlos stated:

> "Cuando fuí a un bar gay, eran puros gabachos. Yo no sabía cómo hablar
> Inglés y no me pude communicar con ellos. Sentí como que se estaban
> burlando de mí porque no era como ellos. No me vestí como ellos y no
> era parte del grupo, algo que he notado mucho aquí. Yo hice el esfuerzo
> de compartir, en términos de bailar, pero me ignoraban. Cuando me
> encontré con otros Mejicanos de aquí, ellos no hablan Espaňol tampoco, y
> como les daba verguenza que yo estaba allí, No se porque actuaron así,

pero eso no se sintió muy bien. No solamente me rechazaron los gabachos, pero tambien mi gente. En términos de sentirme cómodo en la comunidad, bueno pues, era como estar en Mejico. No fue muy bien para mí, en que las personas en general con quien me encontré, no aceptaban a los homosexuales y no era seguro de estar abierto de mi sexualidad. Era como no fui acceptado de nadie, tal vez, otra vez sintiéndome solo de vuelta"

"When I went to a gay bar, they were all white. I did not know how to speak English and I could not communicate with them. I felt as though they were laughing at me because I was not like them. I did not dress like them, and I was not a part of the group, something that I have noticed a lot here. I made the effort to interact with them, in terms of dancing, but they ignored me. When I did run into another Mexican from here, they did not speak Spanish either, and they acted as though they were embarrassed that I was there. I don't know why they acted that way, but that did not feel very good. Not only was I rejected by the white people, but my own people did the same. In terms of feeling safe in the community, well, it's like being in Mexico. It has not been very good for me, in general, the people that I have come into contact with, they did not accept homosexuality, and I was not safe in being open about my sexuality. It's as though I was not accepted by anyone, nevertheless, feeling alone all over again."

Similar experiences were reported by the participants coming from

Mexico, in that the rejection they experienced from their families and the

communities they came from was not much different than what they experienced

here. Vicente added, "Es como si somos una plaga que no deberíamos de existir

en el mundo de nadie. No sé, pero tal vez Dios sí nos está castigando por

viviendo nuestras vidas así." ("It's like we are the plague and that we should not

exist in anyone's world. I don't know, but perhaps God is punishing us for living

our lives in this manner"). Javier, reported: "Pensaba que de menos en este país

las cosas fueran ser un poco diferente. Pero es como nuestra raza de aquí no

comparten con los de Méjico. Los gringos, no quieren nada que tener con nosotros, especialmente si no hablamos Inglés. Nuestra comunidad Mejicana no acpetan los homosexuales. Entonces, ¿Qué nos queda?" ("I thought that at least in this country things would have been somewhat different. But it's like our own people from here do not interact with those from Mexico. The whites, they don't want anything to do with us, especially if we don't speak English. Our Mexican community does not accept homosexuals. Then, what is left for us?").

As difficult as it has been to adjust to a new world for the participants from Mexico, Latinos born in the United States share similar experiences when it comes to feeling left out in a predominant white-gay and straight community, as well as in the heterosexual Latino community. For many, the fact that one is already different in terms of characteristics (i.e., skin color, language), being gay has added another dimension to how they feel and behave in the various communities that they live in. Pablo stated:

> "I was born in Mexico, but raised here. I have been rejected by my own family, and I am afraid to come out because of the profession that I am in. I don't think that in the predominately 'white' community that I teach in, that first, my Mexican heritage is too widely accepted, and then if they found out that I was gay, then I am sure that I would run into some major problems. Even though people present as more accepting and tolerant these days, I feel that I must act and behave according to where I am. Whether it be in the education community, the gay community, the Latino community or the white community. Sometimes, I don't know who I am."

Feeling pressured to "come out" has also created some conflict for many of the participants, to where they have felt that the gay community has rejected them because they have not made the "commitment" to be out. A community which they felt they would be supportive, as well as one in which they would be validated was now recreating an environment that they have previously left, or have been forced to leave (i.e., family, home). However, for the majority of the Latinos in the study, difficulties arose between the two as a result of differences in opinions and experiences in regards to the consequences of coming out, especially to one's family. Many of the participants thus rejected the same community that they felt they should have been a part of. This also left them feeling alone and angry toward a community they felt should be united and not divided.

Childhood Trauma

What meaning do Latino Gay men place on the childhood trauma they suffered? To what extent do they "blame" themselves and their trauma on their sexuality?" And how has this conflict played a role in how the participants in this study identify?

The participants were not asked the question regarding "sexual abuse" during the interviews; however, the topic did come up during the time they told their stories. Although this information may not apply to all Latino gay men, for the participants in the study, what they endured and how it has been dealt with,

has played a major role in how they viewed themselves during their lives. The following information (Table 2) was gathered, and with the exception of one participant, sexual abuse occurred during their childhood.

Given the information provided by the participants in the study, with the exception of the one participant who did not report sexual abuse, 100% reported sexual abuse occurring during the ages 5 through 13 years old. Two of the participants reported abuse occurring at a particular age, with the remainder of the participants reporting abuse occurring over several years. Six of the participants reported abuse by multiple perpetrators, while 3 reported abuse by one perpetrator. Of the nine participants reporting sexual abuse, 60% reported the perpetrator being a priest. Five of the participants had suicidal thoughts, while 2 attempted to take their lives. Eight of the participants felt that they were at fault for being sexually abused due to being gay, while 2 were not sure. Five of the participants reported that their sexual abuse "was perhaps a factor" in the reason they "turned out gay," while 4 reported the sexual abuse not having anything to do with their sexuality.

Reporting the sexual abuse, as stated by the participants that did so, did not prove to be advantageous or positive in their cases. The consequences of "accusing" a priest or a family member were not taken lightly, which left the

Table 2

Participant Childhood Sexual Abuse

Name	Age of Abuse	Who	Reported	Reported To	Outcome	Whose Fault
Raul	7-15	Uncle and Cousin	No	N/A	Depression ; 2 Suicidal Attempts	"I guess it was mine for being gay"
Arturo	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Alejandro	7-11	Priest	No	N/A	1 Suicide Attempt	"God was punishing me"
Ritchie	10	Cousin and Priest	Yes	Mother	"Got beat for Lying"	"Mine…everything is my fault"
Vicente	8-10	Uncle and Priest	No	N/A	Daily Fear, anxiety; Thoughts of suicide	"If I wasn't gay, maybe this would not have happened."
Temo	8 and 10	Neighbor and Uncle	No	N/A	Depression and fear; Suicidal Thoughts	"I think they knew I was gay, so they took advantage."
Juan-Carlos	13-15	Priest and Family Friend	Yes	Mother	"Father beat me for lying" Suicidal	"Now I say not mine; Back then, it was mine."
Pablo	5-13	Uncle	No	N/A	Suicidal Attempt	"Not sure"
Enrique	10-12	Priest	Yes	Mother	Was sent to live with grandmother	"Mine for being gay; God punished me."
Javier	13	Neighbor and Priest	No	N/A	Fear, depression; contemplated suicide	"If I weren't gay, this would not have happened."

participants feeling as though they could not "tell the truth," "afraid that the abuse

would not stop," as well as "guilty" for causing the abuse. For many of the

participants, learning to keep quiet for fear of repercussions was carried with them

into adulthood. Keeping quiet for these participants meant safety, which was not

only a defense mechanism used during their childhood, but which was also

incorporated into their adult lives in order to avoid being hurt, ridiculed and

rejected (i.e., coming out of the closet).

Raul, who was first sexually abused at the age of 7, stated:

"I was sexually molested by a cousin for several years, and then a step-uncle. Back then, you know when you're 7, 8 and 9, clinging to somebody that's older than you and doing things are fine and feel good. Doesn't really, uh, you don't see it as being bad. And so, I had this, you know, I could, just felt like you know, it was okay. But as time went on, when you get a little older, you start to understand that, you know, that that's really not, you're not supposed to be doing those things, you know, to each other. You know. But going back to my first time, I remember him telling me that if I told anyone, I would be in trouble because he would make sure of it. He was older and I was really scared. By the time my uncle began the abuse, I was, you know, I guess, liking it? I know that sounds bad, but it is either that, or I was just used to it. Anyhow, it must have been my fault if I let it go all those years? I must have liked it to not say anything, you know? When we moved away, I felt like I was going crazy because I had not only the secret of the abuse, but I also began to develop an attraction for boys. When I was about 17, I took a bunch of pills because I could not tell anyone, so I figured that was the way to take care of it. I hated myself for letting this happen. Why didn't I tell someone, you know?"

Juan-Carlos describes his abuse in the following manner:

"Cuando tenía 13 aňos, el padre de mi iglesia me hizo cosas que un niňo no debería de pasar. El le decía a mis padres que necesitaba ayuda después de misa, o durante la semana para que tuviera que estar allí. Yo le decía a mis padres que no queria ir, pero me decían que tenia que ir. El padre, todo mundo lo queria (menos yo), me tocaba, lo tenía que tocar a él, y…y….me, bueno, tu sabes lo demás. Me da verguenza hasta decirlo. Me dijo que el sabía que me gustaban los muchachos, y que me estaba ayudando. Me amenazó, y dijo que si yo le decia a alguien, lo negaba, les decía a mis padres que era gay, que Dios me castigará. Despues de eso, un amigo de la familia me hizo lo mismo, porque el padre le dijo que me gustaban los hombres. Yo pensaba que en decirles a mis padres, que tódo iba parar. Cuando le dije a mi madre, me dío una cachetada por mentiroso. Mi padre me golpeó muy duro por mentiroso, y pobre de mí si andubiera hablando de esto con otra gente. ¿Que hacía? Nunca me olvidaré de ese día, porque el abuso siguió como un aňo y medio más. Hasta la fecha, siento que todo esto ha sido mi culpa, y es mejor quedarme callado, 'De Todo.'"

"When I was 13 years old, the priest in my church did things to me that no child should have to go through. He would tell my parents that he needed help after mass, or during the week so that I would have to be there. I would tell my parents that I did not want to go, but they told me that I had to be there. The priest, which everyone liked (except me), would touch me, I had to touch him, and, and, he, well you know the rest. I am too embarrassed to say. He told me that he knew that I liked boys, and that he was helping me. He threatened me, and said that he would deny it, he would tell my parents that I was gay, and that God would punish me. After that, a friend of the family did the same to me, because the priest had told him that I liked men. I thought that by telling my parents, that it would all stop. When I told my mother, she slapped me for being a liar. My father beat me severely for lying, and threatened me should I speak about this to other people. What could I do? I will never forget that day, because the abuse continued for about a year and a half. Today, I feel that all this has been my fault, and it is better that I keep quiet, 'About Everything.'"

Several of the other participants stated that by reporting the abuse, they

would bring shame to the family. Temo stated, "Si yo lo hubiera dicho a mi

madre que esto me pasó, le hubiera hecho daňo a mi tío. Entonces la familia me

hecharía la culpa a mí por causandole problemas a él, eso es si mi hubieran

creído." ("If I would have told my mother what happened, it would have caused

my uncle problems, that is if they believed me"). Pablo went on to add, "I did not

say anything because (1) they probably would not have believed me, (2) I

probably would have been blamed for it, and (3) most importantly, it would have

brought shame to the family. There was no way that I could do that because from

a very little age, we were taught to 'never' tell anyone what happened in the

home, and 'never' do anything that would shame the family. Accusing an uncle

of such things would have definitely brought shame to mine, as well as the rest of

the extended family."

Although it is not a fact that sexual abuse is equivalent to sexual

orientation, the participants in this study questioned themselves and their

sexuality and wondered if their abuse had anything to do with their gay identity,

or if their gay identity had anything to do with the sexual abuse. Javier stated, "Si

no fuera gay, no creo que hubiera sido abusado." ("If I were not gay, I don't

believe that I would have been abused"). Ritchie added, "Everything was my

fault, I believe that he had an idea that I liked boys, so I think that he took

advantage of that and raped me. If I had not been gay, then this probably would

not have happened." Juan-Carlos stated that he was very confused for a long time

as to why this abuse happened, and up until about 2-3 year ago his feelings were

similar. During the interview, he stated,

"Antes, yo te hubiera dicho que sí era mi culpa por ser gay. Ahora, despues de hacerme la pregunta '¿Por qué me pasó?' sin niguna respuesta que yo aceptaba, yo digo que la culpa la tuvo él….todo él….no yo." ("Before, I would have told you that yes, it was my fault for being gay. Today, after asking myself the question, 'Why did this happen to me?', and not coming up with an acceptable answer, I say it was his fault…all him…not me").

For the majority of the participants, the blame they placed on themselves led to feelings of extreme shame and guilt, thus resulting in thoughts of suicide for many of them, and actual attempts for others. When asked whether taking their lives would have taken away the shame they "believed" to have placed on the family, their responses varied. Alejandro stated,

"By taking my life, the emphasis placed on me being gay would have been secondary to me killing myself."

Pablo added,

"Since my mother kicked me out of the house and wanted nothing to do with me, I guess that by dying, it would end the shame that she said I brought to the family and she could go on living without having a gay son."

Juan-Carlos goes on to say,

"Si estubiera muerto, mi familia no se tendría que jamas apurar de que la gente fuera decir. Es como si nunca hubiera nacido." ("If I were dead, then my family would not have to worry about what people would say. It's as if I were never born").

Of the remaining participants with suicidal thoughts, the conflict between ending their lives and their religious background made it impossible for them to follow through with their thoughts. Temo stated,

"Esto es muy complicado. Sabía que no queria vivir, pero Dios no le permite a uno matarse. Y, siendo gay, bueno, estoy bien confusado. Hubiera sido más el pecado si hubiera echo algo al contrario a lo que yo aprendí." ("This is very complicated. I know that I did not want to live, but God does not permit one to commit suicide. And, being gay, well, I am very confused. It would have been more of a sin if I would have done something opposite from what I learned").

Javier added,

 "¿Qué es peor? ¿Ser gay y traerle vergűenza a la familia? O ¿Ser gay, matarme, y ir contra la palabra de Dios? No entiendo, esto es algo con que vivo todo las días." ("What is worse? Being gay and embarrassing the family? Or, Being gay, killing myself, and going against God's word? I don't understand. This is something that I live with every day").

Although many of the participants may have their negative opinions of how disappointed they are with the Catholic Church and their treatment of homosexuals, their choice to remain faithful to their religion comes from a place of traditional values and expectations placed on them by their families, their communities and their culture. The thought of breaking away from these expectations and traditions has created conflict in allowing themselves to live the lives that they would want to; a life without shame, guilt, or regrets.

Maintenance

To what extent did the participants in this study go in order to pass for "straight" in order to avoid ridicule and rejection? The expectation of the male in Latino families is to marry, have children and provide for their families. Many of the participants reported that having to be "someone they were not" as Raul stated was very difficult. "It was like I always had to remember what I said to everyone,

always careful about what I did around my family and insuring that I did what

was 'expected' of the men in the family." Enrique stated,

> "Yo tuve novias, pero siempre cambia cuando las cosas se estaban
> poniendo difíciles. Como cuando sentía que quería tener sexo. En vez de
> tener que hacer el acto, terminaba con ella. Tuve una reputación de ser
> mujeriego, bueno una cosa no tan mal. Demenos no pensaban otra cosa."
> (I had girlfriends, but I always changed them when thing started to get
> difficult. Like when I felt that she wanted to have sex. Instead of going
> through the act, I ended with them. I had a reputation for being a
> woman's man, well, I guess that is one thing that is not that bad. At least
> they did not think something else").

Raul, living with his secret since a very young age, married his "high

school sweetheart," had three children and at the age of 54, and decided to divorce

and "come clean" about who he was.

> "I went through with it because it was the thing that I had to do. There
> was no alternative back then, and I went through with it because I did not want to
> disappoint my family, along with bring them shame. I feel bad that I lived a lie
> for so many years, but that is the way it was."

Adhering to expectations, as difficult as they were, were not the only

means one used to "pass as straight." For many of the participants, participating

in certain behaviors that "put down" and "threatened" other homosexuals, in

particular, Latino gay men, was done in order to fit in and avoid the same

consequences. The feelings experienced by several of these participants were

disturbing. In the course of their development, they learned how to manage these

feelings by suppressing them and avoiding exhibiting comments or contradicting

behaviors that would have the potential to "out them." For example, Pablo stated,

"I can remember my family sitting around bad mouthing gays, calling them names, and talking about what they would do to them if they had the chance. I found myself participating in these 'talks' but hating every minute of it. I used the words "fucking faggots" many times, convincingly. You don't know how that used to get to me. I cried many times when I was alone, because in doing that, I was putting myself down. I used to get very angry inside, but I had to go along and do what they were doing."

Enrique, visibly bothered when responding to this question, stated,

"Me acuerdo cuando perseguíamos a los chavos que pensábamos que eran gay. No estoy muy contento conmigo mismo de las cosas que hice, pero…um…bueno, me siento mal por lo que hice. He vivído con gritos e imaginaciones de los golpes que les dábamos a ellos, y yo creo que por lo que hice, Dios me está castigando ahora."

"I remember when we used to chase the boys that we thought were gay. I am not very happy with myself by the things that I did, but…um…well, I feel bad for what I did. I have lived with the screams and images of the beatings that we used to give them, and I believe, that for what I did, God is punishing me today."

Several of the other participants also discussed similar events, and stated that they lived their lives in fear back then, and at times, relive that same fear today. The fear is being hurt if someone found out that they were gay. Arturo stated,

"Siempre tenía miedo de que mis mismos amigos se dieran cuenta que yo tambien era gay. Miedo de que me pasaria lo mismo de que yo les hacía a otros. Ahora, a veces me doy cuenta que la gente gay han sido violados en este país de adultos, y por eso escondo mi identidad verdadera. Me presento como una persona 'macha' y soy bien díscreto en las cosas que hago en términos de mi sexualidad. Yo creo que es la manera mejor para evitar problemas."

"I was always afraid of what the same friends would find out that I was gay. Afraid that the same would have happened to me that we did to

others. Today, sometimes I hear of adult gay men who have been abused, and that is why I hide my true identity. I present myself as 'macho' and I am very discrete about the things that I do, in terms of my sexuality. I believe that this is the best way in order to avoid problems."

Ritchie, raised in a very rugged environment, where all the boys in the family were involved in gangs, went along with the whole 'image' and behavior in order to avoid the harshest punishment.

"I am not very proud of this, but I remember being involved in what would be described as 'hate crimes' against gay people. If there were suspicions of a 'homie' being a 'maricon'' (faggot) and how we 'tortured' him, literally. There were times that we would go out and find them, to hurt them, always wondering what would happen if they found out about me. This is shitty, I was hurting my own people. Really sucks. But I went along with it to avoid that shit happening to me. How selfish huh? (chuckling). Now, I live with that part of me that I understand was wrong, and when I hear about it happening now, I become very angry. Even though I act differently now, I still am very careful about who knows about me and places I go."

For the majority of the participants, the manner in which they managed being gay in a family and community that disapproved of this lifestyle varied from 'pretending' to be heterosexual and marrying to engaging in activities that would suggest that one was not gay. Several participants went through extremes to present as heterosexual during family and social engagements in order to avoid being questioned. Temo remembers and laughs about it now, how he paid several women to 'act' as his girlfriend when attending functions.

"(Riéndose) Ay, cuanto dinero me hubiera ahorrado. Me acuerdo preguntándoles a varias personas y tenían miedo de hacerlo. Algien me sugerió poniendo un 'ad' en el periódico de esos en donde las personas

buscan a otras, y escribí mi situación. Recibí varias respuestas, y así es como sucedió todo esto. Las cosas que pasa uno nomás para complacer a otros."

"(Laughing) Wow, how much money I would have saved. I remember asking several people, but they were afraid to do it. Someone suggested putting an ad in one of those papers where people look for others, and I put one in explaining my situation. I received responses, and that is how all this happened. The things that one has to go through to make others happy."

Other participants reported going the total opposite direction, where all social events, family gatherings and invites to certain functions were avoided completely, thus isolating themselves in order to not have to answer questions or present themselves in certain ways. Vicente described his situation as follows,

"Siempre me la a pasado solo. Cuando me envitaban a lugares, en particular donde sé que iba ver mujeres, les decía que tenía otros compromisos. Cuando había lugares donde quería ir, pero todos iban con pareja, les decía otras excusas. Siempre he tenido excusas por no compartir con otros por miedo de que se dieran cuenta de mí. Que lástima, pero asi fue, y a veces así todavia es la cosa."

"I was always alone. When I was invited places, in particular where I knew there would be women, I always told them I had other commitments. When there were places where I wanted to go, but others were in couples, I gave them other excuses. I always had excuses for not participating with others in fear that they would find out about me. What a shame, but that is how it was, and at times still is the way it is."

For one participant, gaining and maintaining a high level of weight was the manner in which he could avoid being questioned about his sexuality. He believed that by gaining weight, he would be unattractive and not wanted by another, thus avoiding acting on his impulses. Alejandro stated,

"I gained over 400 lbs in order to make myself as unattractive and 'gross' as possible. I felt that if nobody wanted to be with a 'fat' person, after all one has to be 'thin' in this gay life to be paid attention to, then I would not go out with guys, and my sexuality would not be questioned. I maintained that weight for the majority of my life, and I actually felt good about being big. It took the focus off me being gay. However, when I was about 30, men began to hit on me, which was a scary thought. What I found out was that there are men who like men like me; "big and furry" which really was confusing. Is there room for big people in this very skinny gay world? (said sarcastically) This is how I have managed to avoid all the questions and hype about my sexuality, but it was not easy. All my life, I did not have to live with being called a 'faggot', 'queer', 'joto', well you get the picture, but I did have to live with being called a 'fat tub of lard', 'a cow', and stuff like that. Very hurtful. Would I have changed things? I don't know, either way, life would have been filled with some kind of hurtful things said about me."

For the participants in this study, learning to pass a what was expected of them as 'men' was not an easy task, and often involved feelings of hurt, deceit, anger and in some cases, behaviors which included assault and inflicting pain on others. If having to pass as a 'straight' man within the family environment was not difficult and painful enough, learning to pass "convincingly" within the straight Latino community, as well as the Anglo community was an additional stressor in living one's life as a gay Latino man.

Discussion and Implications

A Model of Familial, Gender and Religious Expectations Influencing A Latino Gay Man's Identity

Based on the results of the interviews, a model (Figure 1) was constructed which provides a framework with which to conceptualize the familial and community expectations that shape and impact the lives of Latino gay men. It is

entitled *A Model of Family, Gender and Religious Expectations Influencing A Latino Gay Man's Identity.* The model's trajectory moves from bottom to top, is developmental and occurs over time. What has been experienced by the participants in regards to these expectations affect and can be experienced in any or all of the categories.

This researcher believes that how Latino men identified was strongly influenced by three key factors and/or expectations: (1) Familial/Cultural; (2) Gender; and (3) Religion. Familial and cultural expectations were those that the family and the culture placed on upon Latino gay men. Several of the participants indicated that they desired peace and harmony within the family, and in those instances refused to confront the familial silence. For example, in one instance, although the participant's parents knew he was gay, they insisted and attempted to force him to get married, which in their eyes would have "cured" him of this. This attempt of marriage was a strategy used to silence and cover-up their son's homosexuality. In another instance, the manner in which the son's homosexuality was dealt with was to send him to live with his grandmother; another way to silence or cover up his homosexuality. For several of the other participants, the respect they had for the family meant silencing oneself and avoiding bringing additional shame and embarrassment, even though they were being rejected by them. According to Morales (1990), the family either accepted the family member or rejected him/her. In some instances, the family member was accepted,

but the issue of homosexuality was not openly discussed within the family. These

participants struggled with the need to acknowledge their homosexuality, yet

remain loyal to the family, which created more of a struggle for them.

The thought of completely turning their backs on their families carried

consequences such a lack of emotional support and an increase in isolation, guilt

and loneliness. Many of the participants carried with them the shame, humiliation

and hurt they experienced within their families, as well as in their communities.

Being called a 'maricon', referenced to as female ("hija de tu madre"-"your

mother's daughter) and in numerous occasions suffering physical abuse, many of

the respondents bore the scars of this verbal and physical abuse. If the family's

attempt to silence or contain the son's homosexuality failed, alternative measures

resulted in the participants experiencing rejection, alienation and estrangement

from the family. Any attempts to confront the participant's homosexuality were

met with resistance and silence rather than with acknowledgement and
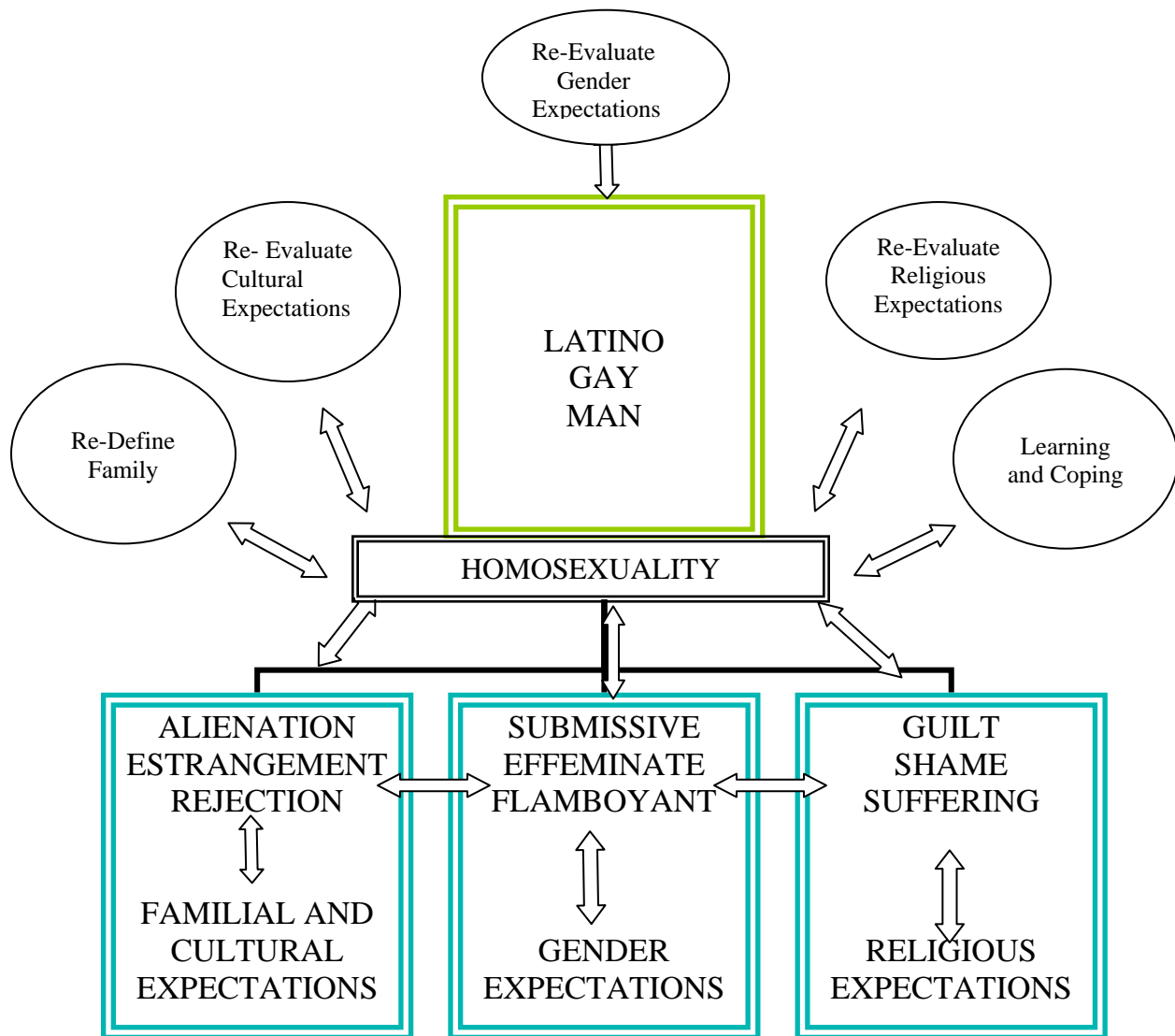
acceptance.

Gender expectations for Latino men delineated clear roles, which did not

include homosexuality. To be gay meant deviating from what was expected of

them, which resulted in being compared to being women, flamboyant and in some

instances "perverted." According to Carrier (1995), keeping a Latino gay man's

family ignorant of their homosexuality was because it was thought of as a

stigmatizing behavior.   Latino men were expected to be aggressive and masculine, not submissive and effeminate. To be Latino and gay meant one was exhibiting flamboyant behavior which was criticized and shunned by the community, which then resulted in bringing shame to the family name. For Latino gay men, these comparisons to women played a major role for them in terms of how they perceived themselves and what they believed and engaged in sexually. According to Carrier (1995), the passive homosexual man is as being less than a man, which is a role (passive) that is high stigmatized by Latinos. To

be "macho" and 'masculine" meant one would need to be in the inserter role.

However, should one enjoy the more passive and receiving role, then those comparisons must hold true and would lead to identification with the female role, creating additional confusion about "having" to take on the role of being effeminate and submissive. According to Rodriguez (1991), the family initiated and monitored gender role socialization, where they provided the standards and norms of masculinity, where the men were taught appropriate and inappropriate behaviors for a boy. Any deviation from these norms was severely sanctioned by family members.

Figure 1

A Model of Family, Gender and Religious Expectations

Influencing A Latino Gay Man's Identity

Religious expectations placed a high value on family, marriage and procreation. The participants in this study felt oppressed and marginalized by the Roman Catholic Church (as all reported being Catholic) for the manner in which a Latino gay man was made to feel guilty and shameful, as well as unwelcome in the house of God. The feeling of "being a bad person" was equivalent for many of the participants to living a life of suffering. In several instances, as reported by the participants, the expectation of the Latino in terms of culture and religion was to live by "God's word" or "suffer an eternity." Regardless of how discontent they may have been or currently are with the church, what was/is expected held precedence over what one felt was "wrong" or "unjust." This conflict was clearly visible for several of the participants who experienced and endured sexual abuse by their priests. The philosophy of guilt and suffering was viewed as unnecessary, but it was the manner in which the church used it in order to instill this guilt and suffering in their lives. According to Morales (1995), the Catholic Church's strong influence on Latin American countries contributes to a very strong anti-homosexual bias, viewing homosexuality as a sin against God.

The proposed model thus far has described the negative effects and experiences the Latino gay men in this study reported. This researcher believes that given the information provided, under different circumstances and in new environments, Latino gay men are able to achieve positive outcomes. One of these positive outcomes could be re-defining family, which would include

interacting and adding positive gay persons to the Latino gay man's support system. With the high rates of rejection experienced in the Latino gay man's life by the family or origin, it would be beneficial in order to increase self-esteem, positive experiences and support. It is a well-know and documented fact that Latinos have placed a high value on family life and the interpersonal relationships among family members. The importance of family relationships and involvement does not just occur during certain periods of one's life, but rather throughout the lifetime. For Latino homosexuals, familismo can represent something other than that when the families view gay individual as sinful, immoral, and shameful. According to Ceballo-Capataine (1990), as cited in Diaz (1998), the strong ties within the Latino families, and the major role that families play in the care and support of Latino individuals, can become (an usually is) a major source of conflict and tension for homosexual.

To avoid this conflict, tension and shame, those who have come out to their families and have been rejected and "disowned," as many of the participants in this study were to seek out individuals that are supportive, where there is a sense of community affiliation and an affirmation of identity may be one manner in which the individual would be able to redefine what family is for them. For Latinos, what matters is to receive support from a family of choice (outside of their family of origin) to acknowledge, accept and value the person for who they are.

Another positive outcome could be re-evaluating expectations of the cultural and gender expectations. According to Morales (1990), Hispanic gay and bisexual men experience many psychosocial stressors such as conflict between their sexual orientation and their cultural roots, which values family and marriage. Over the last few decades, families have witnessed a dramatically changing world. Advances in technology, health and other realms have allowed them more opportunities and choices than ever before (Sanchez, 2001, as cited in Smith and Montilla, 2006). Latino and other minority families experience the same shifts and according to Vega (1995), as cited in Smith and Montilla (2006), they will have a significant impact on the efficiency of family-based socialization and the redefinition of Latino familismo. Latino gay men who have had to live and deal with the implications of "machismo", the expectations of the male role in Latino family and how they are perceived to be less of a man due to their homosexuality, may at some point in their lives be able to experience a similar shift. Machismo remains a strong influence in the lives of Latino men and according to Carrier (1976), boys and men are strongly encouraged to engage in acts of brashness which are introduced at an early age. Latino gay men feel the pressure to conform to this unrealistic ideal of masculinity. Re-evaluating and re-defining these expectations may assist Latino gay men in accomplishing a shift within their newly identified families and moving toward living healthier, happier and prouder of the person they are.

For the majority of the men in this study, seeking help or looking for someone with whom to discuss their private lives is not something that is typically practiced in the Latino culture, in particular when it involves homosexuality. Latinos in general were taught and/or instructed to seek the guidance of a priest, or an extended family member, and under no circumstances should one talk to "strangers" about their problems. However, with the rejection a Latino gay man experienced by the church, as well as from family members, knowing where to turn could be problematic. Assisting Latino men in seeking services where they would not feel threatened, rejected or judged, rather accepted, validated and safe would assist them with learning coping skills and establishing support systems that would help them deal with the homophobia found in the family, the community and the church. For many of the participants in the study, not having access to any type of services, whether it is due to fear, traditional or lack of knowledge, typically led to depression, anxiety and social phobia. According to Zea, Reisen and Poppen (1999), positive identification with a social group can act to protect individuals from depression and from low self-esteem, and receiving social support from others will have a positive impact on the psychological well-being of Latino gay men and lesbians.

Summary of Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the identity development process for a sample of Latino gay men, as well as to investigate and examine their perceptions of their process in defining self as gay and Latino.

The findings of this study indicated that the expectations placed on Latino gay men by the family, the culture, their community in terms of gender, in the majority of the cases, negatively impacted their relationships with their family of origin. In the majority of the cases, the negative outcomes based on these expectations contributed to the shame, guilt and suffering experienced by this group of men, which contributed to high rates of depression, isolation and thoughts of suicide. The negative outcomes may have also contributed to several of the participants participating in attempting suicide.

Limitations of the Study

While the narratives of the men in this study reveal much about the lived experiences of ten Latino gay men living in rural and suburban areas of several major American cities, it is important to remember that the goal of qualitative research is not to form generalizations. Rather, the findings of qualitative research are considered in the context of transferability of concepts. Also, the findings of this particular study may indeed have relevance to similar populations. However, there were several aspects of the study protocol that may be viewed as limitations.

The age of the men in the study was between 29 and 54 years of age; the mean age of the study participant was 39 years of age. Therefore, one limitation of the study is that it did not include men younger than those of this age range. For this study, this researcher sought approximately 15-18 Latino gay men who were over the age of 18. Although approximately 40 separate appointments were made to conduct interviews, this researcher struggled to obtain to 10 participants for this study.

Study participants were sought through various means, such as placing fliers in specific areas where Latino gay men would visit, via the internet, as well as by word of mouth through the assistance of several assistants this researcher acquired. The potential participants were instructed to contact this researcher to explain the study and arrange to meet to conduct the interview. Numerous appointments were made with specific locations chosen by the participants in order to protect their identity; however, they did not show. Numerous appointments were made, and on the day of the interview, they called to cancel and chose to not re-schedule. On several occasions, the potential participants chose to attend, however, decided at the last minute to not follow through with it.

There may have also been some effect due to the fact that the researcher is a Latino male seeking to understand the lived experience of a Latino gay male. Although none of the men in the study acknowledged that there were any

gender/cultural based effect or response because of being interviewed by a Latino male, this may reasonably be viewed as a potential limitation of the study.

Implications

This study provides a model that can assist other clinicians working with Latino gay male population to understand how they identify, as well as to understand the multiple worlds they live in.

This study will assist clinicians in understanding how familial/cultural; gender and religious expectations create multiple challenges for Latino gay men. These three concepts are dynamic and mutually influence one another and provide a context for life-long growth in the development of the Latino gay man. The lack of support by the family, the marginalization by both the culture and their religion adversely affect the well-being of the Latino gay man.

As clinicians, one would need to assess the degree of familial support and involvement in the life of the client. The degree of involvement would assist the clinician in implementing strategies and skills (e.g., empathy, validation) that would allow the client to discuss how the support or lack of it has impacted their growth and their life. For example, given the idea that a Latino male's character encompasses machismo, if the family is involved, do they consider him a

"failure" due to not meeting that expectation because of his sexuality? Has this failure impacted the client's self-esteem and self-worth?

If the Latino gay male has a non-supportive family which refuses to have anything to do with their son, clinicians would be able to address how he manages his stress, depression and isolation, as well as to assess whether he is at risk for suicide.

Another area of exploration and assessment is the degree of comfort the Latino gay male has with expressing his preferred sexuality within the context of the Latino and mainstream communities. If he has experienced ridicule in these communities in the past, the clinician would be able to assist the Latino gay male to identify a group of individuals he would be able to discuss his feelings with, as well as to assist in enhancing the Latino gay man's self-esteem and coping strategies.

When exploring the relationship between the Latino gay man and the dominant gay community, as well as the Latino gay community, the clinician could ask about their involvement in each one. Does the Latino gay man feel comfortable with one particular group? Is he involved in any activities with either group? Has the client felt uncomfortable or dealt with any negative experiences with any of these groups which would add to his isolation and recurring feelings of rejection?

The clinician could also explore the relationship between the Latino man's religious experiences and assess the level of discomfort, rejection and shame experienced as a result of their sexual preference and the message he received from the church. It would also assist the clinician in assessing how his experience with the church has impacted his relationship with his family, as well as how suffering is interpreted and played out in his life.

Clinicians could also explore childhood sexual abuse, as the majority of the participants in this study reported being abused as children. A thorough assessment would assist the clinician in understanding how this abuse has affected the client's negative self-image and belief that the he is "bad", "deserves" the abuse and is being "punished by God" for being gay. Understanding how the client portrays himself in relation to his family and culture may assist in providing culturally sensitive treatment.

The model (Figure 1) developed from this study could serve as a basis for understanding the Latino community's beliefs and practices about homosexuality and could potentially allow the clinician to apply appropriate strategies and coping mechanisms. The information gathered for this study indicates that the Latino gay man who has been rejected or marginalized by his family, culture and religion tends to exhibit higher levels of isolation, depression and suicidal ideation and tendencies. Providing culturally sensitive, as well as competent clinical

services could assist clinicians in reducing the risk of depression, isolation and suicide. The hope is that this study will provide a broader base for understanding and serving Latino gay men and the many complicated issues they face.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study did not only pose as rewarding and informational for this investigator, but more importantly it gave me a better understanding of what future research would be needed in order to gain a more in depth understanding of what it means, in terms if identity development, to be a being a proud Latino man, who happens to be gay.

This study included 10 very brave individuals that were able to commit and follow through with the interview. However, further research on what keeps Latino gay men from telling their stories or participating in studies such as these would assist the researcher in understanding why there is such a high rate of cancellations or no-shows and participation in other areas, such as clinical services.

Further research on loyalty to the family and religion and the implications it holds for the development of Latino gay men, in understanding why participants continued to be devoted to their religion, even after enduring sexual abuse by the priests. What about the childhood religious upbringing discourages Latino gay

men from living a life they desire for fears of sinning, although they fear the very same individuals who committed sin against them? And how has this been influential in their decision to remain quiet about their abuse, as well as their sexuality?

What about the Latino culture makes it more difficult to "come out" than it appears to be in the Anglo culture?   The majority of the participants in this study "struggled" with the idea of coming out, but made reference to their Anglo counterparts, where coming out held less consequences for them. Further research on what determines when, how and why individuals decide to come out in the Latino culture, as well as in other cultures may assist clinicians and other individuals understand and respect one's individual choice. Oftentimes, mental health professionals, one may be very naïve about the cultural aspects of homosexuality and tend to compare and generalize how "easy" it is to come out, or "why" it should matter and put pressure on clients to come out, never bothering to see the consequences it may hold for that person. Understanding the Latino culture may assist those individuals from making generalizations or assumptions about how easy it can be to come out and be gay.

The stories told by the participants in this study were very painful for them to tell, as they were for me to hear. Although this is not indicative of every Latino gay man, understanding and being sensitive to this unspoken pain may be an area

for further research. How many other Latino gay men have suffered the same pain, rejection, sexual abuse, isolation, depression or suicide? And more importantly, can further research in understanding the Latino gay man prevent others from having to endure future pain and suffering? Although this study discovered sexual abuse in the home, as well as in the church, it is not indicative that all Latino gay men endure the same abuse. However, future research would assist mental health professionals in determining if there is a correlation between being a Latino gay man and sexual abuse.

Literature on sexual identity formation and the intersections of identities has grown in recent years; however, suggestions to continue exploring the multiple dimensions of an individual's identity may assist in understanding ethnic and sexual identity of individuals who possess the two characteristics.

Finally, further exploration on how clinicians can best assist Latino gay men in dealing with the rejection, shame, abandonment and loneliness would be extremely beneficial. For the participants in this study, it appears that regardless of how far they believe to have come in their lives, and no matter how much better they felt about themselves, the influence of the Latino familia, culture and religion created continuous conflict for them as Latino, male and gay.

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APPENDIX A

February, 2008

Dear Research Participants:

My name is Manuel Montoya Tajon, and I am a doctoral student in Clinical Psychology at Antioch University in Santa Barbara, California. To fulfill the requirements for my degree, I am conducting research on identity development and maintenance for gay Latino men. Specifically, I am interested in your thoughts, feelings and perceptions of how you developed your identity as a gay Latino man.

The interview should last between 45 to 90 minutes. For the purpose of maintaining accurate research information, the interview will be tape recorded and I will personally transcribe the interview afterwards. You will be asked to choose a fictitious name (example: Pedro Infante) with which your name will be replaced, and only I will have knowledge of your real name. The original form with your information will be secured in a locked box, within a locking file cabinet, which only I will have access to. Quotes and excerpts of the interview may be a part of the final research report, but under no circumstances will identifying information or names be included. Code names will be placed on all audio cassettes and information forms, and only I will have access to this information. I will ensure that the cassette tapes will be erased once I complete the final write-up of the study, and the transcripts will be saved with only the code name available.

I would be glad to share with you the transcript of the interview when it is completed so you can make sure that I understood what you said and to have the information corrected.

Your participation in this study is purely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. If any questions during the interview cause you anxiety or discomfort, please feel free to decline to answer the questions. There is no reward for participating in this study, and no penalty for withdrawing.

I sincerely appreciate your participation in this study. It is my hope that your participation in this study will contribute to assisting myself, as well as others, in learning and understanding the identity development of gay Latino men. If you are interested in participating in this study, or have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (805) 878-5116 or e-mail me with your name and contact number at kuuipo62@verizon.net . Thank you very much.

Respectfully,

Manuel M. Tajon, M.A.
Doctoral Student, Clinical Psychology

It would be greatly appreciated if you could sign this form in acknowledgment that you have read and understand the intentions and procedures of this study. By signing this form, you allow the investigator to audio tape the interview and acknowledge your willingness to participate.

Printed Name   _____   Fictitious Name: _____

Signature   _____   Date: _____

APPENDIX A

Enero, 2008

Queridos Participantes:

Mi nombre es Manuel M. Tajon, y soy un estudiante siguiendo mi doctorado en psicologia en la Universidad de Antioch en Santa Barbara, Ca. Para cumplir con los requisitos de mi doctorado, estoy escribiendo mi tesis sobre el desarollo de la identidad de los hombres Latinos homosexuals. Especificamente, estoy interesado en sus pensamientos, sentimientos, y percepciones sobre su desarollo de identidad como un hombre Latino y homosexual.

La entrevista durara entre 45 y 90 minutos. Para mantener informacion exacta, la entrevista sera grabada y yo lo transcribirale despues. Toda la informacion sera confidencial. Ud. escojara un nombre falso (ejemplo: Pedro Infante) que tomara el lugar de su nombre y yo sera la unica persona que sabra su nombre. La forma original sera puesta en una caja con candado y enserada en un gabinete con candado que nomas yo tendra accesso. Es possible que dichos directos sean escritos en el reporte final, pero informacion personal y el nombre de la persona no aparecera. Codigos de nombre tomaran el lugar de los nombres en las grabaciones, y aparte de mi, nadie tendra accesso a esta informacion. Yo les asegurare que las grabaciones seran destruidas al terminar la investigacion. Yo guardare la transcripcion de la entrevista solamente con el codigo de nombre especial.

Seria un gusto compartir con usted la transcripcion de la entrevista para asegurar que yo comprendi lo que usted me ha dicho y para hacer los cambios necesarios.

Su participacion en esta investigacion es solamente voluntaria, y puede retirarse al cualquier momento. Si las preguntas durante la entrevista le causa ansiedad, no tiene que contester la pregunta. No hay gratificacion por participar en esta investigacion, ni pena por retirarse.

Le agradezco sinceramente su participacion en esta investigacion. Es mi deseo que, para mi tal vez a como a otras personas, su participacion contibuyan a los conocimientos del desarollo de la identidad de los hombres homosexuals Latinos. Si usted esta interesado en esta investigacion, o si tiene preguntas, for favor hable a mi telefono (805) 878-5116 o deje su nombre y numero de contacto a kuuipo62@verizon.net Muchas gracias.

Con Respeto,

Manuel M. Tajon, M.A.
Estudiante para el Doctorado de Psicologia

Sera agradecido si usted firme esta hoja para mostrar que usted ha leido y comprende la intencion y el processo de esta investicion. En firmar esta oja, usted le da permiso al investigado de grabar la entrevista y que esta de acuerdo de participar.

Nombre _____ Nombre Falso _____

Firma _____ Fecha_____

APPENDIX B

The following information is being collected to accurately describe the individual characteristics of each participant in this study. Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

NAME_____   DATE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

                            _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____

CODE NAME: _____

The above information will be detached immediately following the interview and placed in a secure location. Your name and personal identifying information will be kept confidential. Data collected will be recognized only by the code name you chose.

_____

CODE NAME: _____

1.   AGE: _____

2.   WHAT GENERATION OF MEXICAN ANCESTRY ARE YOU (e.g., First generation means you were born in Mexico; Second generation means that one or both of your parents were born in Mexico and you were born in the United States., etc.)?

        _____

3.   WHAT IS YOUR BIRTH ORDER (e.g., First of five children; Third of four children, etc.):

        _____

4.   WHAT WAS THE PRIMARY LANGUAGE SPOKEN IN YOUR HOME
        WHILE GROWING UP?

_____ Spanish
_____ English
_____ Other (Please Specify): _____

5.   CURRENT RELIGIOUS AFILIATION:

_____ Catholic   _____ Jewish
_____ Protestant   _____ None
_____ Other (Please Specify): _____

6.   PARENT'S RELIGION:

_____ Catholic   _____ Jewish
_____ Protestant   _____ None
_____ Other (Please Specify): _____

7.   YOUR HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION:

_____ Grade School   _____ College Graduate
_____ High School   _____ Master's Degree
_____ Some College   _____ Ph.D., or other advanced degree

8.   YOUR MOTHER'S HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION:

_____ Grade School   _____ College Graduate
_____ High School   _____ Master's Degree
_____ Some College   _____ Ph.D., or other advanced degree

9.   YOUR FATHER'S HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION:

_____ Grade School   _____ College Graduate
_____ High School   _____ Master's Degree
_____ Some College   _____ Ph.D., or other advanced degree

10.   WHAT KIND OF WORK DO YOU DO?

_____

11.   DID YOU MOVE TO THE UNITED STATES FROM ANOTHER COUNTRY?:

_____Yes   _____No   From what country: _____

12:     AVERAGE FAMILY INCOME:

_____ Below - $4,999	_____ $15,000 - $24,999	
_____ $5,000 - $9,999	_____ $25,000 - $34,999	
_____ $9,999 - $14,999	_____ $35,000 and above	

13.   ARE YOU CURRENTLY DATING?

_____ Yes   _____ No

14.   IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY DATING, DO YOU DATE MOSTLY:

_____ Latino (English speaking men)
_____ Latino (Spanish speaking men)
_____ Latino (Bilingual men)
_____ Anglo men
_____ Other (Please specify): _____

15.   DO YOU ALSO DATE WOMEN?

_____ Yes
_____ No

16.   HAVE YOU EVER BEEN MARRIED TO A WOMAN?

_____ Yes
_____ No

17.   ARE YOU CURRENTLY IN A RELATIONSHIP?:

_____ Yes   _____ No

18.   IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY IN A RELATIONSHIP, WHAT IS THE ETHNICITY OF YOUR PARTNER?:

_____ Latino   _____ African American
_____ Asian   _____ Native American
_____ Caucasian   _____ Other (Please Specify): _____

19.   ARE YOU OUT TO YOUR:

FAMILY: __ Yes __ No   ___ None ___ Some ___ All or Almost All
FRIENDS: __ Yes __ No   ___ None ___ Some ___ All or Almost All
WORK: __ Yes __ No   ___ None ___ Some ___ All or Almost All

20.   AT WHAT AGE DID YOU FIRST COME OUT?:

_____

21.   WHO DID YOU FIRST COME OUT TO:

_____ Sister
_____ Brother
_____ Mother
_____ Father
_____ Male Friend
_____ Female Friend
_____ Other (Please Specify): _____

Thank you for your cooperation.

APPENDIX C

January, 2008

Dear Participant:

      As promised, I am sending you a copy of my preliminary conclusion based on what you told me during the interview. The next step in the process is for you to read what I have written, and provide me with your honest feedback. If what you read has been misinterpreted, please let me know. If what I wrote is not accurate with what you were trying to get across, please feel free to let me know. If what you read is accurate and represents what you were trying to get across, please let me know that as well.

(This next section will provide preliminary conclusions to the interview which will be written in paragraph form for the participants to read. As I do not have the data, this is what the form would look like when completed.)

Your input is a critical part of the study since the accuracy of the findings is determined by your feedback. I have provided an easy to complete Feedback Form for you to complete and return to me in the stamped, self-addressed envelope provided. I need to receive this form no later than _____. If you have any further concerns or questions, please feel free to call me at (805) 878-5116, or email me at: kuuipo62@verizon.net and I would be more than happy to answer any questions that you may have. Thank you for your support.

Manuel M. Tajon, M.A.
Doctoral Student, Clinical Psychology
Antioch University, Santa Barbara, CA

Detach and return bottom portion in the self-addressed envelope

_____

CODE NAME_____

_____ I have read the preliminary conclusions of the interview and agree that
they fairly represent what I told you.

_____ I have read the preliminary conclusions of the interview and feel that you
have misinterpreted a couple of points that I have made.

_____ Please check here if you would like me to call you regarding any concerns
that you may have.

Additional comments, corrections and/or suggestions:

_____

_____

_____