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“In Spite of it All”: Resilience, Sexual Identity Acceptance, and Disclosure among Black and Latina Same-sex Attracted Women

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“In Spite of it All”: Resilience, Sexual Identity Acceptance, and Disclosure among Black and Latina Same-sex Attracted Women

By

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B.A., Howard University, 2002
M.A. Emory University, 2009

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An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
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Abstract

"In Spite of it All": Resilience, Sexual Identity Acceptance, and Disclosure among Black and Latina Same-sex Attracted Women
By Monique Carry

This empirical study examined sexual identity acceptance and sexual identity disclosure among a sample of 137 Black and Latina women self-identified same-sex attracted women (BLSSAW). A transactional resilience framework was used to explore how varying levels of protective factors, self-efficacy and social support, moderated the affect of perceived discrimination on BLSSAW's adaptation to their sexual identity. This study predicted BLSSAW would perceive higher levels of discrimination compared to their heterosexual counterparts and that perceived discrimination would be negatively associated with sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. This study also predicted a positive relationship between sexual identity acceptance, disclosure, increased social support, and self-efficacy. Results partially supported the hypotheses presented. Analyses indicated BLSSAW perceive higher levels of lifetime discrimination, and identify more reasons for the discrimination compared to their heterosexual counterparts using previously collected comparative data from MIDUS national survey. Still, perceived discrimination to sexual orientation was a positive predictor of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. The majority of participants reported relatively high levels of sexual identity acceptance. Levels of sexual identity disclosure were slightly less among participants. Sexual identity acceptance and disclosure were positively associated. No significant associations were found between self-efficacy, social support, and sexual identity acceptance, overall. However, social support from broader community was positively associated with sexual identity acceptance. Additional analyses revealed higher levels of daily discrimination, perceived discrimination to one's sexual orientation, social support, and social support from broader community were positive predictors of sexual identity disclosure. Perceived discrimination to one's sexual orientation, and social support from broader community were positive predictors of sexual identity acceptance. Social support from broader community moderated the effect of perceived discrimination on sexual identity acceptance, and disclosure. Findings showed support for resilient outcomes among BLSSAW. Identifying as Christian or Protestant and having sexual relations mostly or exclusively with men were negative predictors of acceptance resilient reintegration. Social support from community, and living with significant other were positive predictors, while identifying as Christian or Protestant and having sexual relations mostly or exclusively with men were negative predictors of disclosure resilient reintegration.

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There are many more not listed here whose names and love I carry in my heart, thank you.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

This study seeks to examine how Black and Latina women vary in levels of adaptation to their sexual identity in light of perceived external adversity (or support) from their social environment. Despite a growing literature on psychiatric distress experienced among same-sex attracted individuals, theorizing and empirical research on factors, promoting *positive* mental health and well-being remain underdeveloped. This especially pertains to research on individuals who hold multiple minority statuses like Black and Latina same-sex attracted women (BLSSAW) (Bowleg, Craig, and Burkholder 2004a; Greene 1994). Notable exceptions include Bowleg et al's (2003a) research on internal resiliency characteristics, and Bowleg et al's (2004) model of active coping among Black same-sex attracted women.

Empirical research on same-sex attracted ethnic minorities shows social support and a sense of shared community with the larger lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQQ) community vary as they may feel a lack of identification to a community traditionally perceived as white and westernized (Battle and Bennett 2007; Greene 2000). In addition, identification with the LGBTQQ community may also be interpreted as a rejection of their own racial identity and ethnic community (Greene 1998; Loiacano 1989). In some cases, homophobia experienced in their own ethnic communities leave many same-sex attracted ethnic minorities with feelings of shame or the need to conceal this portion of their identity from family and friends to avoid social stigma or alienation.

Individuals who are both sexual and racial minorities experience disproportionately more negative life events as a result of living in a sexist, racist, and heterosexist environment (Brooks 1981). While LGBTQQ identified individuals are a diverse group with varying life experiences and realities, much of the research focusing on the mental health of same-sex attracted persons has focused on white, middle class males (Greene 1994; Jernewall and Zea 2004). Less is known on the experiences of same-sex attracted ethnic minorities[1]. A ten year review of research published in APA journals found only 1% of 14, 482 articles focused on LGBTQQ individuals and of that 1% only 0.04% (6 articles) focused on LGBTQQ members of color (Jernewall and Zea 2004). LGBTQQ members who have membership in other social minority groups (women, people of color, lower social economic status, and non-conforming gender identity) experience different realities that compound the negative effects of heterosexism.

Black and Latina same-sex attracted women experience adversity in the forms of heterosexism, sexism, racism, and classism to their intersecting social identities. Although researchers can assume BLSSAW experience different levels of oppression to their intersecting identities, researchers cannot assume their adaptations to these experiences are uniformly negative or positive. Bowleg et al. (2004a) found internal factors such as self-esteem, and lesbian identification among Black same-sex attracted women to increase psychological competence[2].

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[1] There are a few exceptions to this gap in the literature on same-sex attracted people of color, including the increasing attention in public health literature on the physical and psychological health of gay and bisexual males of color because of HIV/AIDS epidemic.

[2] Psychological competence, which refers to an individuals' ability to interact and function effectively with their environments (Tyler 1978), was conceptualized by Bowleg et al. (2004) as active coping to stress.

Still, less is known about how external factors such as family and ethnic community affect BLSSAW's experiences.

Background of the Problem

Minority Stress and Well-being among BLSSAW

Minority stress describes the psychosocial stress that results from being juxtaposed between minority and dominant values and the resultant conflict with the social environment experienced by minority group members (Brooks 1981; Meyer 1995). Because of their race, gender, and sexual orientation, BLSSAW are expected to suffer increased amounts of psychological stress than their heterosexual counterparts. Studies examining minority stress among same-sex attracted persons find perceived discrimination by race, gender, and sexual orientation is associated with worse mental health outcomes (Mays and Cochran 2001; Mays, Cochran, and Barnes 2007), reduced relationship quality (Balsam and Szymanski 2005; Mays and Cochran 1993), and increased incidence of domestic violence (Balsam and Szymanski 2005). Mays et al (2003) find self identified lesbian and bisexual Black women experience greater lifetime prevalence rates of psychological distress than heterosexual Black women.

The literature suggests same-sex attracted racial and ethnic minorities are vulnerable to higher levels of psychological distress; whether this stress is specifically related to their sexual identity has not been empirically tested. Moreover, little is known about the level of sexual identity acceptance or whether increased acceptance of one's sexual identity predicts higher levels of social and psychological well-being. Of the U.S. population studies on health disparities, only one (Mays, Yancey, Cochran, Weber, and Fielding 2002) included a

comparison of ethnic minority women by sexual identity. In this study, same-sex attracted Black, Latina, and Asian women were compared to their respective ethnic heterosexual counterparts on several health status indicators. Surprisingly, the data revealed few differences in self-reported chronic disease morbidity related to sexual orientation. Mays et al (2002) suggest the "absence" of findings by sexual orientation might be explained by variance in risk and protective factors among racial and ethnic minority women.

Despite facing challenges to sexual identity acceptance and disclosure because of their "triple disadvantage" as ethnic, gender, and sexual minorities, BLSSAW enact a variety of resilient strategies. These strategies include constructing more protective environments for themselves (such as seeking out resources about and for ethnic minority same-sex attracted women), in addition, directly confronting experiences of oppression (Bowleg, Craig, and Burkholder 2004a; Bowleg et al. 2003a). In light of the lack of association between chronic disease morbidity and sexual orientation (Mays et al. 2002), as well as the findings of active coping strategies among BLSSAW(Bowleg, Craig, and Burkholder 2004a; Bowleg et al. 2003a), my project sought to understand resilience in this population. The major research question I explored in this project was;

> *Under what conditions (if any) do Black and Latina, same-sex attracted women express positive adaption to their sexual identity?*

Resilience is a developmental process, where individuals exposed to higher levels of adversity still display positive adaptation despite their circumstances (Masten 1994). To answer this question I explored how varying levels of self-

efficacy and social support moderates the affect of perceived discrimination on Black and Latina women's adaptation to their sexual identity through acceptance and disclosure of their sexual identity to others.

Significance of Study

The goal of this research project was to address several gaps within the literature:

1) *Sexual Inequality*. Research examining social stratification's impact on mental and physical health has overwhelming focused on structural poverty, racism, and sexism. Research examining sexual inequality (which looks at the social disadvantage, stigma, discrimination, and violence perpetuated by or based on sexual conduct, sexual identity, or perceived sexual orientation or membership in a sexual category) and its impact on overall health and well-being has lagged significantly behind (Teunis, Herdt, and Parker 2006). The research presented here brings into focus how sexual inequality affects aspects of subjective well-being, specific to same-sex attracted women's sexual identity.

2) *Reconsidering the deficit model.* A bias exist in most of health research where the focus tends to be on presence and absence of disease and illness rather than health and well-being (Keyes and Grzywacz: 2005). This is especially true of research on ethnic same-sex attracted minorities. In a review of 22 articles on ethnic same-sex attracted minorities, most use the deficit model an approach found within the literature that focuses on the weaknesses or risk associated with assuming a same-sex attracted identity; linking the experiences of being a "multiple minority" to an increased risk for psychological morbidity (Akerlund and Cheung 2000). Much of the research looks at the experiences of being a multiple minority as a risk factor. As such, there has been a lack of attention to

the positive, or unique, strengths of being a multiple minority (Shih 2004). Research on the positive aspects of minority status has found it to be a consistent positive predictor of eudemonic[3] well-being (Ryff, Keyes, and Hughes 2003b), with Blacks reporting higher levels of eudemonic well being then Whites. In order to have a complete picture of well-being among diverse populations it is important to understand how intersecting social identities, as well as different aspects of subjective well-being result in a continuum of outcomes and experiences.

3) *Intersectionality among same-sex attracted minorities and subjective well-being*. Literature on the subjective well-being of same-sex attracted minorities overwhelmingly focuses on middle class white males (Greene 1994). Research on the subjective well-being by race traditionally has not taken intersections of gender inequality and sexual orientation into consideration (Bowleg, Craig, and Burkholder 2004a). To understand the subjective well-being of same-sex attracted ethnic minorities, research must consider how intersecting status inequalities create a variety of different experiences, understandings, and outcomes.

4) *Environmental Context*. Understanding how environmental context, (which includes aspects of the family, neighborhood, school, peer groups, and other socializing institutions) buffers or exacerbates stressors is central to many studies of resilience. Research on same-sex attracted individuals tends to focus on internal factors that mediate experiences with homophobia and heterosexism.

[3] Eudemonic well-being refers to the aspect of psychological well-being that focuses on human potential and functioning in life.

Inadequate research focuses on social well being, how individuals perception of quality of their relationships with other people, their neighborhood and community mediate outcomes (Keyes 1998). Considering same-sex attracted individuals may be marginalized in their own communities, this study examines how aspects of social well being mediate sexual identity acceptance and disclosure among BLSSAW.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter 2 provides some social context on the experiences of BLSSAW living in the United States. In the section on social context, I identify intersectionality as a framework for understanding BLSSAW identities as multiple minorities, underscoring how sexual identity inequality has received less attention. In turn, I discuss the ways ethnosexual stereotypes influence the social context for gender and sexuality in both communities. I conclude the discussion on social context by summarizing the distinct challenges BLSSAW face in developing a same-sex identity. In the second major section of Chapter 2, I outline the theoretical framework of resilience that aims to understand differential outcomes in BLSSAW's adaptation to sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. Next, I introduce how models of same-sex identity development have traditionally framed the two outcome variables of interest in this study sexual identity acceptance, and disclosure. In the final sections of Chapter 2, I discuss the literature on the main outcome variables of interest in this project, sexual identity acceptance, and disclosure. In the section on sexual identity acceptance, I assess Beron's model of sexual identity acceptance, as well, review empirical studies of predictors of positive (or negative) sexual identity acceptance. In the

final section on sexual identity disclosure, I evaluate empirical studies examining social factors that provide either opportunities or constraints in sexual identity disclosure. Finally, I discuss the debate viewing sexual identity disclosure as either internalized homophobia or as a strategic management of one's sexual identity.

Chapter 3 details the research aims, design, and methodology employed in this study. I begin by discussing why I identify Black and Latina women as an ideal "at risk" group for which to study potential resilient outcomes. Using the transactional model of resilience discussed in Chapter 2, I outline the hypothesized model used to predict sexual identity acceptance and disclosure as potentially resilient outcomes. Subsequently, I list the major research aims for the study that developed out of the literature review provided in Chapter 2. Next, I clarify the methods used to recruit BLSSAW for participation in this study and the procedures used to collect data. Included in the data collection section are details of the comprised measures of the survey instrument that participants completed for this study. In the last section of Chapter 3, I explain how I analyzed the data to address each of the research aims outlined at the beginning of the chapter.

Chapter 4, "*Complex Intersections*", looks at the experiences of discrimination among BLSSAW compared to their heterosexual counterparts using previously collected comparative data from the Midlife in the United States (MIDUS) national survey. The chapter begins with a descriptive overview of the sample's socio-demographic characteristics. I, then, investigate the reports of lifetime, daily discrimination, and discrimination specific to women's sexual

orientation. In addition, I examine what women believe are the main causes for the discrimination they perceive, as well how much they believe discrimination has impacted their ability to live productive lives.

In Chapter 5, "*Coming Out and into Her Own"*, examines levels of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure among BLSSAW. The chapter begins by providing the sample's mean scores on sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. Next, I observe the relationship between sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. Following, I examine the relationship between lifetime, daily, and discrimination specific to sexual orientation on sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. Concluding chapter 5, I examine the effect of discrimination on sexual identity acceptance and disclosure.

Chapter 6, "*Activating the Resilience Process*", I assess the relationship between discrimination, social support, and self-efficacy. This chapter addresses what relationships exist between the hypothesized predictor variables.

In Chapter 7, "*In the Balance*", I assess the relationship between women's protective factors, self-efficacy and social support, on sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. Chapter 7 concludes with a linear model used to predict sexual identity acceptance and disclosure based on the significant relationships among protective factors.

Chapter 8, "*What it Takes to Adapt*", I examine the effect of the full-hypothesized model of transactional resilience on sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. In this chapter, I assess the cumulative effect of discrimination, social support, and self-efficacy on sexual identity acceptance and disclosure.

Chapter 9, "*In Spite of it All*", evaluates the potential for resilient outcomes among BLSSAW. Using the descriptive outcome categories described in Chapter 2 (see Figure 2-2); I reveal the percentage of women failing into resilient categories for sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. As well, I identify respondents falling into resilient categories on *both* measures of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. The remainder of Chapter 9 addresses the relationship between social context and resilient outcomes. I observe the relationship between participants' socio-demographic characteristics, and sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. Last, I use logistic regression to examine if significant associations between participants' socio-demographic characteristics, and sexual identity acceptance and disclosure predict membership into resilient categories.

In the concluding chapter, Chapter 10, I review the key findings and implications of this research project. Following, I discuss the known limitations and explore unanswered questions of this study. To conclude this project, I outline directions for future research.

Definition of Terms

The following section provides working definitions of the terminology used throughout this dissertation.

BLSSAW: an abbreviation for Black and Latina[4] same-sex attracted women, the population of interest in this study. Same-Sex attracted (SSA) refers to the feelings of sexual attraction to members of the same, biological sex or gender identity and as an alternative to using labels for sexual orientation (i.e. gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc). While some individuals may be attracted to members of their same gender, this attraction may not be evident in how they choose to identify themselves by sexual orientation.

"Coming Out" (also see **Sexual Identity Disclosure**): the process of *coming into* one's new sexual identity as same-sex attracted. Coming out has been used to describe the process of developing and acknowledging a same-sex identity, as well as the process of sharing that identity with others (Gagnon and Simon 1973).

Gender Identity: both the performative roles and physical displays associated with socially defined masculine and feminine behavior. While gender identity is typically designated at birth as boy-man (masculine) or girl-woman (feminine), it is subject to some fluidity as it is continuously shaped, redefined, and enforced over time by individuals and social institutions.

[4] I use the term Black to describe the sociopolitical experiences of people of African descent who reside in the United States and I use the term Latina/ Latino, as oppose to Hispanic in this study, to describe the sociopolitical experiences of people of Latin American descent residing in the United States; recognizing there is both great overlap and diversity in terms of race, culture, and language.

Heterosexism: the system of beliefs and practices, which suppresses, denies, and penalizes any other sexuality because only sexual attraction to members of the opposite sex is natural and normal.

Homophobia: an irrational fear of same-sex behavior. The term also refers to an aversion to and prejudice against persons who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer, the traits that characterize them, their sexual practices, lifestyles and beliefs.

Identity: a set of "meanings" applied to the self in a social role or situation defining what it means to be who one is (Burke and Tully 1977). This project focuses on the experiences of women's *social identity* as racial, gendered, and same-sex attracted minorities. *Social identity* refers to a person's knowledge that she belongs to a social category of group (Hogg and Abrams 1988).

Internalized Homophobia (also see **Sexual Identity Acceptance**): a term widely used in the literature representing same-sex attracted persons' inculcation of the negative attitudes and assumptions about same-sex behavior (Sophie 1987). (Also in the literature as *Homonegativity*)

LGBTQQ: A shorthand term to describe persons who identify as members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning community.

Minority Stress: the psychosocial stress associated with being juxtaposed between minority and dominant values and the resultant conflict with the social environment experienced by minority group members (Brooks 1981; Meyer 1995).

Resilience: the developmental process, where individuals exposed to higher levels of adversity still display positive adaptation despite their circumstances (Masten 1994).

Self Efficacy: the sense of competence one gains from successful accomplishment of previous difficult task attainments (Bandura 1997).

Sexual-Gender Identity: different from gender identity (i.e. man, woman, transgender) refers to gendered roles and identities taken among some same-sex attracted women, examples include stud, femme, tomboy, etc, which are often use to distinguish or classify dress, behavior, sexual roles, and/or relationship roles; sometimes referred to as *Gender Presentation* (see Moore (2006)).

Sexual Identity Acceptance (also see **Internalized Homophobia**): the degree to which an individual has rejected negative messages, stereotypes, beliefs and assumptions about one's same-sex identity.

Sexual Identity Development: the developmental process of adopting a sexual identity into one's current identity.

Sexual Identity Disclosure (also see **Coming Out**): recognizing one's emotional and sexual attraction to members of the same-sex and disclosing it to others.

Sexual Orientation: a person's erotic and affectional identity, behavior, fantasies, relationships (including relationship status), and emotional attachments which can change over time (Garnets and Kimmel 1993). While the term traditionally emphasizes the sexual component of interpersonal relationships, in reality any sexual orientation involves a wide range of feelings, behaviors, experiences, and commitments.

Chapter 2 Resilience, Sexual Identity Acceptance and Disclosure among BLSSAW

Black and Latina same-sex attracted women (BLSSAW) construct their identities as same-sex attracted ethnic minority women while processing discourses of “good” and “bad” sexuality within and outside of their own racial and ethnic communities. Erikson (1968) emphasizes the dual nature of identity, where the development of an individual identity is completed within the identity of a given culture or sub culture; “Identity is 'all-pervasive' . . . for . . . we deal with a process 'located' in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture" (p.22). A same-sex attracted identity goes against both mainstream and culturally prescribed gender and sexuality roles (Butler 1996). Understanding the cultural context in which many BLSSAW are situated is imperative to understanding how these women develop their sexual identities. This includes understanding how women internalize or reject the negative messages surrounding their sexual identity and then choose to negotiate the disclosure of their sexual identity to those around them.

To study resilience investigators must specify the “at risk group,” the criteria by which adaptation is to be judged successful, and the features of the individual or the environment that may explain resilient outcomes (Masten 1994). Accordingly, this chapter includes five major sections. The first section provides the socio-cultural context for the “at risk group,” Black, and Latina same-sex attracted women. In the proceeding section, I introduce and explain Kumpfer’s model of transactional resilience, which organizes the result chapters of this dissertation. Using the model, I discuss potential features in BLSSAW

environment that may explain resilient outcomes. I will then review the literature on sexual identity development, the organizing aspect of identity this project focuses on. In the last two sections of Chapter 2, I review the literature on the two major adaption outcomes of interest, sexual identity acceptance, and sexual identity disclosure.

The Social Context of BLSSAW

Recognizing the historical, cultural, and structural context within which BLSSAW live is essential for understanding how they negotiate their identity. Blacks and Latinos represent the two largest ethnic minority groups in the United States, compromising almost one fourth of the population (Census 2000). As members of these groups, Black, and Latina women share commonalties such as a shared history of ethnic racial discrimination, but also have unique legacies and challenges associated with slavery, racial segregation, colonization, and immigration. Different points of entry into the United States affected Black and Latina women's economic positioning (Aldridge 2008; Browne 1999a; McCall 2001).

Economic necessity in both cultures has traditionally forced women to work outside of their homes (Clark-Lewis 1996; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001a; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001b). Challenges from industrial restructuring, concentrated poverty, discrimination, and lower wages have left many Black and Latina women disproportionately represented in the lower socioeconomic class (Bound and Dresser 1999; Browne 1999b; Browne and Misra 2003; Cintron-Velez 1999; Rodriquez, Saenz, and Menjivar 2007). Despite commonly held beliefs that gays and lesbians are financially well off, Black and Latina female

same-sex couples report incomes that are 40% and 35%, respectively, below their white same-sex couples counterparts (Cianciotto 2005; Dang and Frazer 2004).

In addition to economic challenges, Black and Latina women negotiate understandings of acceptable femininity between their own ethnic and racial communities, as well as the sometimes-conflicting ideals of mainstream western society. By openly identifying as a same-sex attracted person, Black and Latina women also, traverse difficult terrain of rigidly enforced standards of heterosexuality in both communities.

Race, gender, class and sexuality are major axes of power for the structuring of relationships in society (Connell 1987; 2005). Each major axis of power informs social group relations as well as interpersonal relations within and across social groups. Group based hierarchies can exist by gender (men more dominate then women), race (whites more dominate over ethnic minorities), class (upper more dominate over lower), sexual orientation (heterosexual more dominate over non-heterosexual), and so on. Examining race or gender alone creates "intersectional invisibility" where individuals with multiple subordinate group identities (e.g. ethnic minority women) are rendered invisible in analysis (Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach 2008). Intersectional invisibility takes place in multiple arenas including, but not limited to, research, policy, and social discourses. Black and Latina same-sex attracted women's structural position as ethnic, racial, gender, sexual, and often time economic minorities create a complex milieu of ideologies that affect attitudes and perceptions around their intersecting identities.

Intersectionality as a framework for understanding BLSSAW's identity

The intersectional approach found in feminist literature provides the most comprehensive framework for understanding the experiences of BLSSAW. Intersectionality provides a framework for examining how markers of difference (i.e. gender, race, sexuality) posses meaning in a hierarchal society that places values or privileges to each of these attributions and their relationship to power. The term "double jeopardy" or "multiple jeopardy" was first used to describe experiences of oppression among women belonging to multiple subordinate groups (Beale 1979; King 1988). The language suggest experiences with identity-specific oppression is additive and thereby increase the level of discrimination and oppression.

Critiques of this approach argue that individuals with identities situated in multiple marginalized groups experience their identities holistically, thus experiences with oppression may not be cumulative (Collins 2000a; Crenshaw 1995; West and Fenstermaker 1995). This insight is mirrored in empirical studies where ethnic same-sex attracted minorities refused, expressed reluctance, or suggested their identities were "inseparable" in response to being asked to "rank identities" in order of importance (Battle, Cohen, Warren, Fergerson, and Audam 2002; Bowleg 2008). Collins (2000) argues that interconnections among various forms of oppression, *the matrix of oppression*, show how even negative ascriptions may be the source of people's resistance. Although the experiences of oppression faced by ethnic and racial same-sex attracted minorities fit well within in intersectional framework, several scholars note these specific experiences

receive less attention within the literature (hooks 1984; Lorde 1984; Moraga and Anzaldua 1981; Smith, Scott, and Hull 1982; Smith and Smith 1981).

Ethnosexual Stereotypes of Black and Latina women

Joan Nagel uses the term *ethnosexual stereotypes* as the sexual component of political rhetoric used to put ethnic others in subordinate positions, creating positive views of one's own group as opposed to other groups as deviant or problematic (Nagel 2000; 2001). For example, Collins (2000) shows how Black women have been historically placed in stereotypical roles such as the asexual Mammy, the promiscuous Jezebel, the welfare queen, and the Sapphire, the emasculating view of the dominant overbearing (unfeminine) Black female (Collins 2000b).

Some parallel stereotypes exist among Latinas in mainstream society. One example comparable to the Jezebel is the "spicy" Latina, who is promiscuous and sexually available (Merskin 2007). Similar to the welfare queen, the stereotype of the immigrant mother exists, presumably with a lot of children, who is draining the welfare system (Gonzalez-Lopez and Vidal-Ortiz 2007). Like Mammy, the Latina maid or domestic is seen as asexual and non-threatening (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001a; Toro-Morn 2007). Within each of these racially-gendered categories there are limitations to the range of sexuality open or available to these women (Gonzalez-Lopez and Vidal-Ortiz 2007). Categories seen as non-threatening such as the domestic or Mammy, are both asexual images. Conversely, seen as promiscuous and sexually available to men are the Jezebel and spicy Latina image. Sexuality when owned or constructed by women

themselves and not for heterosexual male pleasure is seen as threatening to a patriarchal, heterosexual society (MacKinnon 1989; Rich 1981).

Ethnosexual stereotypes have been historically important ideological tools used to regulate group interactions within and across various ethnic groups and been used as justification for attitudes and prejudice toward women in these groups (Nagel 2000). While ethnosexual stereotypes can be either internalized or resisted, they shape the way Black and Latina women understand how society sees them as sexually exploitable, for their labor, or as social problems.

Gender and Sexuality in Black and Latino communities

The intersection of gender and sexuality in Black and Latino communities represents a combination of resistance to the images imposed on them by mainstream society and the attempt to self define standards of ideal gender and sexuality by their own ethnic communities' standards. Black and Latina women have historically resisted mainstreams views of themselves as the problematic or deviant other. Still, gender and sexuality norms within their own ethnic communities are as limiting as those imposed by mainstream society (Collins 2004b; Marshall 1996; Zinn and Dill 1994). As Nagel (2000) points out, "[a]cross a wide variety of ethnic groups' appropriate enactments of heterosexuality are perhaps the most regulated and enforced norms. In particular, correct heterosexual masculine and feminine behavior constitute gender regimes that are often at the core of ethnic communities" (pg. 113). As a result, dichotomous views of gender and sexuality dictate "good" versus "bad" enactments of appropriate femininity.

In Black communities, the example of the "queen" or "princess" that is deserving of respect versus the whore represents an ethnic specific discourse of good versus bad sexuality. The "good versus bad" ideology of Black female sexuality has historical roots in racial and class-based discourse on what it means to be women in the United States. From slavery and throughout the 19th century[5], Black women's sexuality was juxtaposed against ideal white female sexuality (Collins 2000a). Black women's structural position as laborers outside of the home often reified and justified this prevailing view.

Many Black women created their own socio-cultural constructions of themselves as ideological tools to protect themselves from racial and sexual violence. Images such as the queen versus the whore perpetuate similar racial, sexist, classist ideologies within their ethnic community. Today definitions of acceptable Black female sexuality are race and class infused such that only the most sterile images of Black women are seen as palatable to the dominant white society (Collins 2000c). Feminist backlash to overtly sexual images of minority women presented in mainstream Hip-Hop/Rap videos represent one particular cite of active construction of acceptable Black female images (Essence 2004; Reid-Brinkley 2008; Willens 2004). While this self-generated discourse is used as a strategy to dismantle mainstream ideologies of Black female inferiority and create "safe spaces" for Black women (Collins 2000a; Davis 2002), no "space" is safe in that dominant social ideologies are always present and internalized by individuals (Foucault 1990).

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[5] Throughout the 19th century, The Cult of True Womanhood was the prevailing view of white upper and middle class women. This ideology promoted four basic tenants of ideal femininity including virtue, purity, submission, and domesticity.

Similar to Black cultures, cultural gender norms for Latina women create a dichotomous "good" and "bad" limited view of sexuality. In many Latino families, the virgin, or Madonna, who is pure and the mother who is self-sacrificing are idealized female roles (Gil 1996; Vasquez-Nuttall, Romero-Garcia, and De Leon 1987). This cultural climate creates a prescribed gender and sexuality norm for women to be and remain virginal until marriage. In Mexican families, *marianismo* is the cultural expectation for women to be committed to their families and respect male authority (DeLeon 1996; Negy and Woods 1992; Solis 1995). Acceptable sexuality remains contained within the confines of heterosexual marriage and for the purpose of procreation and male pleasure. Rich (1981) refers to this as "compulsory heterosexuality", which is the imbedded assumption of heteronormativity in sexual relationships. Within some Latino cultures, women seen as being aware of or in charge of their sexuality, are often defined as "bad" and not deserving of respect;

> However, a sexual woman was a woman begging rape, begging vulnerability to society, begging to be treated as nothing more than what she was born, a female, without meriting respect for her emotions, her mind, and her person. No, if one admitted to her sexuality, she was uncovering the disguise that she alone knew she had worn as the 'decent' women the good girl and was revealing that underneath she was nothing more than a bitch in heat" (Castillo 2002; 26)

As demonstrated in this passage openness or awareness of one's sexuality for women is not only a devalued attribute, but leaves women exposed to stigmatization and possible violence.

Inside these discourses of appropriate sexuality, Black and Latina women are expected to remain loyal to the men in their ethnic communities (Arguelles and Rich 1984; Reid-Brinkley 2008). This insistence of race loyalty is in response to strained relationships between many ethnic men and women that are

a result of negotiating a racist, classist, heterosexist social environment (Aldridge and Hemmons 2001; Collins 2000d; Collins 2004; Moraga 1986). Interestingly, Black women perceived as speaking out against Black men, or sexism in the Black community, are often labeled as "lesbian" as a way of silencing them (Collins 2004b; Reid-Brinkley 2008). Striking similarities exist in Latino cultures, where the terms "vendida" (race traitor), "puta" (bitch), or "jota" (lesbian) are applied to women who express dissent to male authority, or espouse feminist ideas (Moraga 1986).

Same-sex intimacy among Black and Latina women

A seeming contradiction within many Latino cultures concerning gender and sexuality is the cultural acceptance of "amigas intimas", which describe close intimate relationships between women. Within the context of these relationships, it is culturally acceptable for two women to kiss, hug, and dance together without being seen as a violation of cultural gender norms (Hidalgo and Hidalgo-Christensen 1979). Close intimacy among women is not unique to Latino communities. Although it involves less physical intimacy, "sister-girl(s)" is a term of affection and solidarity among many Black women, used to describe close female friendship networks that provide social, emotional, spiritual and sometimes economic support for one another (Huggins 1998; McDonald 2006; Smith 2000). Adrienne Rich (1981) uses the term *lesbian continuum* to donate the wide range of women-identified experiences among women beyond a desire for literal sexual relationships with other women that are spaces for female empowerment and support.

The existence of both “amigas intimas” and “sister-girls” provide strong intimate context for the women participants and are an essential part of community and social well-being among these women. However, these relationships are not “queer” or indicative of lesbian relationships. While cultural space exists for recognition of same gender intimacies among these women of color, they are separate and distinct from the acceptance of exclusive same gender, lesbian erotic relationships.

Challenges to same-sex identity development in Black and Latino communities

Black and Latino same-sex attracted minorities face distinct challenges to developing a positive same-sex identity. These challenges include; a) discrimination within their racial and ethnic communities (Greene 1994; Jackson and Brown 1996; Loicano 1989), b) discrimination within the gay community (Zamoro-Hernandez and Patterson 2001), c) limited social support (Jackson and Brown 1996; Loiacano 1989) d) few and limited access to same-sex resources (Greene 1994; Jackson and Brown 1996; Loicano 1989), as well e) a lack of healthy role models (Green 1994). Reid-Brinkley (2008) discusses how even “safe spaces” within the Black female community are exclusive, such that many Black women (i.e. the poor, lesbians) are excluded from these spaces. As a result, many BLSSAW face culturally specific challenges to their identities in their own ethnic communities:

> The stereotype...mandates that you develop into the well-groomed Essence girl who pursues a profession and a husband. If you begin to espouse a proud lesbian growth, you find yourself going against the grain. That makes embracing your lesbianism doubly frightening, because you then have to discard the mythology that’s been developed around what it means to be a young Black women (Gomez and Smith 1990).

Romo-Carmona (2004) discusses the challenges of adopting a positive same-sex attracted identity in Latina communities:

> For those of us who live in the US, our Latina identification is crucial. The pride in ourselves is what allows us to confront and survive the various forms of discrimination we face when dealing with the white North Americans who, by no means, see it to their advantage to regard us as their equals in "their" society. However, when we turn to our families for support, we often find that we can only get it if we are willing to repress our lesbian selves" (Romo-Carmona 2004).

For BLSSAW, many report a "silent tolerance" of their sexuality by family members (Hidalgo and Hidalgo-Christensen 1979; Hidalgo and Hidalgo-Christensen 1976). This suggests these women can maintain ties with their families and ethnic community if they silence their sexual identities. For many, maintaining family ties is crucial for economic support, but also for maintaining a sense of pride and cultural connectedness in a society hostile to their ethnic identities. This enforced silence contributes to the invisibility of non-heterosexuals in many communities of color (Moraga 1983).

Much of the literature on same-sex attracted individuals in communities of color validates the idea that race and same-sex behavior seen as incompatible (Beam 1986; Boykin 1996; Collins 1990; Hemphill 1991). Within the Black community, many Afrocentric teachings associate same-sex behavior as an attribute of the White race and deny the existence of same-sex behavior in African and Caribbean communities (Asante 1980; Fanon 1963; Hare and Hare 1984; Pouissaint 1978). Some writings go as far as to attribute same-sex behavior as the equivalent of racial death (see Asante 1980). Same-sex behavior seen as racial death and lesbians equated to racial traitors are the result of many communities of color subordinate structural position in Western society; thus ethnic and racial unity, procreation, and loyalty are essential for maintaining a

sense of cultural cohesiveness. Much of the remaining dissention toward same-sex behavior within Black and Latino cultures is on moral grounds rooted in strong religious traditions of Protestantism and Catholicism respectively (Carballo-Dieguez 1989; Greene 1990; Loiacano 1989). Empirical research on heterosexual attitudes toward same-sex behavior in communities of color find those who report higher religiosity scores, more traditional gender role attitudes, and are politically conservative are less tolerant and express negative attitudes toward same-sex behavior (Herek and Capitanio 1995; Herek and Gonzalez-Rivera 2006; Hidalgo and Hidalgo-Christensen 1979; Lewis 2003).

The social contexts in which BLSSAW develop their identities is both protective in some aspects, such as providing racial and ethnic solidarity, but also hostile to their sexual identity. It is therefore critical to tease out aspects of women's environment that are either protective or hostile to their identity. Going back to the original research question;

> *Under what conditions (if any) do Black and Latina same-sex attracted women show positive adaption to their sexual identity through sexual identity acceptance and disclosure?*

I find developmental resilience an ideal framework for examining positive outcomes of BLSSAW's sexual identity development. Particularly, a transactional model of resilience allows for the organization of multiple resilience constructs into one comprehensive framework; taking into consideration the relationship between contextual risk and protective factors, intervening process, and individual characteristics that mediate resilient outcomes.

Resilience

Resilience is a phenomenon that describes positive adaptation despite exposure to adversity. Masten et al (1990) defines resilience as the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite exposure to risk from illness or problems. Conceptually resilience exist on three levels, including the individual, family and community level. At each of these levels potential vulnerability and protective processes and mechanisms[6] exists that mediate the effects of adversity on developmental outcomes. Vulnerability processes and mechanisms are variables that increase the likelihood of poor developmental outcomes. Conversely, protective processes and mechanisms are those variables that buffer an individual from adversity. Rather than being treated as distinct concepts, vulnerability and protective processes can be considered as negative and positive poles of the same concepts (Rutter 1990). Protective and vulnerability processes and mechanisms work in ways establishing or reducing self esteem and self efficacy, open or close opportunities, or increase or reduce risk impact and chain reactions (Rutter 1990).

Transactional Model of Resilience

Kumpfer's model (Figure 2-1) is organized into six major predictors of resilience; 1) stressors or challenges, 2) external environmental context, 3) person-environment interactional processes, 4) internal self-characteristics, 5) resilience processes, and 6) positive outcomes. The following section addresses

[6] The terms "process" and "mechanism" are used in preference to "variables" and "factors' based on Rutter's (1990) assertion that any one variable may act as a risk factor in one situation but a vulnerability factor in another.

each of the constructs outline in Kumpfer's model and addresses them in relevance to BLSSAW.

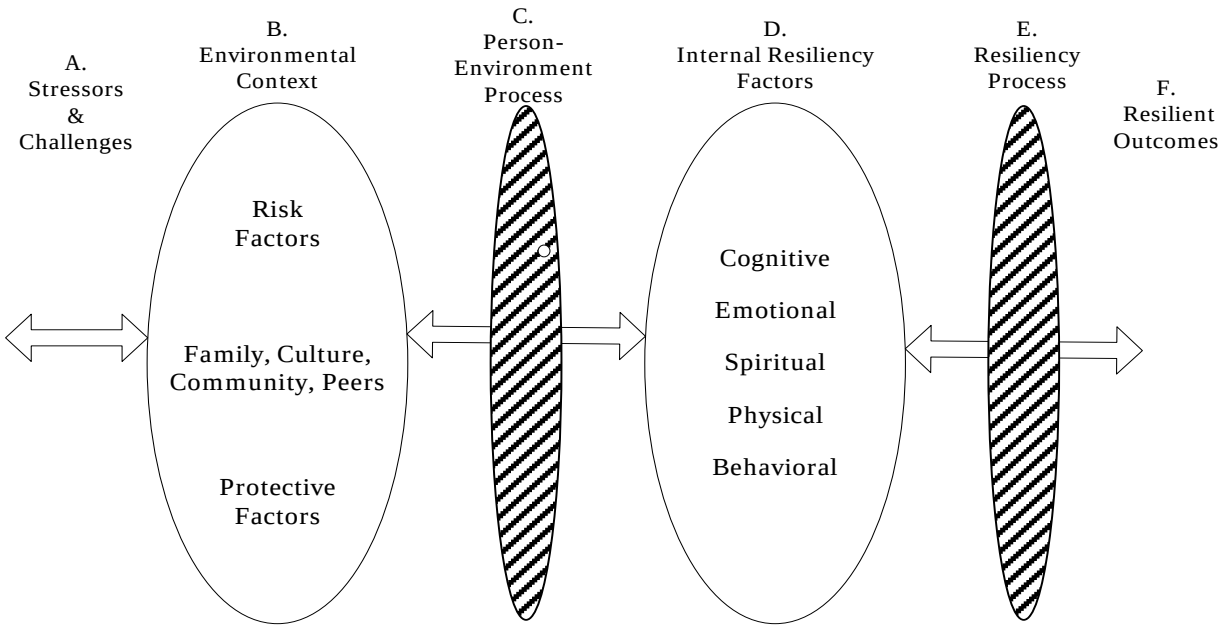


Figure 2-1 Transactional Model of Resilience

Stressors or challenges refer to incoming stimuli that either activate the resilience process or create disruption in the individual or group's environment. The extent to which the incoming stimuli are threatening depends on the individual or group's cognitive appraisal of the event, namely whether it represents a threat or potential harm. For BLSSAW, stressors can come from perceptions of discrimination or prejudice to their identity as racial, gender, and same-sex attracted minorities.

The **environmental context** comprises the balance of protective or risk factors among the critical domains of influence in the individual's life, typically, family, community, culture, school, and peer groups. Kumpfer notes that domains of influence should be particularly salient for the individual or group. A

protective environmental context for BLSSAW consist of an environment where the presence of supportive salient domains of influence to their identity out number hostile or conflicting salient domains of influence. For example, while women may perceive their work place or religious institution as hostile to aspects of their identity, the presence of a supportive significant other, peer group, and family might offset the adverse affects of this perceived hostility. Below I consider the domains of influence salient for BLSSAW; including interpersonal relationships with significant others, family, friends, and in the work place as well as broader connections to their religious, racial and ethnic, and gay community.

Interpersonal Relationships

The presence of close interpersonal relationships is of particular interest with BLSSAW whose challenges include finding healthy role models, and garnishing support from family. Significant others and friends provide opportunities for close interpersonal relationship with other same-sex attracted ethnic minority women. The presence of these relationships might serve to resolve tension between conflicting "gay = white" associations. In addition, these relationships help create a sense of community of "others like me" that provide positive reinforcement to BLSSAW's identities. The presence of supportive partners and friends is an important protective factor against psychiatric distress among same-sex attracted individuals (Brown and Hans 1978, Parker and Hadz-Pavlovic 1984). This is critical for BLSSAW, as data shows ethnic same-sex attracted minorities are more likely to receive support from partners then family (Hughes, Matthews, Razzano, and Aranda 2003). Conversely if those interpersonal relationships are with other "high risk minorities" it might increase

chances of individuals adopting self-hating, defeating attitudes toward their identities.

Black and Latina women, because of their racial and ethnic minority status, are often raised in close-knit cultural communities (Greene 1990; Hidalgo and Hidalgo-Christensen 1976). While close familial ties are common in ethnic minority communities, they can be detrimental if family is not accepting or supportive of a relative's sexual orientation. Buffering these effects might be the role of extended kin, who may be more accepting then immediate family. Whether or not family is a protective processes and mechanisms for Black and Latina women is debatable. Several studies show family relationships are problematic for BLSSAW (Bowleg et al. 2003a; Mays, Cochran, and Roeder 2003; Ramos 1987). On one hand, families provide a source of sameness and security for these women on racial identification, but they maybe the source of homophobic and heterosexist ideals to same-sex attracted individuals.

Community Level

Broader community level institutions of salience for BLSSAW might include the religious, ethnic, and gay communities. Connections and feelings toward religious community might be associated with feelings toward larger ethnic and racial community. The church is a staple institution for both Blacks serving as a source of support, protection, gender identity, and ethnic solidarity (Crane 2003; Diaz-Stevens 1993; Frazier 1963; Higginbotham 1993; Staples 1998). The church and religion hold similar functions for many Latin Americans (Crane 2003; Diaz-Stevens 1993). "Among the nearly 31 million Latinos and Latinas in the United States today, religion is a particularly powerful wellspring

of Latino identity, cultural cohesiveness and family and social organization" (Stevens-Arroyo 2000). While notoriously cited as the reason many justifiably condemn same-sex attracted individuals, religious community enable protective individual characteristics such as faith and spirituality (Herek and Capitanio 1995; Herek and Gonzalez-Rivera 2006; Lewis 2003).

Overwhelming, same-sex attracted Blacks report their church or religion views same-sex behavior is morally wrong. However among those who report actively seeking out religious institutions accepting of their sexuality, they are more likely to report religion has a dominant and positive role in their lives (Battle et al. 2002). Same-sex attracted Blacks who report negative experiences in Black heterosexual churches or religious institutions are more likely to agree homophobia is a problem within Black communities (Battle et al. 2002). Still, many Latinos and Blacks remain tied to ethnic specific community organizations to maintain feelings of social well being as ethnic minorities (Carry and Miller 2009).

Similarly, connection to the larger gay community might be protective or alienating to many BLSSAW. Some Blacks and Latinos may equate the gay community or terms associated with the gay community as reflective of European culture (Battle et al. 2002; Boykin 1996; Greene 1990). In addition, many ethnic same-sex attracted minorities report having negative experiences within gay white organizations (Battle et al. 2002). Yet, a connection to the gay community provides material, social activities, and social support networks affirming aspects of one's same-sex identity.

The third concept in the model, **person-environmental interactional processes**, can be both active and passive. Individuals engage in actives such as interpreting their perception of the threat, reframing the nature of the threat, attempting to change one's environment so it is more protective, or actively coping. For example, women may reframe an experience initially perceived as discrimination to other circumstances, or if unable to physically change locales, may surround themselves with people they see as supportive of their same-sex identity.

The fourth predictor, **internal resiliency factors, and processes**, include a range of characteristics of the individual that increase the likelihood of successfully handling stressors or challenges perceived as threatening. Internal resiliency factors include cognitive, emotional, physical, spiritual, and behavioral attributes. Based on the overlapping traits of resilience associated with successful adaption, Kumpfer (1999) hypothesized five clusters of constructs of individual resilient factors that might mediate resilient outcomes, 1) spiritual or motivational characteristics, 2) cognitive competencies, 3) behavioral/ social competences, 4) emotional stability and 5) physical well-being and competencies. Bowleg et al (2003a) found BLSSAW expressed several of these characteristics including spiritual characteristics, feelings of uniqueness, self esteem, and happiness and optimism.

Self-efficacy as an internal characteristic of resilience may be of specific importance when examining internal factors of resilience among BLSSAW. Bandura (1997) explains self efficacy is the sense of competence one gains from successful accomplishment of previous tasks and goals. Repeated success

attributed to oneself leads to increased self-efficacy. While women with marginalized identities may experience discrimination to their identities as ethnic, racial, gendered, same-sex attracted minorities specific aspects of their environment might encourage positive outcomes. For example, the presence of supportive family, friends, and social institutions may help BLSSAW overcome daily adversity, resulting in a greater sense of self-efficacy when dealing with future adversity. Jones (1997) found ethnic minority families socialize their offspring to cope with the realities of covert and overt racism. In terms of identity, race and gender become more salient for individuals before sexual identity; especially for women who it's argued develop their sexual identity later then boys on average (Diamond and Savin-Williams 2000). BLSSAW develop a sense of themselves as racial and gendered beings before adopting a non-heterosexual identity.

Despite potential vulnerability processes and mechanisms, experiences with adversity may potentially help Black and Latina women develop a sense of agency in confronting challenges to their same-sex attracted identity. Research on resilience has found positive association between resilience and self-efficacy, as it contributes to psychological adjustment, self-regulation, and physical health (Maddux, 2002). The main premise of self-efficacy theory is "people's belief in their capabilities to produce desired effect by their own actions" (Bandura, 1997, pvii).

Similar to the developmental perspective of resilience, self-efficacy is a learned skill acquired through life experience (Maddux, 2002). Bandura posits individuals actively shape themselves through their experiences. Success in

experiences leads to an increase in sense of self-agency. This increased sense of self-agency allows individuals to further attempt to experiment, manipulate, and control aspects of their environment. Black and Latina women have grown up in challenging environments as both women and as racial minorities. Skills they have learned in effectively mastering their environments as women and racial minorities, such as self-efficacy, may transfer to the challenges they face as same-sex attracted minorities.

The final constructs, **resiliency processes and outcomes**, refer to an individual's level of adaption specific to the developmental task after exposure to stressors and challenges. Positive life outcomes in the face of adversity are the result of protective factors and processes. Resilient outcomes can fall into one of four categories, 1) dysfunctional reintegration, 2) maladaptive reintegration, 3) homeostatic reintegration, and 4) resilient reintegration (Kumpfer 1999; Masten 1994) (see Figure 2-2). Dysfunctional reintegration is outcomes below expected outcomes, for example, individuals exposed to low or no stress yet still display poor functioning. Maladaptive reintegration describes poor adaptation because of exposure to stress. Homeostatic reintegration describes outcomes at the expected level. Resilient reintegration describes positive outcomes beyond expected levels for example individuals exposed to high levels of stress or risk factors yet still display positive outcomes.

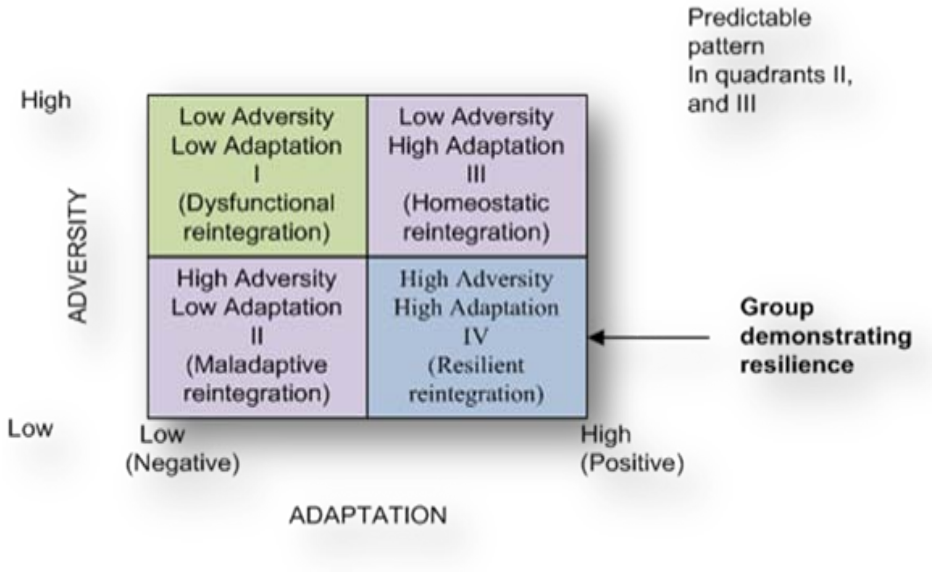


Figure 2-2. Resilient Outcomes

Researchers classify resilient outcomes in three distinct ways. Resilient outcomes are defined as a) the absence of any poor psychosocial functioning or the absence of a psychological disorder, b) doing exceptionally well on any one particular or multiple aspects of development and/ or c) being both the absence of disorder, and doing really well on some (or multiple) aspects of development. Currently there is conflicting, and insufficient literature establishing the increased presence of psychosocial functioning or increased psychological disorder among ethnic/racial same-sex minorities. For this study, the outcome of interest is the developmental task of same-sex sexual identity development. For that reason, I utilize the second classification of resilient outcomes, specifically looking at key aspects of BLSSAW sexual identity development, sexual identity acceptance, and disclosure.

Sexual Identity Development

Sexual identity is an intrinsic part of many individuals self definition (Gagnon and Simon 1973). Beyond a simple designation, one's sexual identity involves making decisions about sexual preference, perceptions of masculinity and femininity, and perceptions of appropriate sexual behavior (Buzzwell and Rosenthal 1996). Adopting a non-heterosexual identity involves going against one's originally socialized sexual identity as heterosexual. An implicit assumption in much of the literature examining same-sex identity formation is the acquisition of a non-heterosexual identity takes place in the context of social stigma.

Socially stigmatized identities are believed to posses some attribute or characteristic that is socially devalued, leading to stereotyping and prejudice, and ultimately to discrimination (Crocker and Major 1989; Goffman 1963; Jones, Farina, Hastorf, Markus, Miller, and Scott 1984). A great deal of attention has focused on the process of acquiring a same-sex attracted identity because it involves dissonance between one's original socialized identity and the acquisition of a socially stigmatized identity.

Same-sex Attracted Identity Formation

The acquisition of a same-sex attracted identity is the process of translating a same-sex attracted image into a same-sex attracted identity (Cass 1984). Many models theorize same-sex attracted identity development (Cass 1984; Chapman and Brannock 1987; Minton and McDonald 1983; Ponse 1978; Sophie 1985; Troiden 1989; Weinberg, Williams, and Pryor 1994). One of the first and most widely used models is Cass' model of same-sex attracted identity

formation (Cass 1979). Cass' model is comprised of six developmental stages. The first stage, "*Identity confusion*", involves questioning assumptions about one's sexual orientation based on same-sex attracted defined actions, thoughts, and feelings. The second stage, *Identity comparison*", involves feelings of isolation and alienation as the differences between self and non-same-sex attracted others becomes clearer. In the third stage, "*Identity tolerance*", one increases her commitment to a same-sex attracted self-identity and seeks out other same-sex attracted persons to fulfill social, sexual, and emotional needs. The fourth stage, "*Identity acceptance*", involves selective identity disclosure to others, more positive views of same-sex behavior, and development of a network of same-sex attracted friends. The fifth stage, "*Identity pride*", involves feelings of pride toward one's same-sex attracted identity and fierce loyalty to same-sex attracted individuals as a group. Individuals' in the fifth stage may discredit and devalue heterosexuals in this stage. In the final stage six, "*Identity synthesis*", individuals come to see their same-sex behavior as only one aspect of their identity; disclosure becomes a non-issue.

While Cass (1979) identifies six stages in identity development several others have identified 5 (Chapman and Brannock 1987; Minton and McDonald 1983; Ponse 1978), 4 (Cass 1984; Sophie 1985; Troiden 1989; Weinberg, Williams, and Pryor 1994), or fewer stages (Minton and McDonald 1983). Thematically, most models are similar in that individuals first have some sense of self awareness, followed by self labeling, then increased community involvement and disclosure, and finally, full identity integration.

Several models focus exclusively on women's same-sex identity development, citing significant differences by gender when developing a same-sex attracted identity (Fassinger and Miller 1996; Ponse 1978; Sophie 1985). Cass (1984) finds same-sex attracted women are significantly different from same-sex attracted men because a) their sexual identity processes are less linear, b) men use sexual experience, where as women identify emotional experience as hallmarks for establishing a same-sex identity and c) women are more likely to reject traditional women roles, whereas men are more likely to modify traditional male roles into their identity (Cass 1984). Overall, women are more likely to repeat stages and see sexual identity development as continuous and circular (McCarn and Fassinger 1996).

Empirical research on women's same-sex identity development supports women's movement through stages is less sequential (Kahn 1999; Ponse 1978; Rust 1993; Sophie 1987). Other studies find primary predictors of women assuming a same-sex attracted identity are dependent on the degree of social interaction with other women, such as engaging in emotional relationships and sexual contact (Chapman and Brannock 1987; Gramick 1984). Sophie (1985) notes while social interaction with other same-sex attracted women remain primary predictors, social and historical context are likely to mediate sexual identity development in women.

Same-sex identity models for men and women assume individuals who adopt a non-heterosexual identity see themselves as exclusively gay (romantic attraction exclusively to males) or lesbian (romantic attraction exclusively to females). Based on six years of empirical research on individuals assuming a

bisexual identity (romantic attraction to males and females), Weinberg et al (1994) developed a model of bisexual identity development that includes four stages: Initial confusion, finding and applying a label, settling into an identity, and continued uncertainty. A significant finding in Weinberg et al's research is after adopting a bisexual identity, many bisexual participants reported negative attitudes and stereotypes about bisexuals added to their hesitancy to adopt a bisexual identity. One critique of Weinberg's model is that it ends in identity confusion, implying bisexuality is an unstable identity and not a valid or distinctive one on its own (Brown 2002; Rust 1993; Scherrer 2007).

While these models are informative for thinking about how gender and type of sexual identity influence sexual identity formation, they fail to theorize how race and ethnicity complicate the process of adopting a non-heterosexual identity. Black and Latina same-sex attracted women negotiate a non-heterosexual identity within the context of ethnic communities that are hostile to their sexual identities and seen as incompatible with their race. For ethnic minorities, the simultaneous focus on sexuality and ethnicity complicates conventional Eurocentric descriptions of women's same-sex identity formation (Keating 2002).

Racial and Sexual Identity Development: Conflicting or Complementary Processes?

Literature examining the process of sexual identity formation in racial minorities primarily focuses on how racial minorities integrate a same-sex attracted identity into their identities as racial minorities, also referred to as dual or multiple identity development (Collins 2004a; Crawford, Allison, Zamboni,

and Soto 2002; Fingerhut, Peplau, and Ghavami 2005; Martinez and Sullivan 1998). Implicit in the assumption is ethnic same-sex attracted minorities must manage the dual process of developing a sexual and racial identity, which is seen as a conflicting process. The phrase, "dual-identity development", is somewhat of a misnomer. Ethnic same-sex attracted minorities are unlikely developing their racial and sexual identities simultaneously. The awareness of sexual identity (distinct from a heterosexual identity) comes later in life, especially for women (Califia 1979; Chapman and Brannock 1987; Cox and Gallois 1996; Diamond and Savin-Williams 2000), after a racial or ethnic identity is established.

Most research on dual identity development assumes racial minorities experience additional distress from non-ethnic minorities developing a same-sex identity. Primarily, dominate society is hostile to racial minorities racial and sexual identity. Next, researchers assume racial minorities' ethnic identity (their primary source of support and protection from experiences of racism and prejudice in dominate society) is hostile to their sexual identity (Amato 1978; Espin 1987; Espin 1993; Greene 1994; Greene 1990). Ethnic minorities make an assumed choice between their sexual identity and ethnic community (Mays and Comas-Diaz 1988; Mays, Cochran, and Barnes 2007). Few empirical studies examine choice of preferred community among same-sex attracted minorities. As well, whether this choice delays the process of identity development is more theorized than empirically tested.

A contrasting view of the same problem might consider same-sex development and racial minority development to be complimentary processes. Theories of racial minority development assume racial minorities become aware

they are a stigmatized group and navigate their way through a series of stages until reaching identity integration (Atkinson, Morten, and Sue 1998; Cross, Parham, and Helms 1991). A strikingly similar process occurs in sexual identity formation, where same-sex attracted minorities first become aware of their stigmatized sexual identities and then move progressively through stages of integrating that identity into their own (Cass 1984; Coleman 1982; Troiden 1989). A few researchers have pointed out the parallels in the stages of Cass' development stage model and Atkinson model of minority identity development (Collins 2004a; Loiacano 1989).

Considering these parallel developmental processes, racial and ethnic minorities have previous experience developing an identity in a (potentially) hostile social environment. This previous experience may provide these individuals with an internal sense of self-efficacy, stigma management, and coping skills that facilitate their adoption of a same-sex identity compared to non-ethnic minorities. Conversely, non-ethnic minorities' development of a same-sex identity might be their first experience with adopting a stigmatized identity.

Sexual Identity Acceptance

Whereas sexual identity development describes the developmental process of adopting a sexual identity into one's current identity, sexual identity acceptance emphasizes the feelings, attitudes, and emotion accompanying each of the stages of development. Sexual identity acceptance is the degree to which an individual has accepted or rejected negative messages about one's sexual identity, or internalized homophobia (Peterson and Gerrity 2006; Shidlo 1994; Sophie

1987). Unlike race or gender, a same-sex attracted identity is a concealable stigmatized identity[7]. Nonetheless, individuals with concealable stigma still experience negative self-perceptions (Frable, Hoey, and Platt 1998; Smart and Wegner 1999). Original theories of same-sex attracted identity formation did not explain what process facilitated movement from one stage of development to another. Cass (1984) and Trodien (1989) later revised their models to include stigma management processes which individuals adopted to avoid internalizing negative messages surrounding their identity.

Models of Positive Identity Acceptance

Despite evidence that poor identity acceptance, or internalized homophobia, accounts for the majority of psychological distress in same-sex attracted individuals (Amadio 2006; Kulkin 2006; Peterson and Gerrity 2006; Shidlo 1994; Sophie 1987; Szymanski and Chung 2001; Wright and Perry 2006), models explaining why some individuals positively adapt to their same-sex attracted identity where others experience deep internalized feelings of homonegativity are virtually nonexistent. An exception is Berzon (2001) who outlines a model for individuals to adopt a positive same-sex attracted identity. Berzon (2001) proposes a four-step process of "replacing antigay programs" in order to develop a positive same-sex identity that includes deprogramming, demythologizing, labeling oneself and recalibrating one's life by markers of success relevant to same-sex attracted individuals.

[7] Goffman (1963) uses the term concealable stigma to describe the extent that others surrounding the individual can see the stigmatizing attribute or characteristic.

The first step, deprogramming, requires a rethinking of one's mindset about same-sex attracted individuals (and oneself as a same-sex attracted person) by removing anti-gay rhetoric and "misinformation" about same-sex attracted individuals that has been internalized. The second step, demythologizing, involves a practice of deconstructing many popular socially perpetuated myths about same-sex behavior (i.e. same-sex behavior is unnatural, an illness, or same-sex attracted persons are child molesters). In the third step, labeling oneself as same-sex attracted, Berzon argues self-labeling leads to self-disclosure, which facilitates communication and builds trust between existing and new intrapersonal relationships. In the final stage of positive identity acceptance, Berzon advocates recalibrating one's life by markers of success relevant to same-sex attracted individuals.

One of the foundations of a positive identity is the successful completion of social developmental task or "ritual events", such as getting married and developing a nuclear family. Berzon argues that many of these developmental tasks are heterosexually orientated; therefore, same-sex attracted individuals need to mark their lives by task central to gay and lesbians. This provides a "life-affirming, gay growth track" (p. 30). Many of the markers she lists are similar to the developmental task reported by respondents in the same-sex identity formation models previously reviewed (Cass 1984; Coleman 1982; Troiden 1989) i.e., first disclosure of one's same-sex identity to a heterosexual person, beginning first same-sex relationship, and becoming involved in a same-sex affiliated organization or event. Berzon states this is integral to creating a positive same-

sex attracted identity, as it gives form and continuity to one's life, a central component of creating a foundation for a positive and viable identity.

The strategies Berzon presents for promoting subjective well being rely heavily on individual agency. Like many models of psychological well-being it ignores the social structures and communities individuals are located inside of that further complicate these task (Keyes 1998). For example, demythologizing stereotypes of same-sex attracted individuals relies heavily on having access to outside sources and role models that contradict negative information. An individual attending college who has exposure to a liberal ideology, or lives in a large metropolitan city (thereby having access to other same-sex attracted individuals and organizations), has a better chance of successfully implementing the strategies outlined by Berzon than an individual without a college education, or located in a rural town or area. Having access to other same-sex attracted individuals is critical for evaluating the self with respect to group membership, as members of the group provide more positive perceptions of group members then nonmembers (Jones et al. 1984).

Psychological Correlates of Internalized Homophobia

Substantial empirical research focused on gay men finds internalized homophobia to be associated with lower stages of sexual identity formation (Rowen and Malcolm 2002), low-self acceptance, (Herek, Cogan, Gillis, and Glunt 1997; Loiacano 1989), lower self esteem (Loiacano 1989), more depressive symptoms (Coleman 1982; Herek, Cogan, Gillis, and Glunt 1997), greater suicide ideation (Peterson and Gerrity 2006), and poor emotional stability and higher rates of sexual guilt (Rowen and Malcolm 2002). Szymanski and Chung (2001)

argue that scales used to measure internalized homophobia in men may not adequately capture women's experiences. For example, statements like "effeminate men make me uncomfortable" and "I prefer to have anonymous sex partners" are biased toward male same-sex experiences and hold less relevance for same-sex attracted women. Using theoretically grounded and empirically tested data, Szymanski and Chung (2001) developed a lesbian internalized homophobia scale. The scale consists of five dimensions including 1) connection to lesbian community, 2) public identification as lesbian, 3) personal feelings about being a lesbian, 4) moral and religious attitude toward lesbians, and 5) attitudes toward other lesbian/bisexuals.

Fewer studies have examined psychological correlates of internalized homophobia in same-sex attracted women. Those studies that have find greater internalized homophobia associated with psychological distress, less social support, less satisfaction with social support, fewer connections to gay social support, passing for straight, loneliness, low self esteem, and other somatic symptoms (Bell and Weinberg 1978; Herek, Cogan, Gillis, and Glunt 1997; Kahn 1999; Peterson and Gerrity 2006; Singh, Dew, Hays, and Gailis 2006; Szymanski, Chung, and Balsam 2001).

Considering the interpersonal nature of sexual identity acceptance, Mohr and Fassinger (2003) found negative sexual identity acceptance was significantly correlated with attachment anxiety and distrust of others. Shildo (1994) found similar results, finding that increased distrust was associated with greater levels of lesbian internalized homophobia. Among the empirical research on internalized lesbian homophobia, few can be generalized to ethnic minority

same-sex attracted women because of their reliance on convenience samples that are highly educated and primarily Caucasian (Szymanski and Chung 2001). As a result, prevalence or correlates of internalized homophobia in Black or Latina women are less known.

Sexual Identity Disclosure

"Coming out" broadly refers to the process of *coming into* one's new sexual identity as same-sex attracted. Coming out has been used to describe the process of developing and acknowledging a same-sex attracted identity, as well as the process of sharing that identity with others (Gagnon and Simon 1973). In this study, the term sexual identity disclosure distinguishes the process of sexual identity development from the process of sharing that sexual identity with others. While sexual identity development and the disclosure process are interrelated concepts, an individual may become aware of and accept her same-sex attraction without disclosing this information to anyone. Although many models of same-sex identity formation treat these two processes as integrated, distinguishing sexual identity development from sexual identity disclosure allows for an unpacking of these unique processes.

Motivations for Sexual Identity Disclosure

For many, coming out is an ongoing, lifelong process. First, one must disclose to oneself their identity and then to others (Weston 1991). Unlike heterosexuals, same-sex attracted women must engage in daily, interaction-to-interaction specific decisions of whether or not to disclose themselves as lesbian, or bisexual. These decisions are as simple as holding one's significant other's hand in a public setting, to relaying their sexual identity to a coworker, health

professional, or new friend. With each new interaction, individuals make decisions to disclose sexual identity based on perceptions of the positive and negative consequences and perceived acceptance and tolerance associated with people, places, and physical spaces.

Models of same-sex identity development typically associate coming out with advanced stages of same-sex identity development. Still, models of same-sex identity development do not explain variation in disclosure levels at various stages, nor do they explain possible motivations for coming out. Addressing this gap, research finds the desire for honesty with oneself and improved self image (Berzon 2001; Harry 1993) is correlated with increased closeness and communication with others (Ben-Ari 1995; Cramer and Roach 1988; Harry 1993), more interest in increasing self-confidence (Rhoads 1996) and increased avoidance of negative feedback (such as accusations of deception) (Ben-Ari 1995; Harry 1993; Rhoads 1996) as motivations for sexual identity disclosure.

Motivations for not disclosing one's sexual identity include fear of rejection (Elliott 1996; Harry 1993), fear of harassment and discrimination (Rhoads 1995), fear of physical harm (Elliott 1996), or the desire to protect love one's from stress (Ben-Ari 1995; Miller and Boon 2000). In addition, a motivation against sexual identity disclosure among ethnic minorities is the fear that affirming ones same-sex identity rejects one's cultural identity (Greene 1998; Grov, Bimbi, Nanin, and Parsons 2006; Thompson 1992; Wall and Washington 1991). The most consistent finding across the literature shows with increased trust, or perceived acceptance in a relationship, individuals are more likely to disclose their sexual identity (Ben-Ari 1995; Cramer and Roach 1988; Grov,

Bimbi, Nanin, and Parsons 2006; Harry 1993; Rhoads 1996; Wall and Washington 1991).

"Passing": Stigma Management or Internalized Homophobia?

Low levels of sexual identity disclosure presumably represent a deficient, pre-actualized identity. Passing or concealing one's sexual identity is often seen as internalized oppression or homophobia. Thompson (1992) suggests concealing one's sexual identity leads to a chronic stress over fear of being "outted" or exposed. In addition, concealing forces individuals to lead a double life, compartmentalizing all aspects of oneself (Morrow 2006). The fear of being "outted", and the effort involved in leading a double life suggests non-disclosure is stressful. In contrast, Berzon (2001) highlights the benefits of disclosure as an empowering process, because it allows for self-definition, a sense of pride, and increased sense of having a political voice.

The alternative argument suggest concealing one's sexual identity, or passing as heterosexual, may not be indicative of higher levels of stress or a deficient sexual identity. Sometimes, passing or concealing one's sexual identity maybe a healthy choice in order to stay safe in certain social interactions where disclosure may incur a variety of negative consequences. Goffman (1963) identifies concealing of one's identity as stigma management strategies that allow individuals to control information about stigmatizing attributes and pass as "normal".

It remains unclear from the literature whether the choice to conceal one's sexual identity represents higher levels of internalized homophobia, or a healthy stigma management coping strategy. What appears to be denial of one's same-

sex identity may represent strategic assessments of social interaction. However, the majority of the empirical literature suggests higher levels of nondisclosure are associated with increased presence of depressive symptoms.

Summary

Black and Latina same-sex attracted women hold multiple socially devalued identities. Despites challenges they may face developing their identities as same-sex attracted women of color, supportive niches may exist in their social environment that protect against the negative experiences of minority stress. Using a transactional resilience framework to understand the experiences of BLSSAW may help provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that promote positive adaption to their same-sex identities. The positive outcome of interest in this study is sexual identity acceptance and sexual identity disclosure. Low internalized homophobia indicates positive adaptation to one's sexual identity. Defining sexual identity disclosure as a resilient outcome is less clear. Previous interpretations of hiding one's sexual identity or "passing" equate this behavior with internalized negative attitudes toward one's sexual identity. The counter argument suggest "passing" is a strategic response to real or perceived negative consequences to being out or out of respect for family (i.e. not to bring dishonor, respect to elders etc). Ferguson (2005) argues, "'Coming out' as the standard of liberation and modernity racializes the closet as the symbol of pre-modern backwardness" (64). Ferguson's argument encourages researchers to be mindful of how they may contribute to the oppression associated with being a same-sex minority if one's culture does not conform to white, middle-class definitions of same-sex desire. Prior to conceptualizing low levels of sexual

identity disclosure as pathological, it is necessary to explore whether disclosure is associated with internalized homophobia or a result of hindering structural factors.

The next chapter details the methodology used to approach these questions, including a detailed description of the research design, selection of participants, constructs used to measure each section of Kumpfer's model, as well a discussion of the data analyses.

Chapter 3 Research Design and Methodology

In this study, Black and Latina same-sex attracted women (BLSSAW) were identified as an at risk group due to their stigmatized identity as ethnic, gender, and same-sex attracted minorities who experience both external and internal stressors in the form of racism, sexism, and heterosexism. These chronic forms of discrimination pose a serious threat to the developmental task of adopting a positive same-sex identity. Adversity was measured using women's self-reports of perceived discrimination. Evaluations of women's social context consisted of the perceived quality of interpersonal relationships among family, friend(s), significant other(s), and the surrounding community. The criteria used to judge successful adaptation was the positive development of attitudes toward her sexual orientation (sexual identity acceptance, and disclosure) despite a significant high level of perceived discrimination. Factors hypothesized to explain resilient outcomes included individual self-efficacy and the perceived presence of supportive interpersonal relationships (social support) within women's environmental context (see Figure 3-1).

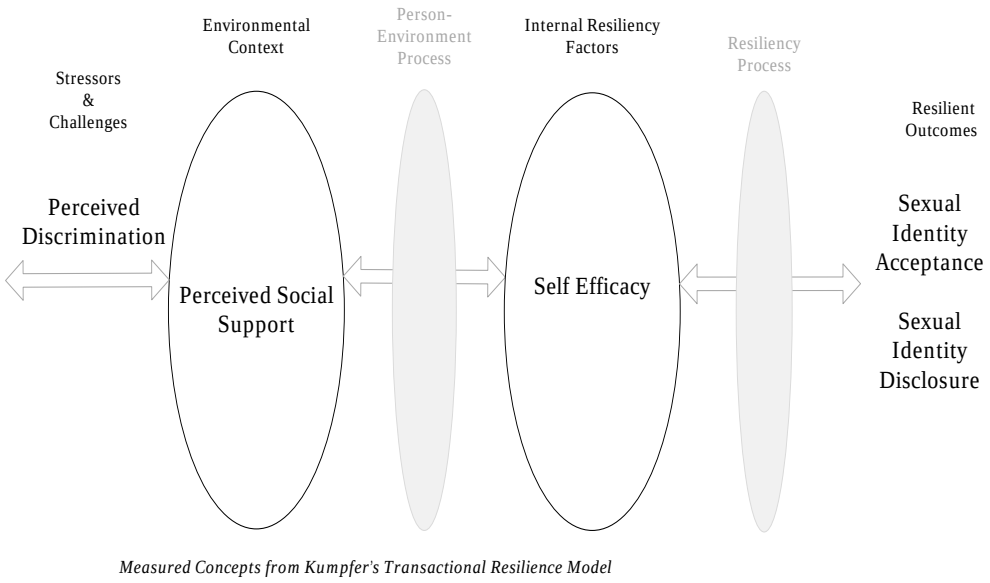


Figure 3-1. *Measured Concepts from Transactional Resilience Model*

Self-reports of perceived discrimination and social support may not accurately represent actual or objective conditions, which leads to some degree of inaccuracy because of the individual's interpretation. However, these potential inaccuracies are offset by what is of importance to women's developmental process is how they *perceive* discrimination and the nature of interpersonal relationships in their social context. Since the adaptation under examination was specific to one's sexual orientation, I defined and measured (positive) adaptation in terms of (positive) acceptance and (higher levels of) disclosure of one's sexual identity.

Two previous studies (Bowleg et al. 2003a; Bowleg, Craig, and Burkholder 2004b) have attempted to understand resilient *processes* among this population. However, additional studies focusing on what *factors* promote resilient outcomes remain unpublished. This study attempted to expand observations on resiliency

among BLSSAW. To achieve this, this study employed a quantitative cross-sectional research design utilizing both self administered web-based, and a pencil and paper questionnaire. Procedures for subjects included reading over the study description, reading study information sheet, and filling out a web-based or six page (front and back) paper questionnaires. Data collection lasted over a six-month period between February 2009 and August 2009. The following sections of this chapter details the research questions and methodology used to recruit participants, construct the questionnaire, and analyze the findings.

Research Aims

A review of the empirical literature reveals little about the experiences of BLSSAW. Therefore, the research aims of this study were to determine:

1) What are the levels of perceived discrimination among BLSSAW and how do they compare to heterosexual Black and Latina women? Consistent with a minority stress assumption, it was hypothesized that Black and Latina same-sex attracted women would report more perceived discrimination than their heterosexual counterparts because of the additional stress they perceive as sexual minorities.

2) Secondly, because levels of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure among BLSSAW were unknown, this study examined the levels of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure in this population. In addition, I sought to understand if levels of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure differed by perceived discrimination. Considering the role of minority stress and literature suggesting racial and ethnic minorities develop their same-sex identities in homophobic environments, it was

hypothesized that there would be low levels of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure among BLSSAW. As well, discrimination would be a negative predictor of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure.

3) To understand the relationship between the predictor variables, the next research aim of this study was to determine the relationship between perceived discrimination, social support, and self-efficacy. I hypothesized that there would be an inverse relationship between perceived discrimination and protective factors, social support and self-efficacy.

4) Subsequently, I wanted to determine if higher levels of social support and self-efficacy would predict higher levels of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. I hypothesized that higher levels of social support and self-efficacy would be associated with and predict higher levels of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure.

5) Testing the effect of the full model of transactional resilience, I explored if increased levels of social support and self-efficacy moderated the effect of perceived discrimination on sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. I hypothesized that higher levels of social support and self-efficacy would moderate the effect of perceived discrimination on sexual identity acceptance and disclosure.

6) Lastly, I wanted to know among this population, what percentage displayed characteristics of resilience (relatively high levels of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure despite perceived discrimination to

her sexual identity). Considering the literature presented by Masten (1994) which suggest resilience is a developmental process, where individuals exposed to higher levels of adversity still display positive adaptation despite their circumstances; I hypothesized that resilience may be more common among BLSSAW who are exposed to adversity due to their multiple identities.

Sample and Data Collection

Black and Latina women over the age of 18 years old who identified as having some same-sex attraction were recruited using purposeful sampling through three main mediums; 1) online newsletters, listservs and internet groups 2) social websites, 3) and personal friend networks. The selected methods were advisable and have been commonly used to access relatively small, hidden populations that are geographically dispersed (Mays et al. 2002).

Online newsletters, listservs, and internet groups

Potential participants received invitations through email to online newsletters, listservs, and internet groups targeted toward same-sex attracted individuals.

Social Websites

Online advertisements were placed in the bulletin and classified spaces of social websites geared to the public including Friendster, Facebook, and Myspace. As well as those targeted specifically toward Blacks and Latinos such as Blackplanet (large social networking site for Blacks), Vostu (Spanish edition of Facebook), MiGente (large social networking site for Latinos), and MySpace Latino (Spanish edition of MySpace). Lastly, social websites geared toward

same-sex attracted individuals such as Downelink, BiCupid, and Curioswomen.com.

Friend networks

Utilizing existing personal networks with Black and Latina women who either identify as lesbian, bisexual, or have expressed some same-sex attraction, I asked these individuals to participate, as well, solicit friends and individuals they know who might be interested an eligible to participate in this study.

Participants who responded to invitations to participate had the option of filling out the survey online by means of Qualtrics[8] or receiving a hardcopy of the questionnaire in English or Spanish. The 10-page questionnaire addressed the major constructs outlined in Kumpfer's model detailed in Chapter 2. Participants read over a letter describing the study and an informed consent letter (Appendix A) which informed them their completion and return of the survey acknowledged their consent to participate.

Participants who requested surveys by mail were also sent two additional survey packets, asking them to pass on additional surveys to friends they might know who are interested and eligible to participate. Each mailed survey packet contained an addressed postage paid return envelope. Participants enclosed and returned their surveys in the postage paid large white envelope. Participants were instructed NOT to place their names anywhere on the return envelope or survey packet. In addition, addressed postcards were inside of each packet and

[8] Qualtrics is an online research suite that provides survey design, reporting and analysis, distribution and data management.

participants had the option of returning the postcard with their name and address or email if they wished to receive the results of the study.

Measures

The questionnaire used in this study was composed of six sections. Sections 1-5 measured a different major construct identified in Kumpfer's theoretical model. Each section utilized scales with established reliability and validity. Some of the scales were modified for the purpose of this study, which is detailed below. The final section was a socio-demographic questionnaire.

Perceived Discrimination Scale

The Perceived Discrimination Scale (PDS), taken from the Midlife in the United States (MIDUS) survey, was used to measure lifetime and daily discrimination. The first question measured number of lifetime discrimination events. Out of ten events, participants were asked how many times in her life she experienced that event, such as not being hired for a job. The number of events was totaled to create a score for the number of lifetime discrimination events. Higher scores indicated more lifetime discrimination events.

The second set of questions measured daily discrimination. Participants were asked nine questions such as how often on a day-to-day basis she was treated less courteously than others were. Participants assessed each question on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 =Never, and 4=Often. Scores were totaled and ranged from 9-36, with higher scores representing higher levels of daily discrimination. Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = .89$ for the present study.

The third set of question asked individuals to choose the main reason she believed she faced discrimination; reasons included age, gender, race, ethnicity,

religion, weight/height, some other aspect of appearance, a physical disability, sexual orientation, or other. Participants were allowed to check more than one reason. For the purpose of this study, the question, "Overall, how much has discrimination interfered with you having a full and productive life?" was broken into three separate questions to ask about gender, race, and sexual orientation separately (i.e. "Overall, how much has discrimination against your **sexual orientation** interfered with you having a full and productive life?"). Participants rated their experiences on a 1 to 4 point Likert scale, where 1 = "A lot" and 4= "Not at all".

Social Support

The social support scale assessed individuals' perceptions of quality of interpersonal relationships. The survey consisted of six questions on a 1 to 4point Likert scale adopted from Pierce et al's (1991) on relationship based perceptions of social support and using the theoretical guidance of Keyes (1998) dimension of social well being and social integration. The survey questions measured three domains of interpersonal relationships, including sense of comfort and support (questions 1, 6), conflict (questions 3, 4), and sense of closeness and depth (questions 2, 5) of specific relationships. A question measuring social support asked, "To what extent could you count on this (individual, relationship, group) if you needed them". An example of conflict was, "How much does this (individual, relationship, group) want you to change"? Questions examining depth asked, "How significant is this (individual, relationship, group) in your life"? For each question the respondent was asked to rate her answer for each of the 10 relationship groups which included significant

other, mother, father, siblings, extended family, friends, ethnic community, gay community, church, and persons at place of employment, for a total of 60 questions. Answers ranged from 1-4, where 1 = “Not at all”, 2 = “A Little”, 3 = “Somewhat”, 4 = “A Lot”.

Scores for conflict (questions 3, 4) were reverse coded. Summed total scores for all six questions created a total score of social support. Higher scores represented higher levels of perceived social support and low conflict. To assess whether the source of social support was important, four subgroups were created for social support. The four subgroups included social support from significant other (significant other), social support of friends (friends), social support of family (mother, father, siblings, extended family), and social support of community (gay community, ethnic community, church, job) by summing scores and averaging them by total number of questions. Cronbach’s alpha was $\alpha = .78$.

Self- Efficacy

The “Self Efficacy” scale (SE) was a 10 item inventory designed to assess the degree of perceived self-efficacy, the belief that one can perform a novel or difficult tasks, or cope with adversity in various domains of human functioning (Wagnild and Young 1993). Ten items formed a one-dimensional scale. Items were scored on a 1 to 4 point scale (1 = “Not at all true”, 4 = “Exactly true”). Participants were asked questions such as, “I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough”. Documented criterion-related validity exists in numerous correlation studies where positive coefficients are associated with favorable emotions, dispositional optimism, and work satisfaction. Negative coefficients are associated with depression, anxiety, stress, burnout, and health

complaints. Possible scores ranged from 10 to 40 with higher scores representing higher levels of self-efficacy. Cronbach's alpha was α= .90 for the present study.

Sexual Identity Acceptance

The Lesbian Internalized Homophobia Scale (LIHS) designed by Szymanski & Chung (2001) measures several dimensions of women's same-sex identity. Different from the Cass model (1984), which assesses stage of same-sex attracted identity, the LIHS scale assesses multiple dimensions of experience relevant to same-sex attracted women's identity development.

The five subscales identified include 1) connection with the lesbian community (CWLC), 2) public identification as lesbian (PIL), 3) personal feelings about being a lesbian (PFL), 4) moral and religious attitudes toward lesbians (MRATL), and 5) attitude toward other lesbians (ATOL) (20 items total, 4 items per subscale). Connection with the lesbian community refers to the individual's feelings of connectivity to the larger lesbian and bisexual community (# 6, 7, 16, 19; α =.79). Responses can range from feelings of isolation to social embeddedness. Public identification as a lesbian describes the process of how a woman manages her lesbian identity (# 1, 8, 14, 20; α =.74). Responses can range from passing, to fear of discovery of sexual identity, to disclosure about her sexual identity to others. Passing can range from hiding one's sexual orientation completely to being able to move in out of certain social settings while being perceived as heterosexual. Disclosure refers to those women willing to be out publicly as lesbian or bisexual. Personal feelings about being a lesbian/ bisexual assess an individual's feelings toward their sexual orientation (# 3, 5, 15, 17; α =.77). Responses range from self-hatred to self-acceptance. Moral and religious

attitudes toward lesbians (MRATL) refers to an individual's global attitude about lesbianism/ bisexuality, ranging from condemnation to tolerance and acceptance (#4, 9, 10, 13; α =.79). The section, attitude toward other lesbians (ATOL), refers to the attitudes that women hold toward members of the larger group (# 2, 11, 12, 18; α =.53). Attitudes can range from horizontal oppression/hostility to group appreciation. Horizontal oppression/ hostility refers to group deprecating attitudes (Szymanski and Chung 2003). It involves attitudes of devaluation and disrespect about other lesbians and their relationships (Pearlman 1987). Further, it involves criticizing other lesbians and often results in divisions along lines of political correctness, lifestyles, and inclusiveness (Pharr 1988).

Participants were asked to place a number 1-5 on a Likert scale by each of the 20 statements, where 1= "Disagree Strongly", and 5= "Agree Strongly". Assessment of LIHS used average total and subscale scores. Higher scores under the original coding of the scale indicated a greater degree of internalized homophobia/ negative attitudes toward one's sexual orientation. Szymanski and Chung report a reliability coefficient of reproducibility of α = .93, a scalability coefficient of α = .73, and a construct validity score of α = .94 (Szymanski and Chung 2001).

In this study, the wordage of certain sentences was changed, for example "lesbian community", read "lesbian/bisexual community". Questions 1-3, 12-13, 15, and 18 were reverse coded. Total scores were summed and averaged on subscales and total scale to create the measure "Sexual Identity Acceptance". Scores ranged from 1-5, where higher scores represented higher levels of sexual identity acceptance. Cronbach's alpha was α= .87.

Sexual Orientation Disclosure

The "Outness" Inventory (OI) is a 12-item ordinal scale designed to assess the degree to which same-sex attracted individuals are public about their sexual orientation (Mohr and Fassinger 2000). The OI inventory assessed level of sexual identity disclosure (SID). Responses on OI items indicated the degree to which the respondent's sexual orientation was known by and openly discussed with various types of individuals (i.e. mother, work peers). The OI consisted of 12 items on a seven-point Likert scale. Respondents were instructed to select the number corresponding to each of the 12 different types of relationships listed where 1 = "person definitely does not know about your sexual orientation status", to 7= "person definitely knows about your sexual orientation status, and it is openly talked about". A score of 5 or above indicated that the participant had definitely disclosed her identity to the individual or group represented in that statement.

A single score of sexual identity disclosure included sum scores of all scale items divided by total number of items. Cronbach's alpha for the present study was α =.90. Three subscales were created to obtain an average score for level of disclosure in three categories, out to family (items 1, 2, 3, 4), out to world (items 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12), out to religious community (items 8, 9). The original authors found strong support for each of the three subscales through confirmatory factor analysis; Cronbach alphas are reported for the present study "out to family" (α =.79), "out to world" (α =.88), and "out religion" (α =.72).

Demographic Questionnaire

The demographic questionnaire consisted of a 15 questions including background information on age, occupation, race/ethnicity, relationship status, marital status, number of children, education, religion and questions regarding self-described sexual identity adopted from Gregory (1998). Slight modifications to the original instrument include expanding the race ethnicity category to include Black/ African American, Afro-Caribbean (i.e. Jamaican, Haitian, etc.), African Immigrant (Nigerian, Ghanaian, etc.), Hispanic or Latina (i.e. Dominican, Puerto Rican, etc.) or Mixed Race or asking participants to specify. In addition to the original demographic instrument, questions were included on sexual behavior (asking participants to describe sexual behavior as exclusively with women to exclusively with men) and on sexual-gender identity (asking participants if they identify as any of the following; Femme, Tomboy, Soft stud, Stud, Butch, other, or none).

Data Analysis

The following section details the analytic strategy used to test the above research hypotheses. First, using information collected from the demographic questionnaire an overview of the sample characteristics of the population was completed using descriptive statistics to assess frequencies of characteristics of the entire sample.

In Chapter 4, I test the hypothesis that Black and Latina same-sex attracted women would report more perceived discrimination than their heterosexual counterparts would. Comparable data for the heterosexual sample was obtained from the MIDUS public dataset. Participants in the MIDUS dataset

who identified as African American/Black, Hispanic, female and heterosexual were used to make cross comparisons with the sample obtained in this study. Descriptive statistics were used to assess the frequencies, means, and standard deviations for lifetime discrimination, daily discrimination, and causal attribution of the discrimination perceived. Lifetime discrimination, daily discrimination, and causal attribution of the discrimination perceived were calculated by summing the scores on each respective measure. An independent t-test was used to compare the means of total reported lifetime discrimination events, number of events in each category of lifetime discrimination, total daily discrimination, and number of causal attributions for perceived discrimination.

To test the hypothesis that there would be low levels of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure among BLSSAW, in Chapter 5 I use descriptive statistics to determine the means, and standard deviations on the sexual identity acceptance and disclosure scales. High sexual identity acceptance was defined as participants scoring one standard deviation above the scales midpoint of three (3). High sexual identity disclosure was defined as participants reporting a score of five or above on the disclosure scale. A score of five represented the first score on the disclosure scale whereby participants had actively disclosed her sexual identity to the individual or group represented in that statement. Bivariate associations were then used to assess the relationship between sexual identity acceptance and disclosure.

To test the hypothesis that discrimination would be a negative predictor of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure, first bivariate associations were used to assess the relationship between lifetime discrimination, daily discrimination, and

discrimination specific to sexual orientation. Discrimination specific to sexual orientation was measured by creating a dichotomous variable where women who identified that her sexual orientation was one of the main reasons for the discrimination she perceived were coded one; those not selecting her sexual orientation as one of the main reasons she for the discrimination she perceived were coded zero. An independent sample *t*-test was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between women perceiving discrimination specific to her sexual orientation with respect to the average means across total scores for sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. As well, an independent sample *t*-test was used across subscales of sexual identity acceptance (i.e. connection with lesbian community, personal identification as a lesbian, personal feelings as a lesbian, moral and religious attitudes toward lesbians, and attitudes toward other lesbians) and disclosure (i.e. out to family out to world, and out to religious community). Last, a linear regression was used to test the effects of discrimination on sexual identity acceptance and disclosure.

Beginning in Chapter 6, I test the hypothesis that there would be an inverse relationship between perceived discrimination and protective factors social support and self-efficacy. First, descriptive statistics were used to obtain sample mean scores for social support, and self-efficacy. Next, bivariate associations were used to assess the relationship between predictors, lifetime discrimination, daily discrimination, discrimination specific to sexual identity, social support, and self-efficacy. Last, an independent *t*-test was used to compare mean scores of social support and self-efficacy between women who identified

that her sexual orientation was one of the main reasons for the discrimination she perceived and those who did not.

In Chapter 7, I test the hypothesis that higher levels of social support and self-efficacy would be associated with higher levels of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. Pearson's product moment correlations were used to determine the relationship between the variables social support, self-efficacy, sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. Last, a linear regression was used to test the effects of social support, self-efficacy, on sexual identity acceptance and disclosure.

In Chapter 8, I test the hypothesis that higher levels of social support and self-efficacy would moderate the effect of perceived discrimination on sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. Using a linear regression model, I regressed significant predictor variables from the previous chapters onto sexual identity acceptance and disclosure.

Lastly, in Chapter 9, to test the hypothesis that resilience may be more common among BLSSAW, four dichotomous outcome categories were created from the measures sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. To create the categories for sexual identity acceptance, a dichotomous variable was created where participants scoring one standard deviation above the scales midpoint were coded 1, and all others were coded zero. To create the categories for sexual identity disclosure, a dichotomous variable was created where participants scoring a 5 our above were coded 1, and all others were coded zero. Cross-tabulations with the variable "perceived discrimination to sexual orientation" were used to identify participants with 1) low sexual identity acceptance and disclosure, and low perceived discrimination (*dysfunctional reintegration),* 2)

low sexual identity acceptance and disclosure, and high perceived discrimination *(maladaptive reintegration)*, 3) high sexual identity acceptance and disclosure, and low perceived discrimination (*homoeostatic reintegration)*, and 4) high sexual identity acceptance and disclosure, and high perceived discrimination (*resilient reintegration)*. Cross-tabulations were used to identify participants who were resilient in *both* sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. Descriptive statistics were then used to identify frequencies for each category. Bivariate associations were used to assess the relationship between participants' socio-demographic characteristics, sexual identity acceptance, and disclosure. Last, using an ordinal logistic regression procedure, significant associations found among participants' socio-demographic characteristics were used to predict membership in resilient outcome categories of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure.

Due to the amount of variation by racial category among participants including those women who identified as both (Black and Latina) or by other categories (i.e. African immigrant, Caribbean, mixed race) comparisons by race were not completed. The following chapters outline the results of these analyses.

Chapter 4 "Complex Intersections": A Comparison of Discrimination among Black and Latina Same-Sex Attracted and Heterosexual Women

I am not a racially supersensitive person looking for danger behind every rock, and I feel I can handle myself pretty well; however, I am very much aware of what goes on around me. Being a person of color my antennae are supertunned. I see a lot of terribly ugly and insensitive behavior much too often (Martin 1999; 148).

In the introduction of this project, I explained that because of their race, gender, and sexual orientation, Black and Latina same-sex attracted women (BLSSAW) are expected to experience increased amounts of psychological stress than their heterosexual counterparts. Still, whether this stress is specifically related to their sexual identity has not yet been tested. Therefore, an expressed interest of this study was to observe the experiences of discrimination among BLSSAW.

This chapter addresses the following research aim:

> *How do levels of perceived discrimination among Black and Latina same-sex attracted women compare to heterosexual Black and Latina women?*

Beginning with an overall description of the women who participated in this study, the data presented in this chapter looks at the experiences of adversity among BLSSAW. Specifically, it looks at women's reports of lifetime, daily, and discrimination specific to her sexual orientation. As discussed in Chapter 2, the intersection of multiple identities creates different social experiences. To understand how sexual identity further compounds experiences of adversity, the women in this sample are compared to Black and Latina heterosexual identified

women (BLHW) using comparative data from the Midlife in the United States (MIDUS) national survey.

Sample Description

Table 4-1 presents a summary of the socio-demographics for the women who participated in this study. The women in this study ranged from age 18-61, with the average age of participants being 30 years old (s.d. = 8.96). The largest part of the sample identified ethnically as Black/African American (73%, n=86). Latina participants represented 10% of the sample (n=12). Most of the participants in the sample (50%, n=59) indicated they were in committed relationships and lived with her partner/spouse (39%, n=46) at the time the survey was conducted. The majority of women in the sample did not have children (69%, n=81).

A good number of the women were college educated (64%, n=75). Among that 64%, 41% (n=48) indicated she had a college degree, and another 23% (n=27) had a graduate or professional degree. The bulk of women who participated were employed full-time (62%, n= 73) and 23% (n=27) specified she was in a professional or technical occupation. Half the participants were Christian or Protestant (51%, n=60), and another 35% (n=41) indicated no religious affiliation. For the most part, women in the sample identified as Lesbian/Gay (64%, n=75) and had sexual relations exclusively with women (68%, n=80).

Table 4-1: Sample Description (n=118)

	N	%
Age		
18-25	32	27%
26-34	55	47%
35-44	19	16%
45+	12	10%
Race/Ethnicity		
Black/ African American	86	73%
Afro-Caribbean (i.e. Jamaican, Haitian)	6	5%
African Immigrant (i.e. Nigerian, Ghanaian)	3	3%
Latina (i.e. Chicana, Dominicana)	12	10%
Multiracial/ Other	11	9%
Relationship Status		
Single	41	35%
Dating	20	17%
In committed relationship	59	50%
Married to person of same-sex	5	4%
Married to person of opposite-sex	4	3%
Educational Attainment		
Some High School or Vocational Training	3	3%
Some College	40	34%
College Degree	48	41%
Graduate/Professional Degree	27	23%
Household Composition		
Children	29	25%
Parents	11	9%
Friend(s)	23	19%
Girlfriend/Partner/Spouse	46	39%
Other Relatives	5	4%
Self	33	28%
Children		
0	81	69%
1	16	14%
2	12	10%
3	7	6%
4	2	2%

Table 4-1 *Socio Demographic Characteristics*

Table 4-1: Sample Description (n=118) cont.

	N	%
Occupation		
Professional/Technical	27	23%
Managerial/Administrative	22	19%
Sales	6	5%
Clerical	4	3%
Culture/Arts	2	2%
Student	23	19%
Other	27	23%
Employment Status		
Student	49	42%
Employed Full Time	73	62%
Employed Part Time	18	15%
Unemployed	6	5%
Self Employed	10	8%
Military	6	5%
Retired	2	2%
Religion		
Christian/ Protestant	60	51%
Catholic	9	8%
Jewish	2	2%
Muslim/Islamic	0	0%
Atheist/Agnostic	6	5%
None	41	35%
Sexual Orientation		
Lesbian/Gay	75	64%
Bisexual	22	19%
Queer	13	11%
Exploring/Curious/Other	8	7%
Sexual Relations		
Exclusively Women	80	68%
Mostly Women	14	12%
Women and Men Equally	9	8%
Mostly Men	9	8%
Exclusively Men	3	3%

Comparing Perceived Discrimination between Black and Latina Same-sex Attracted and Heterosexual Women

Lifetime Discrimination

An important aspect in assessing resilient outcomes is to understand the experiences of adversity in the population under investigation. Lifetime discrimination refers to major discriminatory events that occur less frequently over the life course whereas daily discrimination refers to the repetitive, routine discriminatory practices (Essed 1990; Essed 1991).

Black and Latina same-sex attracted women (BLSSAW) in this study assessed lifetime discrimination by estimating the number of times in her life she perceived discrimination because of things such as her race, gender, sexual orientation or other social characteristics.

The majority of Black and Latina same-sex attracted women (74%, n= 92) reported experiencing some type of lifetime discrimination event with the median number of reported lifetime discrimination events being six (M = 11.98, s.d. = 27.36). Of the 103 Black and Latina heterosexual identified women (BLHW) in the MIDUS dataset, the majority (61%, n=63) reported experiencing no lifetime discrimination events (M =2.96, s.d. =11.24) (see Figure 4-2).

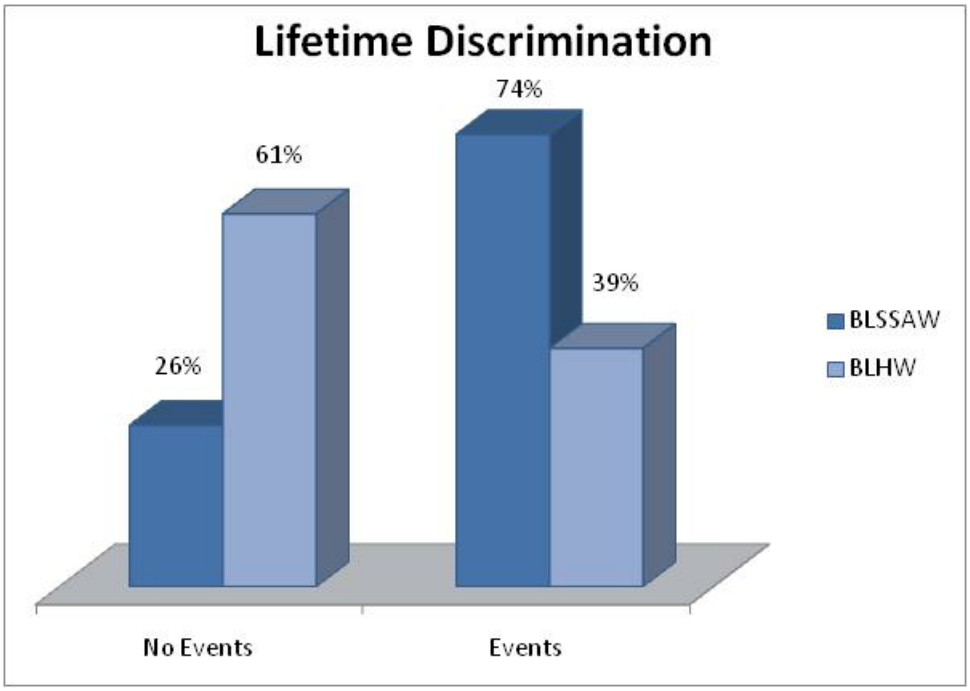


Figure 4-1. *Lifetime Discrimination for Same-Sex Attracted and Heterosexual Samples*

An independent t-test revealed a significant difference in sample means of reported lifetime discrimination between BLSSAW and BLHW, t= 3.829 (226), *p* <.00.

Among BLSSAW, the most frequently reported type of lifetime discrimination event included not being hired for a job (45%, n=61), being denied a promotion (42%, n=57), and being hassled by the police (35%, n=48).

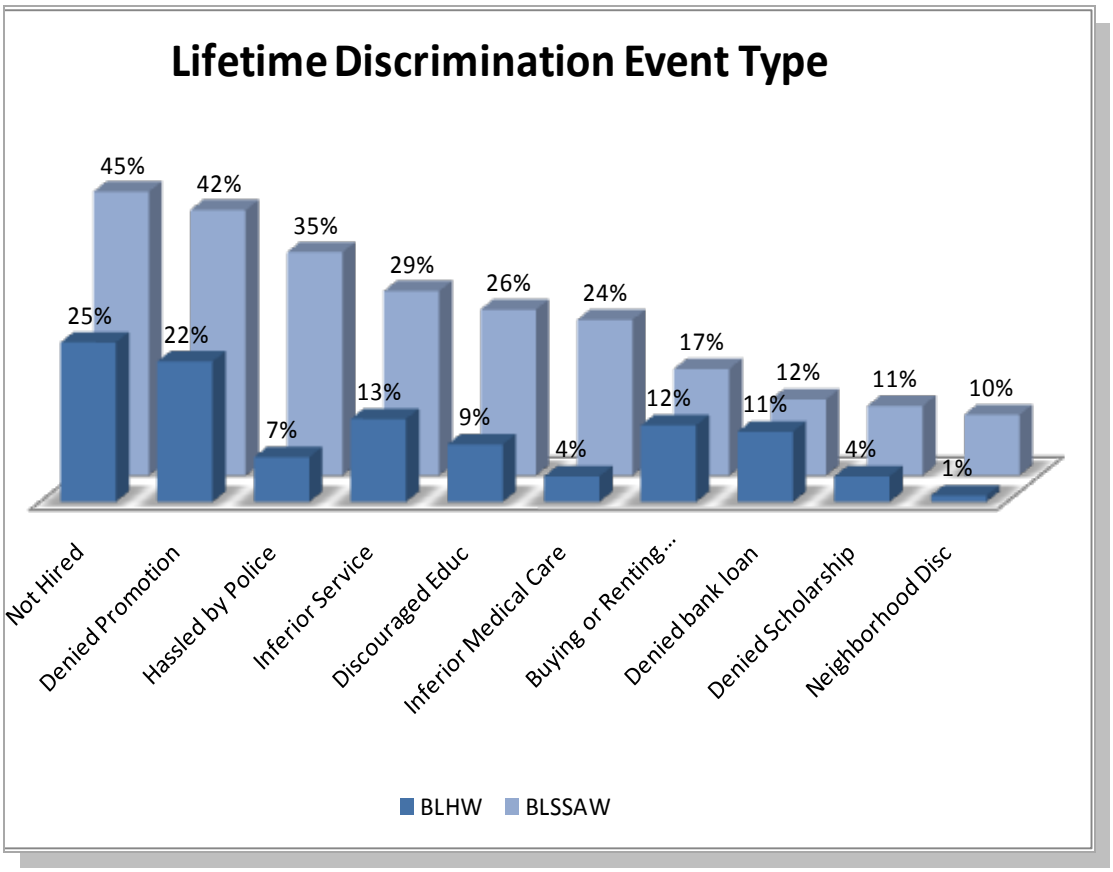


Figure 4-2: *Lifetime Discrimination Event Type for Same-Sex Attracted and Heterosexual Samples*

Figure 4-3 compares BLSSAW to BLHW reporting type of lifetime discrimination event. Similarly to same-sex attracted women in the study, heterosexual identified women reported not being hired for a job (25%, n=26), and being denied a promotion (23%, n=23) as the top two lifetime discrimination events she experienced. Unlike same-sex attracted women in the study, heterosexual identified women reported being provided with inferior service as the third most frequent lifetime discrimination event experienced (13%, n=13).

Table 4-2 shows the comparison of means of reported lifetime discrimination events. Significant differences in sample means were found among lifetime discrimination events not being hired for a job, denied a promotion, being hassled by the police, being provided with inferior medical care, and being prevented from remaining in a neighborhood.

Table 4-2: Lifetime Discrimination Event Means for Same-Sex Attracted and Heterosexual Samples

	BLSSAW[1]	(sd)	BLHW[2]	(sd)	t (df)	
Not Hired	3.45	(10.42)	0.62	(1.49)	2.73 (238)	**
Denied Promotion	1.69	(4.44)	0.44	(1.28)	2.77 (238)	**
Hassled by Police	1.44	(4.70)	0.09	(0.37)	2.74 (238)	**
Inferior Service	1.27	(1.57)	1.17	(9.86)	.112 (236)	
Discouraged Educ	1.36	(8.66)	0.14	(0.52)	1.52 (238)	
Inferior Medical Care	0.61	(1.57)	0.06	(0.31)	3.54 (236)	***
Buying or Renting Disc	0.70	(4.50)	0.23	(0.91)	1.03 (227)	
Denied bank loan	0.64	(2.97)	0.16	(0.48)	1.63 (236)	
Denied Scholarship	0.51	(2.77)	0.06	(0.31)	1.65 (238)	
Neighborhood Disc	0.17	(0.79)	0.01	(0.10)	2.01 (227)	*

*** p <.000, ** p <.01, * p < .05 (two tailed)

[1] *BLSSAW- Black and Latina Same-Sex Attracted Women*

[2] *BLHW- Black and Latina Heterosexual Identified Women*

Table 4-2 : *Lifetime Discrimination Event Means for Same-Sex Attracted and Heterosexual Samples*

Daily Discrimination

Lifetime discrimination was significantly correlated with daily discrimination for both the heterosexual (r = .199, p < .05) and same-sex attracted sample (r = .413, p < .01). Daily discrimination assessed the frequency in which participants experienced events such as being treated with less respect, courtesy, or were harassed. Scores ranged from a possible 9-36, with higher scores representing more daily discrimination.

Mean scores on the daily discrimination scale for BLSSAW were 20.66 (s.d. = 5.79). Comparatively, BLHW's mean scores on the daily discrimination scale were higher at 25.50 (s.d. = 5.30). An independent t-test revealed a significant difference in sample means of reported daily discrimination between BLSSAW and BLHW, t= -6.635 (238), p <.00. Unlike reports of lifetime discrimination, these results indicate the heterosexual sample reported higher levels of daily discrimination than same-sex attracted women in the sample.

Causal Attributions for Discrimination

Participants were asked to identify the main reasons she believed she experienced discrimination. Among BLSSAW, the top three reasons for main source of discrimination reported by participants included race (n=94), gender (n=72), and sexual orientation (n=67). Heterosexual identified Black and Latina women reported race (n=46), gender (n=12), and weight or height (n=12) as the top three causal attributions for perceived discrimination (see Figure 4-4).

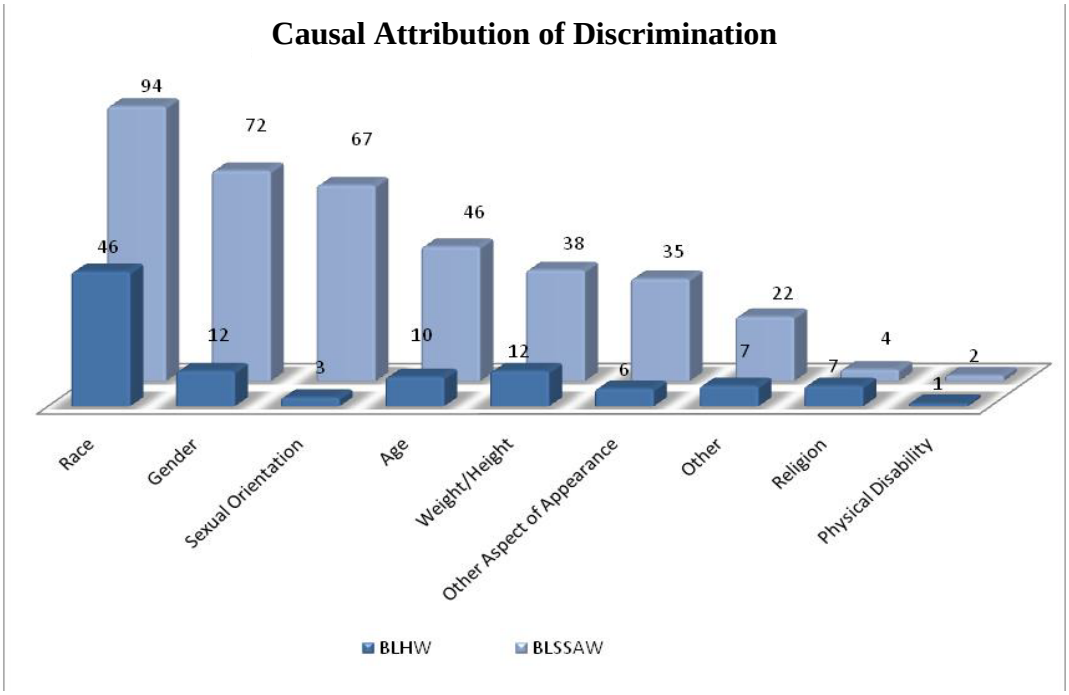


Figure 4-3: *Causal Attribution of Discrimination for Same-Sex Attracted and Heterosexual Samples*

The majoritiy of participants in both samples were likely to select more than one main source for the discrimination they percieved; 85% (n=128) of BLSSAW and 62% (n=63) of BLHW. However among BLHW, the majority of women selected one reason (*M* =1.00, s.d. = 1.13) for percieved discrimination (38%, n=39) compared to BLSSAW, where the majority (44%, n=56) selected four or more reasons (*M* = 3.08, s.d. = 1.84) (see Figure 4-5).

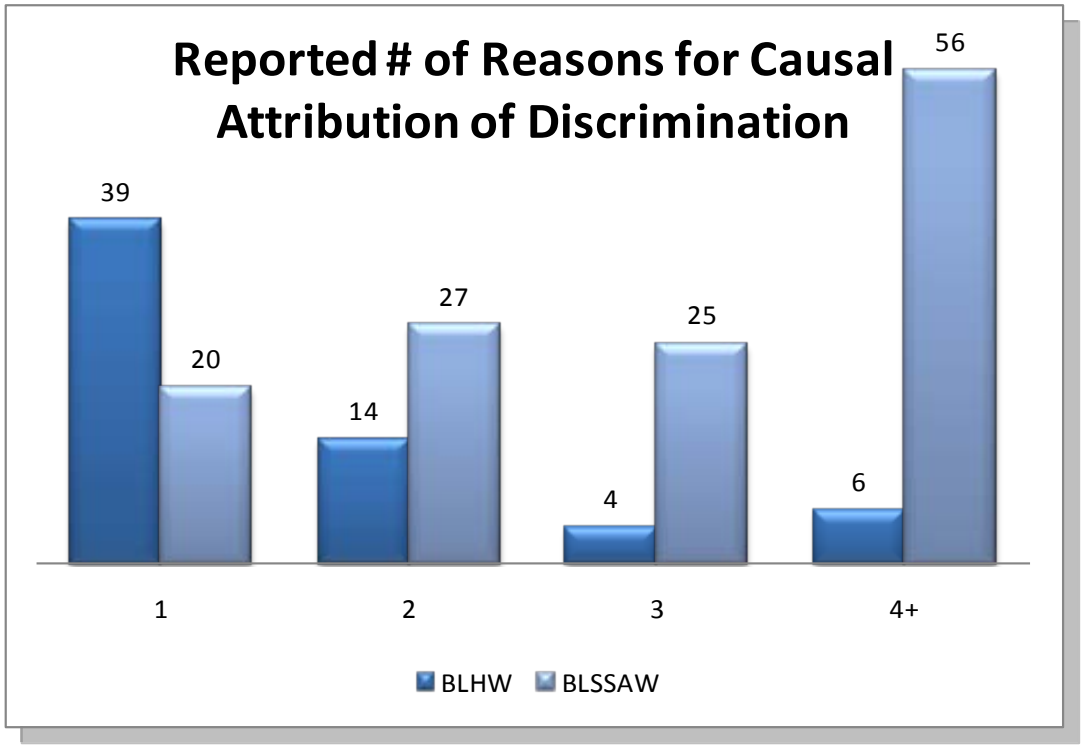


Figure 4-4. *Reported # of Causal Attribution of Discrimination for Same-Sex Attracted and Heterosexual Samples*

An independent t-test revealed a significant difference in sample means of reported number of causal attributions between BLSSAW and BLHW, t= 6.80 (206), *p* <.00.

Living a Productive Life

Different from the original MIDUS questionnaire[9], participants rated how much discrimination by race, gender, and sexual orientation specifically had affected her ability to live a productive life. BLSSAW participants reported how much she believed discrimination had affected her ability to live a productive life. As a reminder, race and gender were the top reported causal attributions of discrimination participants perceived (see Figure 4-4). However, when asked overall how has race and gender affected her ability to live a productive life, the majority of respondents reported race and gender had little to no affect on her ability to live a productive life, 58%, n= 78 and 65%, n=87, respectively (Figure 4-6).

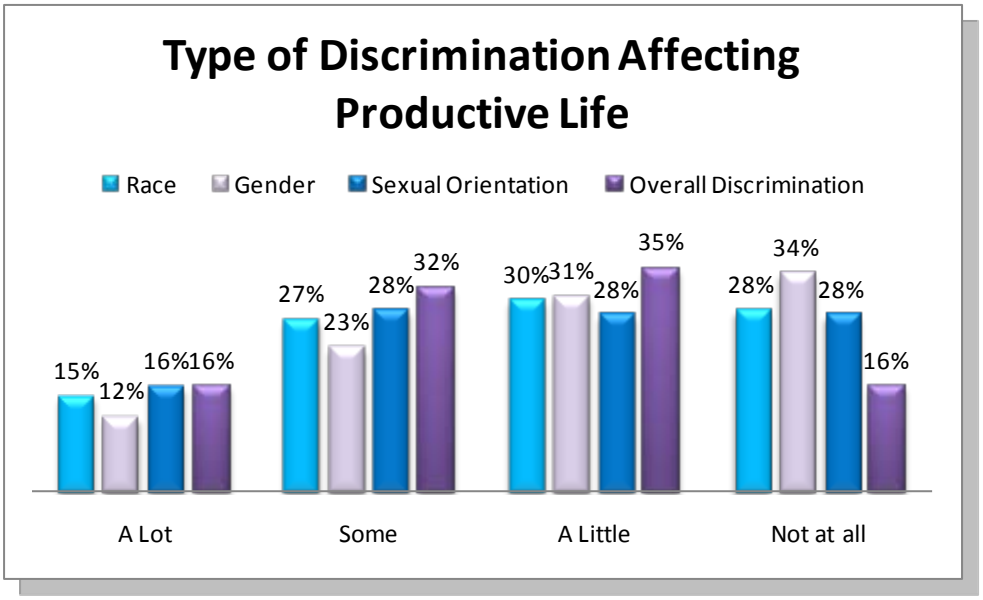


Figure 4-5. *Type of Discrimination Affecting Productive Life for Same-Sex Attracted Sample*

[9] The MIDUS questionnaire asks participants how much discrimination has affected their ability to live a productive life.

More variance existed among participants responses to sexual orientation; 16% (n=22) of women reported discrimination to her sexual orientation affected her ability to live a productive life “A lot”; 28% (n=38) of women reported “Some”; 28% (n=37) reporting “A little”; and the remaining 28% (n=37) reporting “Not at all”. Overall, participants reported discrimination, in general, had “A little” to “Some” affect on her ability to lead a productive life (67%, n= 90).

Discussion

The present chapter tested the hypothesis that Black and Latina same-sex attracted women would report more perceived discrimination than their heterosexual counterparts. The results of this chapter provided strong support for this hypothesis. The majority of same-sex attracted women reporting experiences of acute discrimination (lifetime discrimination events) were particularly high at 74% compared to their heterosexual counterparts at 39% and the general population at 33.5% (see Kessler et al 1999). These findings support Brooks (1981) who suggest sexual and racial minorities experience disproportionately more negative life events.

Among lifetime discrimination events reported, Black and Latina same-sex attracted and heterosexual women both reported not being hired for a job or denied a promotion as the top two lifetime discrimination events they perceived. Where heterosexual identified women were next likely to cite receiving inferior service, the same-sex attracted sample identified being hassled by the police as the next frequent type of lifetime discrimination event.

The differences in type of perceived discrimination among same-sex minorities highlight some of the distinct aspects of discrimination same-sex

attracted women are exposed to, different from their heterosexual counterparts. For example, being hassled by police, or feeling unwelcomed in one's neighborhood, might reflect specific forms of social intolerance to aspects of same-sex attracted women's appearance or lifestyle choices. Same-sex attracted women who either present a non-gender conforming appearance[10], live with their partners, or socialize with other same-sex attracted women maybe specific targets of this type of harassment because of visible (or perceived markers) of their same-sex attracted identities. Many of these attributes, seen as transgressing social norms, are more likely to be "policed" by individuals and social institutions (Butler 1996; Lucal 1999; Moore 2006).

As well, when comparing mean differences in types of lifetime discrimination events, notable differences were also found among receiving inferior medical service. Lambda Legal's (2010) recent report of lesbian, gay and bisexual persons' access to healthcare showed sexual orientation negatively affects quality and access of healthcare; as well, higher proportions of those experiencing discriminatory or substandard care were persons of color.

Still, the same-sex attracted women in this study indicated experiencing comparable low daily discrimination to their heterosexual counterparts. The majority of the literature shows people are more likely to report everyday discrimination than lifetime discrimination (Kessler, Mickelson, and Williams 1999; Schultz, Williams, Israel, Becker, Parker, James, and Jackson 2000; Williams, Yu, Jackson, and Anderson. 1997). Possibly explaining this discrepancy, BLSSAW

[10] Gender-nonconforming (GNC) refers to individuals whose external manifestation of their gender identity does not conform to society's expectations of gender roles.

may minimize chronic (day-to-day) forms of discrimination as a protective strategy. Ruggiero and Taylor (1997) found minimizing discrimination protects self esteem and helps maintain individuals' perceptions of control over their performance. As well, Feagin (1991) found some middle class blacks attempt to minimize or reassess possible experiences of daily discrimination as a coping response. Thus, while possibly minimizing experiences of day-to-day discrimination, acute experiences of discrimination maybe more salient to BLSSAW.

Both heterosexual and same-sex attracted women citing multiple reasons for perceived discrimination show evidence of intersectionality. While heterosexual women were likely to attribute only one aspect of their identity as the main reason she perceived discrimination, the majority of same-sex attracted women selected four or more reasons. For the heterosexual population, race was the most salient causal attribution of discrimination. Kessler et al (1999) found African Americans, similarly cite race as the top causal attribution of discrimination. Interestingly, same-sex attracted women in this study suggested their race, gender, and sexual orientation were the top three causal attributions for perceived discrimination. Only 12% of heterosexual Black and Latina women cited gender, and a mere 3% cited sexual orientation as causal attributions of perceived discrimination. Where heterosexual ethnic minority women may see race as the most salient form of discrimination, having a minority *sexual* identity may make *gender* and *sexual orientation* discrimination more salient among same-sex attracted women. Rodriguez (2007) argues that perceived

discrimination may be gendered or racialized whereby members of different social groups may perceive themselves to face different forms of discrimination.

Lastly, despite reporting race and gender as the top reasons for discrimination, the majority of participants did not believe discrimination by race and gender greatly affected their ability to live productive lives. Responses varied more in women's perception on how discrimination toward sexual orientation affected their ability to lead productive lives. This variation may be explained by the different resources BLSSAW have for different aspects of their identities. Often, Black and Latina women grow up within families that provide social support and coping strategies for dealing with racial and gender discrimination (Phinney and Chavira 1995). However, many same-sex attracted minorities have limited social support and access to resources for dealing with discrimination to their same-sex identities (Jackson and Brown 1996; Loiacano 1989).

Overall, the results of this chapter support the use of an intersectional framework to address the differential experiences of discrimination among multiple minorities. As discussed previously in chapter 2, examining race or gender alone creates "intersectional invisibility" where individuals with multiple subordinate group identities (e.g. same-sex attracted ethnic minority women) are rendered invisible in analysis (Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach 2008). Contrasting the data from the women in this study with a national sample of heterosexual Black and Latina women illustrates the vast difference in experiences of discrimination by subgroups.

Chapter 5 "Coming Out and into Her Own": Sexual Identity Acceptance and Disclosure

Results presented in the previous chapter show women perceive varying levels of discrimination to their identity as racial, gender, and same-sex attracted minorities. In the introduction of this study, I noted that levels of sexual identity acceptance or disclosure among Black and Latina same-sex attracted women (BLSSAW) were unknown. Taking into consideration women's perceptions of and reported sources of discrimination, I examine how variation in perceived discrimination affects levels of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure among the women in this study.

Accordingly, this chapter addresses the following research aims:

> *What are the levels of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure in this population? Do levels of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure differ by perceived discrimination?*

This chapter begins with a description of women's levels of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. Next, it addresses the relationship between sexual identity acceptance and disclosure among BLSSAW. To understand the affect of discrimination, I then evaluate the relationships between lifetime discrimination, daily discrimination, discrimination specific to women's sexual orientation, sexual identity acceptance, and disclosure. After evaluating the relationships between perceived discrimination, sexual identity acceptance, and disclosure, I use a linear regression model to show the effect of discrimination on sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. The concluding section of this chapter summarizes the chapter's main findings.

Sexual Identity Acceptance and Disclosure

Sexual identity acceptance was used to assess the dimensions of participants feelings toward her same-sex attracted identity overall (sexual identity acceptance composite) and among the five subscales of sexual identity acceptance. Scores for sexual idenity acceptance ranged from 1-5, with 1 -2 representing negative feelings (disagree-strongly disagree); 3 representing nuetral feelings (somewhat agree); and 4-5 representing positive feelings (agree-strongly agree) toward statements on measure. Table 5-1 presents the mean scores for sexual identity acceptance and subscales for participants. Overall, participants reported high levels of sexual identity acceptance on all scales, with highest mean scores on moral and religious attitudes toward lesbians (MRATL) (*M*=4.38, s.d. = *.760*), and lower mean scores on personal identification as a lesbian (PIL) (*M*=3.58, s.d. = .952).

Table 5-1: Sexual Identity Acceptance Means for Black and Latina Same-Sex Attracted Women

	(n=125)
Sexual Identity Acceptance	4.04 (.570)
Moral and Religious Attitudes toward Lesbians (MRATL)	4.38 (.760)
Personal Feelings about being Lesbian (PFL)	4.36 (.708)
Attitudes Toward other Lesbians (ATOL)	4.14 (.664)
Connection with Lesbian Community (CWLC)	3.73 (.823)
Personal Identification as Lesbian (PIL)	3.58 (.952)

Note: Standard deviations in parentheses.

Table 5-1: *Sexual Identity Acceptance Means for Black and Latina Same-Sex Attracted Women*

The majority of participants (79 %, n=99) had mean scores of 3.57 or higher, indicating relatively high levels of sexual idenitiy acceptance (composite).

A score of 3.57 represented a mean score of at least one standard deviation above the scale's midpoint.

The "Outness Inventory" assessed the degree to which participants had disclosed her sexual identity. This measure included an overall score of disclosure, as well as three subscales of disclosure (being out to her family, out to religious community, and out to the world). Scores ranged from one to seven, with one indicating low sexual identity disclosure and seven indicating higher levels of sexual identity disclosure. Table 5-2 presents the mean scores for sexual identity disclosure (composite) and subscales among participants. On average, participants reported low to moderate levels of sexual identity disclosure on all scales, with highest mean scores on being out to her family (M=5.21, s.d. = 1.70) and lowest mean scores on being out to her religious community (M=3.29, s.d. = 2.21).

Table 5-2: Sexual Identity Disclosure Means for Black and Latina Same-Sex Attracted Women

	(n=125)
Sexual Identity Disclosure	4.50 (1.78)
Out to Family	5.21 (1.70)
Out to World	5.10 (1.79)
Out to Religious Community	3.29 (2.21)

Note: Standard deviations in parentheses.

Table 5-2: *Sexual Identity Disclosure Means for Black and Latina Same-Sex Attracted Women*

Sixty- four participants (47%) had mean scores above 5. On the "Outness Inventory", 5 represents the first score indicating that the individual "definitely"

had disclosed her sexual identity to the individual or group represented in the statement; whereas lower scores (1-4) suggest the individual had not disclosed her sexual identity even though the group or individual represented in that statement may know of her sexual orientation. The percentage of women indicating that she had disclosed her sexual identity (sexual identity disclosure) was 32% lower than women reporting high sexual idenity acceptance levels.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, it is unclear what relationship exists between sexual identity disclosure and sexual identity acceptance among BLSSAW. In effort to address this concern, bivariate associations assessed the relationship between sexual identity disclosure and acceptance (see Table 5-3).

Table 5-3: Sexual Identity Acceptance and Sexual Identity Disclosure Bivariate Associations

Sexual Identity Disclosure (Composite)		Out to World	Out to Family	Out to Religious
Sexual Identity Acceptance (Composite)	0.484 ***	0.508 ***	0.281 **	0.280 **
Connection with Lesbian Community (CWLC)	0.442 ***	0.423 ***	0.299 **	0.288 **
Personal Identification as Lesbian (PIL)	0.562 ***	0.568 ***	0.356 ***	0.330 ***
Personal Feelings about being Lesbian (PFL)	0.350 ***	0.341 ***	0.213 *	0.250 *
Moral and Religious Attitudes toward Lesbians (MRTAL)	0.092	0.138	0.003	0.030
Attitudes Toward other Lesbians (ATOL)	0.246 *	0.320 ***	0.093	0.068

*** p < .000, ** p <.01, * p <.05 (two tailed)

Table 5-3: *Sexual Identity Acceptance and Sexual Identity Disclosure Bivariate Associations*

Pearson's product moment correlations yielded a significant relationship between sexual identity acceptance and sexual identity disclosure (r=0.484, p < .000), whereby 23% of the responder variance was accounted for between sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. In addition, significant relationships existed between all subscales of sexual identity disclosure, sexual identity acceptance

(composite), and subscales of sexual identity acceptance, with few exceptions. The relationships between sexual identity disclosure (composite and subscales) and "Moral and Religious Attitudes toward Lesbians" (MRATL) were found to be statistically non-significant. As a well, the relationships between sexual identity disclosure subscales "Out to Family", "Out to Religious Community" and "Attitudes Toward Other Lesbians" (ATOL) did not reach statistical significance. These results provide support for a relationship between sexual identity acceptance and disclosure among BLSSAW.

Discrimination, Sexual Identity Acceptance, and Sexual Identity Disclosure

General reports of lifetime discrimination and daily discrimination were modestly and significantly (respectively) associated with sexual identity disclosure (see Table 5-4). Neither lifetime discrimination nor daily discrimination was associated with sexual identity acceptance. Because sexual identity acceptance and disclosure are outcomes specific to sexual orientation, this study investigated the relationship between perceived discrimination specific to one's sexual orientation, sexual identity acceptance, and disclosure.

Table 5-4: Discrimination, Sexual Identity Acceptance, and Disclosure Bivariate Associations (n= 137)

	SIA		SID	
Lifetime Discrimination	-0.095		0.151	†
Daily Discrimination	0.110		0.289	**
Sexual Orientation (Main Source of Disc.)	0.183	*	0.210	*

**p < .01, *p < .05, † p< .10 (two-tailed)

Table 5-4: *Discrimination, Sexual Identity Acceptance, and Disclosure Bivariate Associations*

Unlike lifetime and daily discrimination, perceiving discrimination to one's sexual orientation was significantly correlated with both sexual identity acceptance (r=.183, $p < .05$) and sexual identity disclosure (r=.210, $p < .05$).

Out of the women in the sample, almost half (49%, n=67) reported perceived discrimination to her sexual orientation (see Figure 4-6 in Chapter 4). An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to compare means scores of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure between women reporting perceived discrimination to her sexual orientation as a main source of discrimination and those who did not.

Table 5-5 compares the mean scores for sexual identity acceptance and disclosure among participants reporting perceived discrimination to her sexual orientation as a main source of discrimination compared to those who did not see sexual orientation as her main source of discrimination.

Table 5-5: Sexual Identity Acceptance and Disclosure Means Comparison by Perceived Discrimination to Sexual Orientation

	Sexual Orientation reason for Disc. (n = 67)	sd	Sexual Orientation not reason for Disc. (n = 70)	sd	*t* (Significance)
Sexual Identity Acceptance	4.15	(.528)	3.94	(.593)	-2.063 (.041)
Personal Feelings about being Lesbian	4.46	(.696)	4.27	(.771)	-1.568 (.120)
Moral and Religious Attitudes toward Lesbians	4.40	(.699)	4.36	(.819)	-.338 (.736)
Attitudes Toward other Lesbians	4.19	(.624)	4.09	(.702)	-.862 (.390)
Personal Identification as Lesbian	3.84	(.882)	3.34	(.959)	-3.033 (.003)
Connection with Lesbian Community	3.83	(.736)	3.64	(.894)	-1.303 (.195)
Sexual Identity Disclosure	4.88	(1.74)	4.13	(1.75)	-2.501 (.014)
Out to World	5.61	(1.64)	4.61	(1.81)	-3.246 (.002)
Out to Family	5.54	(1.54)	4.89	(1.78)	-2.190 (.030)
Out to religious Community	3.65	(2.39)	2.95	(1.99)	-1.790 (.076)

Table 5-5: *Sexual Identity Acceptance and Disclosure Means Comparison by Perceived Discrimination to Sexual Orientation*

The mean scores for women reporting sexual orientation as one of the main causes for discrimination were higher on composite scores and subscales of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. A *t*- test for equality of means revealed significant differences between sexual identity acceptance (composite) (*t* (123)=-2.063, *p* =.041), subscale "Personal Identification as a Lesbian" (PIL) (*t* (123)=-3.033, *p* =.003), sexual identity disclosure (composite) (*t* (123)=-2.501, *p* =.014), subscales being "Out to Family(*t* (123)=-1.764, *p* =.080), and "Out to the World" (*t* (123)=-3.246, *p* =.002). A modest difference was found between mean scores on subscale out to religious community (*t* (123)=-1.790, *p* =.076). Contrary to hypotheses, these findings suggest women who reported discrimination specific to her sexual orientation averaged higher on sexual identity acceptance and "Personal Identification as a Lesbian" (PIL). As well, women reporting discrimination specific to her sexual orientation averaged higher on sexual identity disclosure (composite), being out to her family, and broader community oppose to women not perceiving discrimination specific to her sexual orientation.

Based on the bivariate relationships daily discrimination, discrimination specific to sexual orientation were retained for the regression analyses. Daily discrimination was not significantly associated with sexual acceptance and therefore was not included in the model for sexual identity acceptance.

The effect of daily discrimination and perceived discrimination to sexual orientation on sexual identity acceptance and disclosure was tested using linear regression analyses (shown in Table 5-6).

Table 5-6: Linear Regression of Sexual Identity Acceptance and Disclosure onto Discrimination

	Unstandarized coefficients B (std. error)	Standardized coefficients Beta	*t* (Significance)
Sexual Identity Acceptance (SIA)			
Step 1: Predictor			
Discrimination to Sexual Orientation (no=0)	4.152 (2.012)	0.183	2.063 (0.041)
Constant	78.750 (1.406)		56.021 (0.000)
Sexual Identity Disclosure (SID)			
Step 1: Predictor			
Daily Discrimination	0.057 (0.025)	0.212	2.260 (0.026)
Step 2: Add Predictor			
Discrimination to Sexual Orientation (no=0)	0.690 (0.281)	0.230	2.454 (0.016)
Constant	3.32 (0.517)		6.416 (0.000)

Notes: Values in table reflect final regression equation.

Sexual Identity Acceptance Model: $R^2 = .033$, adjusted $R^2 = .026$; df = 1, 123, F = 6.256, p = .041

Sexual Identity Disclosure Step 1: $\triangle R^2 = .079$, $p < .003$

Final (Step 2) Model: $R^2 = .128$, adjusted $R^2 = .112$; df = 1, 109, F = 7.971, p = .001

Table 5-6: *Linear Regression of Sexual Identity Acceptance and Disclosure onto Discrimination*

Reporting perceived discrimination to sexual orientation was a significant predictor of higher levels of sexual identity acceptance. As well, higher levels of daily discrimination and perceived discrimination to sexual orientation were significant predictors of higher levels of sexual identity disclosure.

Discussion

In this chapter, I tested the hypotheses that BLSSAW would report relatively low rates of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure, and that discrimination would be a negative predictor of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. The results from this chapter provided little support for these hypotheses.

Despite the findings in Chapter 4 that BLSSAW report relatively higher levels of discrimination than their heterosexual counterparts, the majority of BLSSAW reported high levels of sexual identity acceptance. Slightly less than half of the participants in the study reported relatively high levels of sexual identity disclosure. Results also show a strong relationship between sexual identity disclosure and sexual identity acceptance among BLSSAW. This finding is consistent with other studies finding a positive relationship between sexual identity acceptance and disclosure in the larger lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) populations (Peterson and Gerrity 2006; Singh, Dew, Hays, and Gailis 2006).

As found in Chapter 4, BLSSAW report experiencing discrimination to multiple aspects of their identity. However, the findings in this chapter illustrate the importance of examining how specific instances of discrimination maybe more salient when assessing particular outcomes. In this case, discrimination specific to sexual orientation, was the only measured form of discrimination significantly associated with both acceptance and disclosure. Daily discrimination and discrimination specific to one's sexual orientation were both positively associated with sexual identity disclosure.

Contrary to the hypothesis, women believing their sexual orientation was one of the causal attributions for discrimination she experienced scored higher on sexual identity acceptance and disclosure inventories than those who did not believe sexual orientation was one of the causal attributions for discrimination she experienced. As well, the results indicate perceived discrimination to sexual orientation was a significant positive predictor for both sexual identity acceptance and disclosure.

Many of the findings presented in this chapter are counterintuitive. However, one explanation for the positive relationship between increased perceived discrimination and disclosure may be causality. Women who disclose their sexual orientation, are visibly out (i.e. gender presentation, appearance, or wear culture markers of the LGB community), or visibly connected to (or within) gay and lesbian communities, more likely face discrimination to their sexual orientation compared to those women whose same-sex identity is undisclosed or not visible.

Causality as an explanation works less when considering the positive relationship between discrimination and sexual identity acceptance. In other words, why would perceived discrimination increase positive feelings about ones sexual identity? The answer may lie in the measure of sexual identity acceptance itself. The measure of sexual identity acceptance includes a component of sexual identity disclosure, personal identification as a lesbian (PIL). Thus, in order to achieve higher levels of sexual identity acceptance based on the current measure, one must also have higher levels of disclosure. Therefore, causality may too, to a

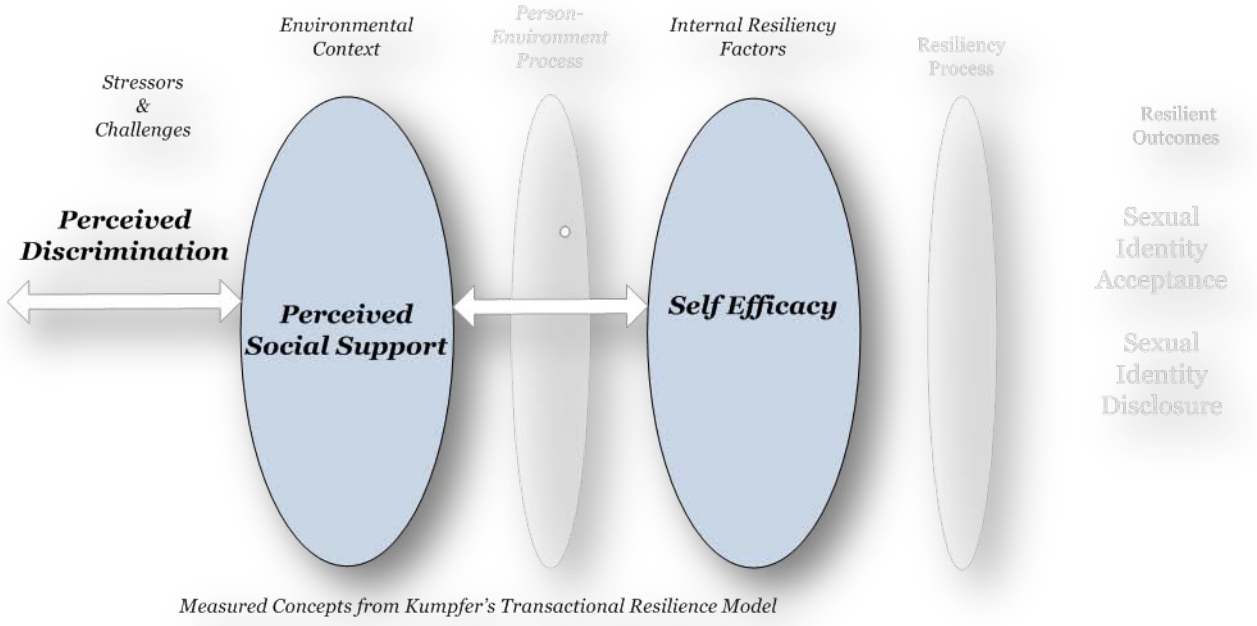
degree explain the positive relationship between sexual identity acceptance and discrimination.

Second, these results imply the potential for resilience within this population; suggesting that despite perceived adversity, positive outcomes of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure are possible. Consistent with a developmental resilience framework, some individuals exposed to high levels of adversity still thrive within these environments (Luthar 2006; Masten 2001; Masten, Best, and Garmezy 1990).

While positive outcomes are achievable despite experiences of adversity, the remaining chapters in this study examine what factors moderate the relationship between adversity and the outcome variables of interest. A seemingly direct relationship obscures what factors in BLSSAW's environment buffer the effects of discrimination on sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. Subsequent chapters will explore what other factors moderate the relationship between perceived discrimination and sexual identity acceptance and disclosure, as well, the potential for resiliency.

Chapter 6 "Activating the Resilience Process": Discrimination, Social Support, and Self-Efficacy

The transactional model presented in Chapter 2 suggest perceived stressors filter through women's environmental context, while activating internal resiliency factors.



Measured Concepts from Kumpfer's Transactional Resilience Model

To assess these relationships, this chapter addresses the research aim,

> *What is the relationship between perceived discrimination, social support, and self-efficacy?*

This chapter begins with a description of women's levels of social support and self-efficacy. Next, bivariate associations were used to examine the relationships between discrimination, social support, and self-efficacy. Last, mean scores of social support and self-efficacy between women perceiving discrimination to their sexual orientation to those women who did not perceive discrimination specific to their sexual orientation were compared.

Social Support and Self-Efficacy

Perceived social support represented the presence of supportive groups or individuals within Black and Latina same-sex attracted women's environment. Social support scores ranged from 1-4. Higher scores in each group of social support represented higher levels of close, supportive, low conflict relationships in women's environmental context. Self-efficacy is an internal resiliency factor hypothesized to increase the likelihood of successfully handling stressors or challenges perceived as threatening. Self-efficacy was measured using a one-dimensional scale with scores ranging 10-40. Higher scores represented higher perceived self-efficacy. Table 6-1 presents a summary of the mean scores of social support and self-efficacy for the sample.

Table 6-1: Social Support and Self-Efficacy Means for Black and Latina Same-Sex Attracted Women

	(n=125)
Social Support	3.10 (.328)
Friends	3.57 (.471)
Significant Other	3.43 (.961)
Family	1.85 (.296)
Community	1.68 (.225)
Self Efficacy	33.99 (4.27)

Note: Standard deviations in parentheses.

Table 6-1: *Social Support and Self-Efficacy Mean Scores among Black and Latina Same-Sex Attracted Women*

Highest mean score for social support was among social support from friends (*M*=3.57, s.d. = *.471*), and lowest mean for social support was among social support from the community (*M*=1.68, s.d. = .225). The mean score for self-efficacy for the sample was 33.99 (s.d. = 4.27).

Bivariate associations were then used to assess the relationship between social support and self-efficacy. Overall, levels of social support and perceived self-efficacy were not statistically correlated (see Table 6-2). However, a significant positive association existed between social support from the community and self-efficacy score (r=0.201 p < .03). As well, a modest positive association existed between social support from friends and self-efficacy (r=0.165, p < .08).

Table 6-2: Social Support and Self-Efficacy Bivariate Associations

	Self-Efficacy
Social Support	0.144
Friends	0.165 †
Significant Other	0.052
Family	0.015
Community	0.201 *

*p < .05, † p <.10 (two-tailed)

Table 6-2: *Social Support, and Self-Efficacy Bivariate Associations*

These results suggest women who feel more social support from friends and broader community also report higher levels of perceived self-efficacy.

Discrimination, Social Support, and Self-Efficacy

Overall, Pearson product moment correlations yielded non-significant relationships between perceived discrimination (lifetime discrimination, daily discrimination, and perceived discrimination to sexual orientation), social support (composite), and self-efficacy (see Table 6-3).

Table 6-3: Discrimination (Lifetime, Daily, and Specific to Sexual Orientation), Social Support and Self Efficacy Bivariate Associations

	Lifetime Discrimination	Daily Discrimination	Sexual Orientation (Main Source of Disc.)
Social Support	-0.104	-0.094	0.098
Friends	-0.209 *	-0.159 †	-0.114
Significant Other	-0.036 *	0.011	0.161 †
Family	-0.117	-0.112	0.032
Community	0.031	0.027	0.076
Self Efficacy	-0.104	0.067	0.010

** p <.01, * p < .05, † p <.010 (two-tailed)

Table 6-3: *Bivariate Associations Discrimination, Social Support, and Self-Efficacy*

Still, a negative association was observed between lifetime discrimination and social support from significant others (r = -.036, p < .05) and friends (r = -.209, p < .05). A modest negative association was also observed between daily discrimination and perceived social support from friends (r = -.159, p < .08). Contrarily, a modest positive association was found between social support from significant other and perceived discrimination to sexual orientation (r = .161, p < .08). These associations suggest that women who report more lifetime discrimination events report lower levels of social support from her significant other and friends. However, women perceiving discrimination specific to her sexual orientation report higher levels of social support from their significant other.

In order to compare self-efficacy and social support scores among participants reporting perceived discrimination to her sexual identity as a main source of discrimination compared to those who did not, an independent *t*-test was conducted. Table 6-4 compares the mean scores for social support and self-efficacy by perceived discrimination to sexual orientation.

Table 6-4: Social Support and Self Efficacy Means Comparison by Perceived Discrimination to Sexual Orientation

	Sexual Orientation reason for Disc. (n = 67)	sd	Sexual Orientation not reason for Disc. (n = 70)	sd	*t* (Significance)
Social Support	3.14	(.297)	3.07	(.359)	-1.042 (.299)
Social Support from Significant Other	3.59	(.941)	3.27	(.962)	-1.764 (.080)
Social Support from Friends	3.52	(.500)	3.62	(.442)	-1.242 (.217)
Social Support from Family	1.85	(.310)	1.83	(.2.85)	-.347 (.729)
Social Support from Community	1.70	(.209)	1.66	(.239)	-.822 (.413)
Self-Efficacy	34.04	(4.35)	33.95	(4.23)	-.106 (.916)

Table 6-4: *Social Support and Self-Efficacy Means Comparison by Perceived Discrimination to Sexual Orientation*

The tests were found to be statistically non-significant for social support and self-efficacy by perceived discrimination to sexual orientation. Although modest (t (117)=-1.764, p =.080), women reporting discrimination to her sexual orientation reported higher levels of social support from significant others.

Discussion

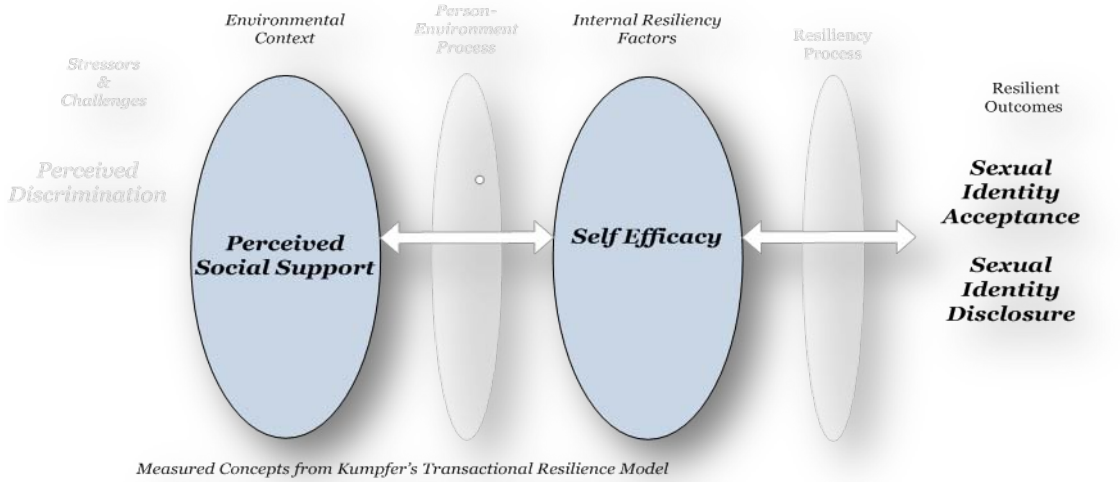
This chapter tested the hypothesis that social support and self-efficacy would be inversely related to perceived discrimination. Results from this chapter partially support that hypothesis. Overall, associations between lifetime, daily, and perceived discrimination to one's sexual orientation were not statistically associated with overall levels of social support or self-efficacy. However, significant inverse relationships were found between number of lifetime discrimination events and social support from friends and significant other. These results suggest women reporting more lifetime discrimination events, perceive less social support from friends and significant other(s). As well, a modest inverse relationship was observed between perceived social support from friends and daily discrimination. Similar to the relationship observed with lifetime discrimination, this suggest women reporting relatively high levels of daily discrimination perceive less social support from friends. These findings were similar to findings by Prelow, Mosher, and Bowman (2006). Testing one of three models of social support, Prelow, Mosher, and Bowman (2006) found evidence supporting a *deterioration* model of social support; showing a positive relationship between lack of supportive social networks and perceived discrimination among African American youth.

Contrary to the hypothesis, a modest positive relationship was observed between social support from significant other and perceiving discrimination specific to sexual orientation. At the end of Chapter 4, I suggested that same-sex attracted individuals may benefit from social support for their racial and gender identities, but have less available support for their same-sex identities.

Resultantly, same-sex attracted individuals perceiving discrimination specific to their sexual orientation may rely on the support from significant others instead of friends, family, or broader community. Hughes et al (2003) found ethnic same-sex attracted women were more likely to receive affirmation and support to from partners then family. Thus, the positive relationship found between perceived discrimination to sexual orientation and social support from significant other(s) may reflect mobilization or buffering models of social support. A *social support mobilization* model posits that social support suppress the effect of stress leading to a decrease in psychological distress (Barrera 1988); whereas a *social support-buffering* model posits that individuals undergoing high levels of stress are protected from detrimental effects by social support networks (Cohen and Wills 1985). The effects of social support on sexual identity acceptance and disclosure are tested in Chapter 7. Following in Chapter 8, I examine the role social support plays between perceived discrimination and sexual identity acceptance and disclosure.

Chapter 7 "In the Balance": Social Support, Self-Efficacy, Sexual Identity Acceptance, and Disclosure

As suggested in Chapter 2, the increased presence of protective factors in women's environmental context and internal resiliency characteristics increase the potential for positive outcomes.



Testing these assumptions, this chapter addresses the research aim,

> *Do higher levels of social support and self-efficacy predict higher levels of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure?*

Using bivariate associations, I examine the relationship between social support, self-efficacy, sexual identity acceptance, and disclosure. Then using linear regression, I determine whether the presence of social support and self-efficacy predict higher levels of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure.

Social Support, Self-Efficacy, and Sexual Identity Acceptance

Pearson product moment correlations yielded non-significant relationships between perceived social support and overall reported level of sexual identity acceptance (composite) (r = .027). A significant relationship was observed between perceived social support from broader community, sexual identity acceptance (composite) (r = .183, $p < .05$), and connection with the lesbian community (CWLC) (r = .351, $p < .01$) (see Table 7-1).

Table 7-1: Sexual Identity Acceptance, Social Support, and Self Efficacy Bivariate Associations

	SIA	CWLC	PIL	PFL	MRATL	ATOL
Social Support	0.027	0.154 †	-0.037	-0.012	-0.046	0.042
Friends	0.102	0.167 †	0.018	-0.001	0.029	0.169 †
Significant Other	-0.006	0.032	-0.007	0.050	-0.075	-0.026 †
Family	-0.119	-0.060	-0.126	-0.087	-0.081	-0.068
Community	0.183 *	0.351 **	0.058	0.054	0.021	0.176 †
Self Efficacy	0.147	0.204 *	0.074	0.095	0.056	0.100

**p < .01, *p < .05, † p <.10 (two-tailed)

Table 7-1. Sexual Identity Acceptance, Social Support, and Self-Efficacy Bivariate Associations

Modest associations were observed between connection with lesbian community (CWLC), social support (composite) (r = .154, $p < .09$), and social support from friends (r = .167, $p < .07$). As well, modest associations were observed between attitudes toward other lesbian (ATOL), social support from friends (r = .169, $p < .06$), and social support from community (r = .176, $p < .06$). These associations suggest women who feel social support from their broader community report higher levels of overall sexual identity acceptance, and they feel more connected with the lesbian community. Potentially, women who

perceive higher levels of social support (overall) and specifically from friends are more connected with the lesbian community. As well, women perceiving higher levels of social support from friends and community have increased positive attitudes toward other lesbians. Results provide partial support for hypothesis that social support would be positively associated with sexual identity acceptance.

Similarly, Pearson product moment correlations yielded non-significant relationships among self-efficacy and sexual identity acceptance (r = .147). Yet, a significant relationship was found between self-efficacy and connection with the lesbian community (r = .204 $p < .05$). This suggests women reporting higher levels of self-efficacy were more likely to feel connected to the lesbian community. Results provide partial support for hypothesis that self-efficacy would be positively associated with sexual identity acceptance.

Social Support, Self-Efficacy, and Sexual Identity Disclosure

Significance was detected between social support (composite) and sexual identity disclosure (composite) (r = .235, $p < .05$), suggesting a potential mediating affect (i.e. greater social support, greater levels of sexual identity disclosure). Significant relationships were also observed between perceived social support from community and sexual identity disclosure (composite) (r = .352, $p < .01$). All subscales of sexual identity disclosure including being out to family (r = .218, $p < .05$), being out to the world (r = .294, $p < .01$), and being out to religious community (r = .362, $p < .01$) were significantly associated with perceived social support from community (i.e. religious community, gay community, racial community, job) (see Table 7-2).

Table 7-2: Sexual Identity Disclosure, Social Support and Self Efficacy Bivariate Associations

	SID	SID Family	SID World	SID Religious
Social Support	0.235 *	0.274 *	0.157 †	0.144
Friends	0.054	-0.02	0.130	-0.071
Significant Other	0.090	0.088	0.044	0.122
Family	0.099	0.246 *	0.019	-0.023
Community	0.352 ***	0.218 *	0.294 **	0.362 ***
Self Efficacy	0.170 †	0.005	0.184 *	0.229 *

***p < .000, **p < .01, *p < .05, † p <.10 (two-tailed)

Table 7-2. *Sexual Identity Disclosure Bivariate Associations with Social Support and Self-Efficacy*

These findings suggest women who perceive higher levels of social support from their community have higher levels of sexual identity disclosure. Predictably, perceived social support from family was also significantly associated with being out to family (r = .246, p < .01). Overall associations between social support and sexual disclosure support the hypothesis that higher perceived levels of social support are associated with higher levels of sexual identity disclosure.

Similar to findings between self-efficacy and sexual identity acceptance, Pearson product moment correlations yielded non-significant relationships between self-efficacy and overall sexual identity disclosure (r = .170). Yet, significant relationships were observed between self-efficacy and being out to the world (r = .184 p < .05), and being out to religious community (r = .229 p < .05). Findings imply women reporting greater self-efficacy were more likely to report being out to world and their religious community. Results provide partial

support for hypothesis that self-efficacy would be positively associated with sexual identity disclosure.

Based on these bivariate relationships, social support from the community was retained for the acceptance regression analyses. Social support (composite), social support from the community, and self-efficacy were retained for the disclosure regression analyses.

The hypothesized model predicting sexual identity acceptance (composite) was tested using linear regression analyses. The final model predicting sexual identity acceptance, shown in Table 7-3, included social support from the community. Results show that higher levels of social support from broader community were a significant predictor of sexual identity acceptance.

Table 7-3:Linear Regression of Sexual Identity Acceptance onto Social Support

	Unstandarized coefficients B (std. error)	Standardized coefficients Beta	*t (Significance)*
Predictor			
Social Support from Community	0.460 (0.231)	0.183	1.993 (.049)
Constant	3.240 (0.390)		8.298 (.000)

R^2 = .033 adjusted R^2 = .025; df = 1, 115, F = 3.972, p = .049

Table 7-3: *Linear Regression of Sexual Identity Acceptance onto Social Support*

The hypothesized model predicting sexual identity disclosure (composite) was tested using linear regression analyses. The final model predicting sexual identity disclosure, shown in Table 7-4, included social support, social support from the community, and self-efficacy. All independent variables included were significantly associated with sexual identity disclosure. Higher levels of perceived social support were a significant predictor of sexual identity disclosure. However, once added into the analyses, results show that higher levels of perceived social support from broader community mediated the relationship between social support and sexual identity disclosure. Once levels of social support were controlled for, self-efficacy was no longer a significant predictor of sexual identity disclosure.

7-4: Linear Regression of Sexual Identity Disclosure, Social Support and Self-Efficacy

	Unstandarized coefficients B (std. error)	Standardized coefficients Beta	*t (Significance)*
Step 1: Predictor			
Social Support	0.004 (0.009)	0.054	0.477 (.634)
Step 2: Add Predictor			
Social Support from Community	2.278 (0.782)	0.335	2.912 (.004)
Step 3: Add Predictor			
Self-Efficacy	0.034 (0.031)	0.097	1.076 (.284)
Constant	-0.934 (1.557)		-0.600 (.550)

Notes: Values in table reflect final regression equation.

Model 1: $\triangle R^2 = .079$, $p = .003$

Model 2: $\triangle R^2 = .154$, $p = .000$

Final (Step 3) Model: $R^2 = .163$ adjusted $R^2 = .139$; df = 3, 108, F = 6.989, $p = .000$

Table 7-4: *Linear Regression of Sexual Identity Disclosure onto Social Support and Self-Efficacy*

Discussion

This chapter tested the hypothesis that increased social support and self-efficacy would predict higher levels of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. This hypothesis was partially supported by the results. Overall, increased social support and self-efficacy were not statistically associated with higher levels of sexual identity acceptance. However, a significant relationship existed among subscale social support from broader community and sexual identity acceptance. As well, significant positive relationships existed among subscale "connection with lesbian community" with social support from broader community, and self-efficacy. In the final analysis, social support from the broader community was predictive of higher levels of sexual identity acceptance. Consistent with previously reviewed empirical studies (Hunter 2001; Knous 2005; LaSala 2000), these results stressed the overall importance of supportive social networks counteracting negative messages surrounding a same-sex identity.

The relationship between connection with lesbian community and self – efficacy, may highlight a particular aspect of self-efficacy, social self-efficacy, which focuses on individuals' ability to effectively master their social environment (Bandura, Cioffi, Taylor, and Brouillard 1988). Thus, a greater sense of self-efficacy is enforced among women who have been successful in establishing a sense of belonging within the lesbian community.

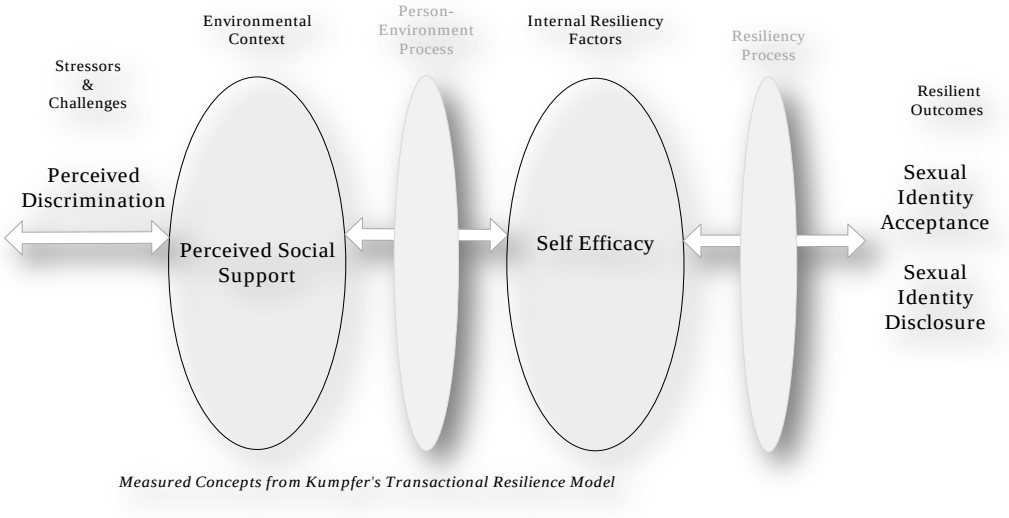
Overall, I found support for the hypothesis that increased social support (composite) and self-efficacy would predict higher levels of sexual identity disclosure. Similar to the finding among sexual identity acceptance, social

support, specifically social support from broader community, was positively associated with and a positive predictor of sexual identity disclosure (composite).

Self-efficacy (composite) was modestly associated with sexual identity disclosure; some positive associations existed among subscales being out to world and being out to religious community.

Preliminary results from this chapter suggest social support, specifically from broader community, was a significant positive predictor of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. A possible interactive effect of self-efficacy and social support may be more relevant for sexual identity disclosure than personal feelings toward one's sexual identity. These assumptions are tested in the full model in Chapter 8.

Chapter 8 "What it takes to Adapt": Predicting Sexual Identity Acceptance and Disclosure



The previous chapters of this study have attempted to tease out aspects of Black and Latina same-sex attracted women's (BLSSAW) environment that are hostile to or protective of their same-sex identities. Incorporating factors found to be significant in previous chapters, I test the full effects of perceived discrimination, social support, and self-efficacy on sexual identity acceptance and disclosure.

Accordingly, this chapter addresses the research aim:

> *Do increased levels of social support and self-efficacy mitigate the effect of perceived discrimination on sexual identity acceptance and disclosure?*

Using a linear regression model, I test the hypothesis that increased social support and self-efficacy will moderate the effect of perceived discrimination on sexual identity acceptance and disclosure.

Potential Risk Factors

Results from Chapter 5 revealed that perceived discrimination to one's sexual orientation was positively associated and a predictor of both sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. As well, increased daily discrimination was positively associated and a predictor of higher levels of disclosure.

Potential Protective Factors

Results from Chapter 7 revealed social support from community was positively associated and a predictor of both sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. As well, increased social support, social support from the broader community and self-efficacy was positively associated with higher levels of disclosure.

Based on these bivariate relationships and the theoretical model, discrimination to sexual orientation, and social support from the broader community were retained for the acceptance analyses. Daily discrimination, perceived discrimination to sexual orientation, social support, social support from community, and self efficacy were retained for the disclosure analyses.

Predicting Sexual Identity Acceptance and Disclosure

The hypothesized model predicting sexual identity acceptance (composite) was tested using a linear regression analyses. The final model (shown in Table 8-1) included perceived discrimination to sexual orientation, and social support from the community. All independent variables included were significantly associated with sexual identity acceptance. Reporting perceived discrimination to sexual orientation was a significant predictor of higher levels of sexual identity acceptance. Interactions between perceived discrimination and social support from community were not significant and are not shown. All model steps were significant.

Table 8-1: Linear Regression of Sexual Identity Acceptance (composite) onto Discrimination, Social Support

	Unstandarized coefficients B (std. error)	Standardized coefficients Beta	*t (Significance)*
Step 1: Predictor			
Discrimination to Sexual Orientation (no=0)	3.537 (1.823)	0.163	1.940 (.054)
Step 2: Add Predictor			
Social Support from Community	8.59 (4.407)	0.164	1.949 (0.053)
Constant	64.631 (7.442)		8.684 (0.000)

Notes: Values in table reflect final regression equation.

Model 1: $\triangle R^2 = .033$, $p = .041$

Final Model: $R^2 = .057$ adjusted $R^2 = .043$; df = 3, 135, F = 4.068 $p = .019$

Table 8-1: *Linear Regression of Sexual Identity Acceptance (composite) onto Perceived Discrimination and Social Support*

The hypothesized model predicting sexual identity disclosure (composite) was tested using linear regression analyses. The final model (shown in Table 8-2) included daily discrimination, perceived discrimination to sexual orientation, social support, and social support from the community. All independent variables included were significantly associated with sexual identity disclosure. Like sexual identity acceptance, reporting perceived discrimination to sexual orientation was a significant predictor of higher levels of sexual identity disclosure. Higher levels of social support from community were also a positive predictor of sexual identity disclosure. Interactions between perceived discrimination and social support from community were not significant, and are not shown. As well, interactions between social support and self-efficacy were not significant, and are not shown.

Table 8-2: Linear Regression of Sexual Identity Disclosure (composite) onto Discrimination, and Social Support

	Unstandarized coefficients B (std. error)	Standardized coefficients Beta	*t (Significance)*
Step 1: Predictor			
Daily Discrimination	0.059 (0.024)	0.220	2.478 (0.015)
Step 2: Add Predictor			
Discrimination to Sexual Orientation (no=0)	0.577 (0.263)	0.193	2.193 (0.030)
Step 3: Add Predictor			
Social Support	0.435 (0.512)	0.093	0.849 (0.398)
Step 4: Add Predictor			
Social Support from community	2.064 (0.737)	0.304	2.800 (0.006)
Constant	-1.485 (1.368)		-1.085 (0.280)

Notes: Values in table reflect final regression equation.

Model 1: $\triangle R^2 = .079$, $p = .003$

Model 2: $\triangle R^2 = .128$, $p = .001$

Model 3: $\triangle R^2 = .209$, $p = .000$

Final Model: $R^2 = .263$, adjusted $R^2 = .236$; $df = 4, 107$, $F = 9.560$, $p = .000$

Table 8-2: *Linear Regression of Sexual Identity Disclosure (composite) onto Perceived Discrimination and Social Support*

Discussion

In this chapter, I tested the hypothesis that significant protective factors would moderate the effect of perceived stressors on sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. The results of this chapter support this hypothesis. Although higher levels of perceived discrimination were a significant predictor of higher levels of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure, increased social support moderated the strength of this relationship. However, much of the effect of social support was mediated by social support specifically from the broader community. Social support from the broader community included social support from racial, gay/lesbian, and work communities.

Similar to a social support mobilization model discussed in Chapter 6, these results suggest much of the positive relationship between perceived discrimination, sexual identity acceptance, and disclosure is explained by the increased presence of social support within women's environment. Potentially, despite perceiving more discrimination, the increased presence of supportive social networks, help women restore a sense of equanimity; thus, increasing their potential for resilient outcomes. Bowleg et al. (2003, 2004) identified protective strategies employed by ethnic minority same-sex attracted women, and found constructing more protective environments for oneself, as well, seeking out resources about and for ethnic minority same-sex attracted. As well, Garmezy (1984) argues resilient individuals are those who find micro niches of support with adequate growth opportunities even within high-risk environments.

The following chapter, Chapter 9, identifies what percentage of women displayed resilient outcomes, as well, examines what factors in women's social environment are associated with resilient outcomes.

Chapter 9 In Spite of It All: Resilience among BLSSAW

Considering the findings from the previous chapters of this study, in this chapter, I identify which participants, if any, fall into resilient outcome categories of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure.

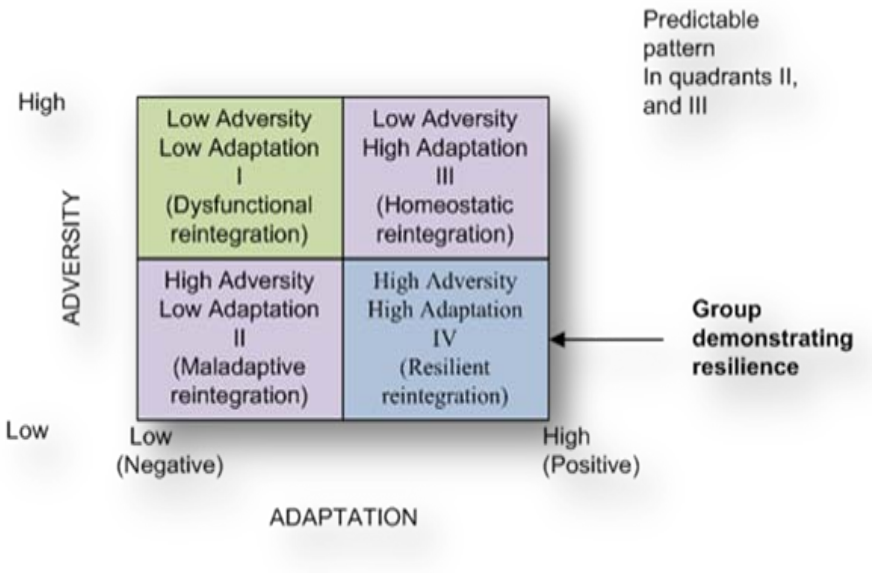
Accordingly, this chapter addresses the final research aim of this study:

> *Among this population, what percentage display characteristics of resilience (relatively high levels of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure despite perceived discrimination to her sexual identity)?*

In this, chapter I search for evidence of resilient outcomes, considering what percentage of women still report high levels of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure, despite perceiving discrimination to their sexual orientation. Further, I explore the relationships between women's social demographic characteristics and sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. Last, I examine how significant relationships between women's levels of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure predict membership in resilient outcome categories.

Resilient Outcomes

In Chapter 2, I discussed four potential outcome categories, dysfunctional, maladaptive, homeostatic, and resilient reintegration.



In this study dysfunctional reintegration, categorized women who did not perceive discrimination to her sexual identity yet still reported relatively low levels of sexual identity acceptance or disclosure. Maladaptive reintegration categorized women who perceived discrimination to her sexual identity and reported relatively low levels of sexual identity acceptance or disclosure. Homeostatic reintegration categorized women who did not perceive discrimination to her sexual identity and reported relatively high levels of sexual identity acceptance or disclosure. Resilient reintegration, positive outcomes beyond expected levels, categorized women who did perceive discrimination to her sexual identity yet still reported relatively high levels of sexual identity acceptance or disclosure.

Table 9-1 shows the percentage of women categorized into each outcome category for sexual identity acceptance (SIA) and sexual identity disclosure (SID).

Table 9-1: Resilient Outcomes for SIA and SID (n=125)

	SIA		SID	
	n	%	*n*	%
Dysfunctional Reintegration	17	14%	36	29%
Maladaptive Reintegration	9	7%	25	20%
Homeostatic Reintegration	47	38%	22	18%
Resilient Reintegration	*52*	42%	*42*	34%

Table 9-1: *Resilient Outcomes for Sexual Identity Acceptance and Disclosure*

For sexual identity acceptance, descriptive analysis identified 52 respondents (42%) who displayed resilience (perceived discrimination specific to sexual orientation and high levels of sexual identity acceptance) based on the sexual identity acceptance cut off criteria (mean scores one standard deviation above scales midpoint, 3.57), whereby dichotomous groups were constructed. For sexual identity disclosure, descriptive analysis identified 42 respondents (34%) who displayed resilience (perceived discrimination specific to sexual orientation and sexual identity disclosure) based on the sexual identity disclosure cut off criteria (a score of 5 or above), whereby dichotomous groups were constructed.

Overall, 57 respondents (46% of total sample) demonstrated resilient characteristics through sexual identity acceptance or sexual identity disclosure. Thirty-seven of those 57 respondents (65% of resilient group) demonstrated resilient characteristics in both categories of sexual identity acceptance and sexual identity disclosure (see Figure 9-1).

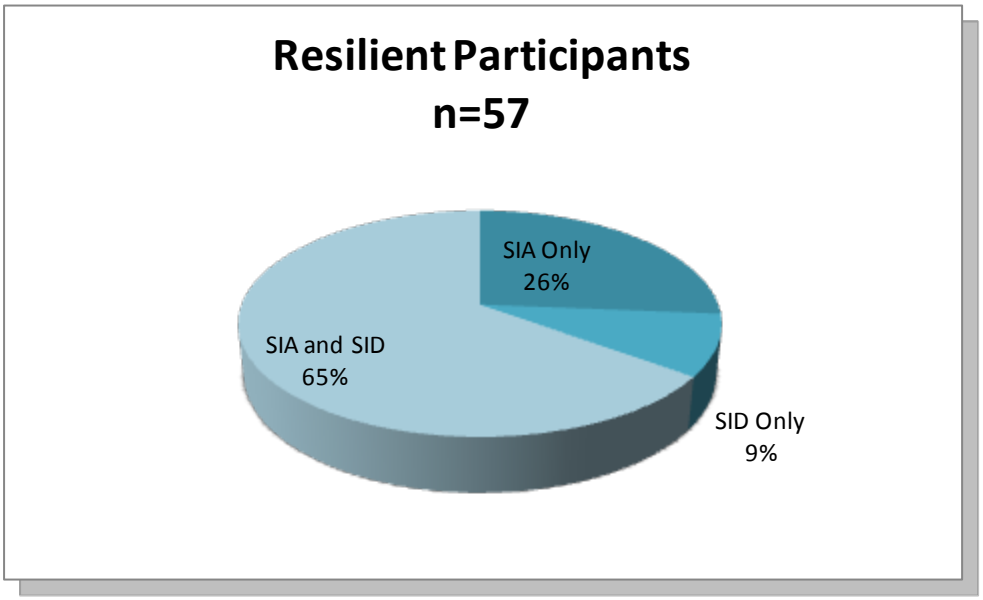


Figure 9-1. *Resilient Participants*

Results show the majority of women fell either in the resilient reintegration categories (42% SIA, and 34% SID). This suggests the majority of women who perceive relatively high discrimination nonetheless display positive adaption in terms of their identity. Women who perceive a low level of discrimination were more likely to display positive adaption to their identity, as expected, rather than fall into the dysfunctional reintegration category. Still, in respect to sexual identity disclosure, over one fourth of the sample (29%)

reported low levels of disclosure despite reporting low levels of perceived discrimination specific to their sexual identity.

Understanding Social Context

In introducing a transactional resilience framework in Chapter 2, I discussed how the environmental context in which Black and Latina same-sex attracted women live comprises a balance of protective or risk factors among the critical domains of influence in her life. In addition, socio-demographic characteristics such as age, household composition, and occupation type may influence resilient outcomes. As Harry (1993) found, disclosure was better explained by structural and individual conditions, rather than stage of sexual identity formation as previously hypothesized.

Bivariate associations were used to assess the relationship between participants' socio-demographic characteristics, sexual identity acceptance, and disclosure (see Table 9-2).

Table 9-2: Bivariate Associations between SocioDemographic Characteristics and Sexual Identity Acceptance (SIA) and Disclosure (SID)

	SIA	*SID*
Age	0.198 *	0.176 †
Race/Ethnicity		
Black/ African American	-0.032	0.125
Afro-Caribbean	-0.048	0.059
African Immigrant	0.014	-0.106
Latina	0.027	-0.101
Multiracial/ Other	0.049	-0.072
Relationship Status		
Single	-0.039	-0.031
Dating	-0.201 *	-0.028
In committed relationship	0.031	0.280 **
Married to person of same-sex	0.090	0.157 †
Married to person of opposite-sex	-0.084	-0.134
Years of Education	-0.102	0.074
Household Composition		
Children	-0.039	0.229 **
Parents	-0.203 *	0.010
Friend(s)	0.057	-0.048
Girlfriend/Partner/Spouse	0.036	0.288 **
Other Relatives	-0.187 *	0.040
Self	-0.005	-0.029
Number of Children	0.115	0.176 *
Occupation		
Professional/Technical	-0.019	0.051
Managerial/Administrative	-0.015	-0.049
Sales	-0.039	0.031
Clerical	0.047	-0.040
Culture/Arts	0.106	0.095
Student	-0.143	0.086
Other	0.088	0.166
Employment Status		
Student	-0.143	0.086
Employed Full Time	-0.099	0.282 **
Employed Part Time	0.064	-0.039
Unemployed	0.044	0.047
Self Employed	-0.028	0.074
Military	-0.184 *	-0.015
Retired	0.064	0.069

**p < .01, *p < .05, † p < .10 (two-tailed)

Table 9-2: *Bivariate Association between Socio-Demographic Characteristics, Sexual Identity Acceptance, and Disclosure*

Table 9-2: Bivariate Associations between SocioDemographic Characteristics and Sexual Identity Acceptance (SIA) and Disclosure (SID) cont.

	SIA	*SID*
Religion		
Christian/ Protestant	-0.255 **	-0.008 *
Catholic	0.132	-0.006
Jewish	0.117	-0.019
Atheist/Agnostic/None	0.188 *	0.022
Sexual Orientation		
Lesbian/Gay	0.144	0.190 *
Bisexual	-0.066	-0.172 †
Queer	0.032	0.039
Exploring/Curious	-0.053	-0.178 †
Sexual Relations		
Exclusively Women	0.129	0.270 **
Mostly Women	-0.058	-0.055
Women and Men Equally	-0.022	0.006
Mostly Men	-0.039	-0.227 *
Exclusively Men	-0.164 †	-0.273 **

**p < .01, *p < .05, † p <.10 (two-tailed)

Age was positively associated with both sexual identity acceptance (r= 0.198, p < .01) and disclosure (although modestly, (r= 0.176, p < .10)). Self-identifying as Christian or Protestant was negatively associated with both sexual identity acceptance (r= -0.255, p < .01) and disclosure (r= -0.008, p < .05). Conversely, identifying as Atheist, Agnostic, or having no religious affiliation was positively associated with sexual identity acceptance (r= 0.188, p < .05).

Relationship status, as a category, showed differential associations with both sexual identity acceptance, and disclosure. Specifically, the relationship status dating was negatively associated with sexual identity acceptance (r= -

0.201$p < .05$). Being in a committed relationship was positively associated with sexual identity disclosure ($r = 0.280$, $p < .01$). A modest positive relationship was found between being married to a person of the same-sex and sexual identity disclosure ($r = 0.157$, $p < .10$).

In terms of household composition, living in the home with parents ($r = -0.203$, $p < .05$) or other relatives ($r = -0.187$, $p < .05$) was negatively associated with sexual identity acceptance. Having children ($r = 0.176$, $p < .01$) and children living in her home ($r = 0.229$, $p < .01$), were positively associated with sexual identity disclosure. As well, residing with her girlfriend/partner was positively associated with sexual identity disclosure ($r = 0.288$, $p < .01$).

A couple of significant relationships were found between employment status and sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. Being in the Military was negatively associated with sexual identity acceptance ($r = -0.184$ $p < .05$). Being employed full time was positively associated with sexual identity disclosure ($r = 0.282$, $p < .01$).

Identifying as Lesbian ($r = 0.190$, $p < .05$), and having sexual relationships exclusively with women ($r = 0.270$, $p < .01$) were positively associated with sexual identity disclosure. Conversely, having sexual relationships mostly ($r = -0.227$, $p < .05$) or exclusively with men ($r = -0.273$, $p < .01$) were negatively associated with sexual identity disclosure. Modest negative associations were found between women self-identifying as Bisexual ($r = -0.172$, $p < .10$) or Exploring ($r = -0.178$, $p < .10$), and sexual identity disclosure. In terms of sexual behavior, a modest negative relationship was found between women indicating sexual relations exclusively with men and sexual identity acceptance ($r = 0.164$, $p < .10$).

However, no significant associations were found between sexual orientation and sexual identity acceptance.

Predicting Resilient Outcomes

Significant relationships from the Bivariate associations above were used to produce an ordinal regression model using logit link function to predict membership in each of the resilient outcome categories identified at the beginning of this chapter: dysfunctional reintegration, maladaptive reintegration, homeostatic reintegration, and resilient reintegration. The complete models for sexual identity acceptance and disclosure analyzed all significant associations with a *p*-value of .05 or less. The final reduced models for sexual identity acceptance and disclosure retained significant predictors with a *p*-value of .10 or less.

Based on the above modeling strategy, Table 9-3 shows the final reduced model ($X^2 = 15.607$, d.f. =3, p = .001) for predicting membership in the sexual identity acceptance resilient outcome categories.

Table 9-3: Maximum Likelihood Estimates of Ordinal Regression Model of Sexual Identity Acceptance Resilient Outcome Categories

Item Name	Regression Coefficient	P value	(std. error)	(95% CI)
Threshold (Dysfunctional Reintegration)	3.517	.050 *	1.791	(.01-7.03)
Threshold (Maladaptive Reintegration)	4.050	.024 *	1.799	(.523-7.58)
Threshold (Homeostatic Reintegration)	5.860	.001 *	1.842	(2.245-9.47)
Social Support from Community	1.432	.091	.846	(-.23-3.10)
Christian/Protestant	- 1.174	.002 *	.383	(.424-1.92)
Sexual Relations Exc /Mostly Men	-2.481	.046 *	1.245	(.04-4.92)

Notes: Reference category = Resilient Reintegration

* significant difference from zero (p < .05)

Table 9-3: *Maximum Likelihood Estimates of Ordinal Regression Model of Sexual Identity Acceptance Resilient Outcome*

Results show that the three thresholds of the model equation were significantly different from zero and substantially contributed to the values of the response probability in different categories. Membership in each in each of the outcome categories for sexual identity acceptance was significantly affected by two explanatory variables, being Christian/Protestant, and having sexual relations exclusively or mostly with men. By self-identifying as Christian or Protestant, one can expect a 1.174 decrease in the expected log odds in moving to the next higher category of resilient outcome of sexual identity acceptance, controlling for all other factors in the model. As well, having sexual relations exclusively or mostly with men, one can expect a 2.481 decrease in the expected log odds in moving to the next higher category of resilient outcome of sexual identity acceptance, controlling for all other factors in the model.

The pseudo R squares for the final model were Cox and Snell (.13), Nagelkerke (.143), and McFadden (.058). The additional model fitting statistic, the Pearson's chi-square, (X^2 = 168.687, d.f. =171, p = .536), indicated that the observed data were consistent with the estimated values in the model.

Table 9-4 shows the final reduced model (X^2 = 35.652, d.f. =5, p = .000) for predicting membership in the sexual identity disclosure resilient outcome categories. Results show that the three thresholds of the model equation were significantly different from zero and substantially contributed to the values of the response probability in different categories.

Table 9-4: Maximum Likelihood Estimates of Ordinal Regression Model of Sexual Identity Disclosure Resilient Outcome Categories

	Regression Coefficient		(std. error) (95% CI)
Threshold (Dysfunctional Reintegration)	7.084	.000 *	1.944 (3.28-10.90)
Threshold (Maladaptive Reintegration)	7.819	.000 *	1.966 (3.97-11.67)
Threshold (Homeostatic Reintegration)	8.740	.000 *	1.966 (4.83-12.65)
Social Support from Community	2.831	.001 *	.882 (1.10-4.56)
Live in HH with Sig Other	1.118	.004 *	.386 (.361-1.88)
Live in HH with Children	.737	.088	.432 (-1.584-.110)
Christian/Protestant	-.929	.015 *	.382 (-1.68- -.181)
Sexual Relations Exc /Mostly Men	3.243	.004 *	1.134 (1.02-5.47)

Notes: Reference category = Resilient Reintegration

* significant difference from zero (p < .05)

Table 9-4: *Maximum Likelihood Estimates of Ordinal Regression Model of Sexual Identity Disclosure Resilient Outcome*

Membership in each in each of the outcome categories for sexual identity acceptance was significantly affected by four explanatory variables, being Christian/Protestant, living in the household with significant other, living in the household with children, and having sexual relations exclusively or mostly with men.

For every unit increase in perceived social support from broader community, one can expect a 2.831 increase in the expected log odds in moving to the next higher category of resilient outcome of sexual identity disclosure, controlling for all other factors in the model. Living in the household with significant other, one can expect a 1.118 increase in the expected log odds in moving to the next higher category of resilient outcome of sexual identity disclosure, controlling for all other factors in the model. By self-identifying as Christian or Protestant, one can expect a .929 decrease in the expected log odds in moving to the next higher category of resilient outcome of sexual identity disclosure, controlling for all other factors in the model. As well, having sexual relations exclusively or mostly with men, one can expect a 3.243 decrease in the expected log odds in moving to the next higher category of resilient outcome of sexual identity disclosure, controlling for all other factors in the model.

The pseudo R squares for the final model were Cox and Snell (.267), Nagelkerke (.287), and McFadden (.118). The additional model fitting statistic, the Pearson's chi-square, (X^2 = 245.802, d.f. =265, p = .796), indicated that the observed data were consistent with the estimated values in the model.

Discussion

This chapter examined the potential for resilient outcomes among BLSSAW. The results of this chapter provide support for the hypothesis that being an at risk group, resilience maybe more common among BLSSAW. Over forty percent of participants fell into at least one of the categories of resilient reintegration (i.e. high adaption despite perceived adversity). Still, the high number of participants represented in the resilience category may reflect sample bias; this is discussed further in the limitations section of the next chapter.

Noteworthy, more respondents were likely to display dysfunctional outcomes (low adaption despite low perceived adversity) in regards to sexual identity disclosure than among measures of sexual identity acceptance. The results from the previous as well as this chapter suggest disclosure is associated with both levels of sexual identity acceptance and hindering structural factors.

Similar to findings by Harry (1993) disclosure and acceptance were positively associated with several social characteristics. The data in this study revealed several significant associations between respondents' socio-demographic characteristics and sexual acceptance. Age, specifically being older, was positively associated with sexual identity acceptance. Research has consistently found a positive association between women's age and sexual identity acceptance (Chapman and Brannock 1987; Gregory 1998).

A negative relationship also existed between women living with parents or other relatives and sexual identity acceptance. Being dependent on and subject to the ideologies of parents or relatives toward women's sexual identity might negatively affect women's positive views of themselves as same-sex attracted

individuals. Parents of same-sex attracted youth often try to re-align their children's identities so they are consistent with the hetero-normative values (Cramer and Roach 1988; Miller and Parker 2009; Pearlman 2005).

Living with one's partner was positively associated, and a significant predictor of resilient outcomes of sexual identity disclosure. Consistent with findings from Hughes et al (2003) showing the importance of significant others as a source of affirmation, the findings presented here stress the importance of significant others as a important factor affecting positive same-sex outcomes. As well, several empirical studies have shown that involvement in a significant and committed relationship predicts sexual identity acceptance and disclosure among same-sex attracted women (Ben-Ari 1995; Califia 1979; Degges-White, Rice, and Myers 2000; Sophie 1985).

Certain employment statues, specifically being in the military was negatively associated with sexual identity acceptance. Mandated policies such as "Don't Ask Don't Tell", which prevent same-sex individuals from serving openly in the military create environments, promote lower aspects of sexual identity acceptance for same-sex individuals serving in the military. These policies would directly inhibit same-sex identified individuals from disclosing their sexual identities as well hinder open connections to other same-sex individuals.

Identifying, as Christian or Protestant was negatively associated, and a significant negative predictor of both sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. These findings highlight that religion (overall) may not be a protective factor to BLSSAW's identities, especially if religious communities to which these women belong reach same-sex attraction and behavior as morally wrong. The protective

effect of religion (i.e. instilling a sense of faith and spirituality) maybe more salient among women who are able to identify religious communities that are accepting and affirming of their same-sex identities.

Lastly, sexual behavior, specifically indicating sexual relations mostly or exclusively with men was a negative predictor of both sexual identity acceptance and disclosure resilient outcomes. Possibly explaining this association, incongruence between identifying as same-sex attracted, and the behavior of having sexual relations mostly or exclusively with men may contribute or be reflective of suppressing or internalize negative messages surrounding one's same sex identity. Several models of same-sex identity development have identified incongruence between feelings and behavior as a source of stress among same-sex attracted individuals (Cass 1984; Fingerhut, Peplau, and Ghavami 2005; Herek, Cogan, Gillis, and Glunt 1997; Peterson and Gerrity 2006).

Interestingly, when comparing participants' social demographic characteristics between sexual identity acceptance and disclosure, significant associations varied. Thus, while results stress the interrelation of the two concepts, it is important to recognize how different social characteristics differentially structure the outcomes of acceptance and disclosure. Accordingly, associations, nor the meaning of associations, should be treated as the same across varying dimensions of sexual identity.

Chapter 10 Conclusion

This study grew out of the need to theorize and empirically research the experience of Black and Latina same-sex attracted women (BLSSAW) coping with perceptions of discrimination to their multiple devalued identities. More importantly, it sought to understand how internal and external factors promote positive outcomes despite experiences with minority stress. The literature on Black and Latina women described how the psychosocial stress associated with being a multiple minority increased these women's risk for poor psychological well-being. Still it was unknown rather or not this stress related specifically to their sexual identity as same-sex attracted women.

Despite experiences with minority stress, a few studies showed individuals with multiple minority status still display resilient outcomes (Bowleg, Craig, and Burkholder 2004b; Bowleg, Huang, Brooks, Black, and Burkholder 2003b; Ryff, Keyes, and Hughes 2003a). This lead to the main research question of this project, understanding what conditions, if any, do BLSSAW express positive adaption to their sexual identity. The information from the 137 women who participated in this study provided a foundation for answering the main question presented here. The results of this study suggest BLSSAW experience not only different levels of oppression to their intersecting identities but their adaptation to these experiences are not uniformly negative or positive. This chapter discusses the key findings and implications, as well the limitations of the study. The final section of this chapter offers directions for future research.

Key Findings and Implications

Summary of Key Findings

Evaluating experiences of adversity, Black, and Latina same-sex attracted women reported more lifetime events of discrimination and casual attributions of discrimination than their heterosexual counterparts did. Over fifty percent perceived discrimination specific to their sexual orientation. Still, perceived discrimination to sexual orientation was a positive predictor of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure.

Taking into consideration the role of protective factors, results found perceived discrimination was inversely related to social support and self-efficacy. Yet, a positive relationship was found between social support from significant other and discrimination to sexual orientation. Overall, neither social support nor self-efficacy was positively associated with disclosure. Yet, social support from broader community was a significant predictor of acceptance and disclosure.

In assessment of the full model of transactional resilience, perceived discrimination to sexual orientation was still a positive predictor of higher levels of acceptance and disclosure. Daily discrimination also positively predicted higher levels of sexual identity disclosure. The effect of perceived discrimination on sexual identity acceptance and disclosure was moderated by the increased presence of social support, specifically from broader community.

Last, in searching for evidence of resilience, almost half the participants expressed resilient characteristics as defined in the study. Religion and sexual behavior were the most significant aspects of participants' social characteristic

for predicting membership in the four-outcome categories o sexual identity acceptance. Social support from community, living with children or significant other, religion and sexual behavior were the most significant aspects of participants' social characteristics for predicting membership in the four outcome categories of sexual identity disclosure.

Implications

The data from this study provides strong justification for the use of Intersectionality as a theoretical and methodological approach in understanding the experiences and outcomes of BLSSAW. Examples of intersectionality were evident in variations among casual attributions of discrimination between same-sex attracted and heterosexual women. The findings from this project also demonstrate that resilience is a viable organizing framework for understanding positive adaption. Using a transactional resilience framework allowed for the organization of salient factors present in BLSSAW's environment relevant for predicting positive adaptation.

Methodologically, it is important to consider the use of general versus specific measurements of various constructs. For example, adversity specific to women's sexual orientation was associated and predictive of both sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. Despite the well-documented relationships between self-efficacy and other indicators of overall well-being, many of the relationships between general self- efficacy and other variables in the model were non-significant. The non-significant findings may suggest that future researchers should consider developing measures of self- efficacy that are specific to the task.

In this case, a measure of self-efficacy related to aspects of sexual identity development might better predict sexual identity acceptance and disclosure.

Practical Implications

The results of this study also demonstrate the relative importance of social support in predicting positive outcomes between Black and Latina same-sex attracted women. Several findings highlighted the importance of social support. For example, despite indicating that race and gender (respectively) were the leading casual attributions for perceived discrimination, women reported that neither race nor gender discrimination had a significant impact on their ability to lead productive lives. However, a lower percentage of women indicated that discrimination by sexual orientation did not affect their ability to live productive lives. This disparity in findings suggest that while BLSSAW may have important sources of social support in place that buffer the negative effects of racial and gender discrimination, they may not have significant social support in place for buffering the negative effects of sexual orientation discrimination.

Importantly, broader social support was more predictive of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure than social support from family, friends, and significant other. As well, the protective effect of overall social support was completely mediated through broader social support. Broader social support consisted of perceived levels of close, significant, low conflict relationships ethnic community, gay community, the church, and workplace. While perceived levels of close, significant, low conflict relationships with significant others, friends, and family have a protective affect for BLSSAW, the tipping point in the presence of

protective factors moderating the effects of adversity may be found in the presence (or absence) of these relationships in larger social groups.

The Non-Significance of Sexual Identity Acceptance

Overall BLSSAW in this study reported high rates of sexual identity acceptance. However, one of the central findings of this study was the overall lack of significance of sexual identity acceptance and its relationship to other variables in the model. Hypothesized variables mattered very little such that even among those significantly associated with sexual identity; the effect size remained relatively small. Several considerations might explain this finding. First, different from sexual identity disclosure, sexual identity acceptance is an attitude about oneself as a same-sex attracted individual. Overall levels of social support and self-efficacy might better predict behavioral outcomes as opposed to attitudes. In effort to capture internalized messages surrounding same-sex identity, future studies should examine the attitudes and early socialization messages women received. Second, the current measure for sexual identity acceptance, the Lesbian Internalized Homophobia Scale (LIHS), might not adequately capture the aspects of same-sex identity important for BLSSAW. The sexual identity acceptance measure promotes an archetype of an "ideal lesbian". Rothblum (2000) suggest very few women fit this ideal. Empirical data found low intercorrelations among aspects of disclosure, sexual experience, and participation in lesbian community (Morris and Rothblum 2000). Still, correlations between these variables were slightly higher for African American, Latina, and Native American women (compared to White and Asian women).

The lack of significance (and variation) among the measure of sexual identity acceptance may reflect cultural difference in significant aspects of same-sex identity. Alternative conceptions of sexual identity acceptance taken from narratives of queer women of color suggest "[t]he mere presence of non-conforming black women in a heteronormative space is important to the survival and development of queer and questioning black women" (Dorsainvil 2009). Consistent with findings in this study of the importance of connection with lesbian community, and social support from broader community, importance is placed on the visibility and availability of same-sex attracted women of color to the development of a positive sexual identity. Accordingly, future research should consider social and culture interpretations of the items included in the sexual identity acceptance measure. For example, how are same-sex identified women of color interpreting these questions? Do they interpret "lesbian community" as white or not inclusive of women of color? In addition, when reading lesbian community are they perceiving their own lesbian communities of color in which they may or not participate. Researchers should investigate these and additional culturally relevant questions to create more expansive understandings of sexual identity acceptance among multicultural groups.

Lastly, when considering the findings regarding sexual identity acceptance it may be problematic theoretically to include a measure of disclosure into a scale measuring attitudes toward ones same-sex identity. Including sexual identity disclosure in sexual identity acceptance assumes decisions to disclose ones same-sex identity is only dependent on the negative attitudes one has adopted about ones same-sex identity. Therefore the subscale personal feelings as a lesbian

(PFL) may represent the most valid scale measuring one's true internalized feelings toward same-sex identity.

The Importance of Sexual Identity Disclosure

The findings in this study stress the importance of sexual identity disclosure. Sexual identity disclosure may better reflect levels of overall well-being than sexual identity acceptance. The results highlight the relationship between sexual identity disclosure and characteristics that are consistent positive predictors of well-being. Higher levels of sexual identity disclosure were positively associated with both higher levels of social support, and higher levels of self-efficacy. Levels of sexual identity disclosure were higher among women in created family units (i.e. those with children, in committed partnerships, living in the household with partner and or children. Lastly, higher levels of disclosure were positively associated with full-time employment which proxies as an indicator of financial well-being and stability.

Returning to the discussion on rather nondisclosure is indeed pathological or reflective of structural factors; results from this study suggest there is evidence of both. Motivations for nondisclosure vary among individuals. Resultantly, sweeping categorizations of sexual identity nondisclosure should be avoided. While results presented in this study substantiated a positive relationship between disclosure and acceptance; over one fourth of the women in this study expressed high levels of sexual identity acceptance yet had relatively low levels of disclosure. In addition, significant correlations existed between sexual identity disclosure and several of participants' socio-demographic characteristics. While some key comparison of structural conditions could not be made due to sample

size (i.e. disclosure of individuals living in rural versus urban areas), bivariate associations between respondents social demographic characteristics suggest aspects of disclosure are socially structured.

Still, social scientist should exercise caution interpreting sexual identity disclosure as a necessary condition for positive adaption. While there is empirical evidence linking disclosure and positive mental health outcomes (Jordan and Deluty 1998), it remains problematic to suggest nondisclosure or the absence of disclosure is a sign of dysfunction without further investigation of both motivations for non-disclosure and social context. It is a very different to feel one can not disclose her sexual identity because she is ashamed opposed to choosing to not disclose her sexual identity because doing so will jeopardize her employment or cause her family distress. These motivations for nondisclosure are representative of strategic management rather than internalized homophobia, or poor sexual identity acceptance (Goffman 1963).

Considering the important findings among social context and social support, Lindsay et al (2006) identifies how same-sex women negotiate disclosure strategies in varying social context. The authors suggest a social context continuum ranging from a homophobic context to supportive context. In their study, the authors identify three major strategies of disclosure, which form a continuum consisting of proud, selective, and private disclosure. The “proud” strategy involved a commitment to active disclosure of a same-sex identity. The “selective” strategy was where women chose to disclose or conceal their identity depending on the social context. The ‘private’ strategy involved deliberate and active non-disclosure. As the two continuums (social context and disclosure

strategy) interact, where they match equals congruence, where they do not one has incongruence or “socially uncomfortable situations”. During instances of incongruence, women renegotiate their strategies accordingly. Unlike a static measure of disclosure, adopting this particular framework takes into consideration the ongoing and interactive nature of sexual identity disclosure and social context.

Related but Not the Same

Lastly, while sexual identity acceptance and disclosure were highly correlated with one another, they are not the same. Different relationships existed among experiences of discrimination, protective factors, and participants’ social demographic characteristics. In instances where sexual identity acceptance and disclosure demonstrate similar associations, interpretations of those relationships should not be treated the same. For example, while identifying as Christian or Protestant was negatively associated with sexual identity acceptance and disclosure, the interpretation of these relationships should be understood as distinct from one another. The internalization of anti-homosexual doctrine prescribed within Christian or Protestant theologies may be the pathway explaining the negative association between sexual identity acceptance; however, fear of backlash or family isolation might explain its negative relationship with sexual identity disclosure.

Limitations

Notwithstanding its contributions, several limitations of this study need to be recognized. This study operationally defined resilience as high levels of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure despite perceived discrimination to one’s

sexual orientation. This decision was made in effort to adhere closely to the theoretical definition provided in the transactional resilience model; positive adaption despite experiences of adversity. Still, I recognize the utility and need for multiple measures to capture experiences of adversity, as well potential positive adaption in relation to sexual identity. Future studies should continue to expand theoretical definitions of how positive adaption to sexual identity is conceptualized and defined.

While the current measure of sexual identity disclosure provides a starting point for understanding disclosure, understanding levels of disclosure quantitatively without taking into consideration the continuous interactive nature of disclosure is challenging. Quantitative measurements of disclosure assume an end point to disclosure whereas disclosure is a lifelong process in which individuals consistently negotiate disclosure as they meet new people and enter new situations(Mohr and Fassinger 2003; Morrow 1996). Despite these concerns, the "Outness Inventory" used in this study from is a significant improvement over past measures which calculated one-dimensional scores with taking into consideration how levels of disclosure or how disclosure varies among personal relations(Mohr and Fassinger 2000).

The women who participated in this study were not chosen by means of random assignment, providing some issues with internal validity. Thus, differences found in the outcome variables of interests may be due to the group selection, rather than perceived discrimination alone. Despite the multiple methods utilized used to recruit participants, most of the respondents were recruited online, creating mono method bias. As well, the majority of the women

recruited online came through networks catering to the visible gay and lesbian community, thus stratifying the sample by lesbian self-identity. Still, Rothblum (2000) suggest researches should not necessarily view non-representation as limiting. Researchers have the opportunity to learn successive strategies from individuals and communities that have successfully overcome the stress of coming out (Rothblum 2000).

Considering external validity, there remains the issues with selection and treatment. It is unknown how women who chose to participate in this research project differ from those that declined. Respondent outcomes may differ substantially from non-responder outcomes.

Lastly, the participants in this study were highly educated beyond normal population distributions. This characteristic of the sample may also be a result of the aforementioned issues with recruitment and selection bias. Taken into consideration, these factors limit the generalizability of the findings from this study to larger populations of African American and Latina same-sex women.

Future Research

In addressing the research aims presented in this study, more questions arose. At the onset of this study, I noted research examining social stratification's impact on mental and physical health has overwhelming focused on structural poverty, racism, and sexism while research examining sexual inequality has lagged significantly behind. While investigating sexual identity acceptance and disclosure as aspects of subjective well-being, the data revealed that BLSSAW do report experiencing discrimination specific to their identity as same-sex attracted minorities. This aspect of discrimination and affect on the structural and

physical outcomes of their life should be further explored. Does discrimination specific to sexual identity disproportionately affect outcomes of these women's life?

The framework from this project focused on what outcomes promote positive outcomes of sexual identity development as identified in the literature (sexual identity acceptance and disclosure). This data showed that despite reporting experiences with discrimination, many of the women in the study did not see this as affecting their ability to live productive lives. In addition, it showed how both internal and external factors could promote healthy adaption among multiple minorities. Parks, Hughes, & Matthews (2004) suggest using a bi-cultural competence framework to situate the experiences of same-sex attracted women of color. Traditionally, bi- and poly-cultural frameworks have been used in relation to ethnic identity but have not been extended to other aspects of identity development.

A poly-cultural framework is a useful perspective because it examines identity negotiations from a strengths perspective or as an adaptive response rather than as a failure to achieve a secure identity. Parks, Hughes, & Matthews (2004) also point out that same-sex attracted women of color can utilize the skills they have used to cope with their devalued racial identity to cope with their devalued same-sex attracted identity. Therefore, what has become a source of oppression can become a source of strength. The need to use a competency based framework future research can focus on understanding the adaptive coping strategies and skills used by same-sex attracted women of color to help manage the task of identity development. Future work should examine the implications

of managing same-sex identities in other specific social contexts; providing an understanding what occurs in the absence of social support. For example, understanding where BLSSAW find their support for identity as same-sex attracted ethnic minorities can provide researchers insight into coping strategies.

This study reiterated the need to continue theorizing about how environmental context, which includes aspects of the family, neighborhood, school, peer groups, and other socializing institutions, buffers or exacerbates stressors. Teasing out aspects of social support in this study illustrated how varying aspects of social support mediated outcomes of sexual identity acceptance and disclosure. Future research should consider how BLSSAW affirm their same-sex identities; how are the experiences of BLSSAW supported? This is particularly important because theoretical models for identity development have traditionally deemed identity development as a linear process where disclosure is the end-point and associated with positive outcomes. Specifically the process is thought to create intimacy, feelings of acceptance, and decrease the stress related to concealing the identity, which has been linked to better psychological well-being. However, researchers must consider the negative consequences of this process as well. Disclosing a stigmatized identity represents an intimate exchange, which can make disclosers more vulnerable to insult. How are these processes similar with disclosure among other devalued identities? Another interesting question to address is how disclosure has different implications depending on context. In general, exploring this line of research raises the important question of what are the social costs of disclosing devalued identities.

This work also raised questions as to what the consequences are of having to conceal or manage certain aspects of one's identity to have other parts of one's identity affirmed. This forces us to question whether full disclosure is necessary. Moreover, if one does not disclose does it always imply dysfunction? In light of the results of this present study, I suggest future research consider aspects of nondisclosure as potential coping strategies that are renegotiated in multiple social context. In addition, full disclosure should not be the only positive or healthy strategy for managing a stigmatized identity.

Understanding the connection between identity and social context was an underlying objective of this research project. While the impetus for this project was to understand the experiences of minority stress among BLSSAW, I sought primarily to understand the factors promoting positive outcomes. While completing this project, a critical underlying question that emerged from this project was, how do people successfully blend multiple identities that may be at odds or divergent from one another? How does the blending of these divergent identities happen in ways that is authentic for them? Furthermore, how does this happen in a way that does not compromise one identity for the other? The answers to these question has the potential to benefit multiple bodies of research The methodology used in this study limited the ability to capture the dynamic and fluid nature of identity, such as how these processes are influenced by the context in which they are occurring. Still, the data presented here attends to the complexity of identity acceptance and disclosure as well as the unique contextual factors that influence or support these processes. In understanding the role of context, researchers are able to recognize the adaptive features of identity.

Looking at identity in relation to multiple contexts and the adaptive role it serves is an interesting way to frame future identity research. In light of the findings from this project, future work should expand our understanding of the unique coping mechanisms used to navigate oppressed identities and serves as practical information for counselors, educators, families, etc. Insight provided from the data presented in this study has the potential to open up the conversation of how individuals' with stigmatized identities vary in their outcomes despite their social contexts.

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Appendix 1. Letter to Participants

Dear Participant:

Thank you for taking part in this investigation on Black and Latina lesbian and bisexual women's experiences. This survey is intended for Black and Latina women at least 18 years of age, who considers herself to be lesbian, bisexual, or has any same-sex attraction.

The information gained through this research will be used to better understand perceptions of sexual identity among racial minority women. Your participation in this study is voluntary, confidential, and anonymous. There will be no way to identify your responses.

Your participation should take about 30 minutes to complete the entire survey. There are seven sections to complete. Please follow the directions and complete the brief questionnaires in the order presented.

Remember, the information you are providing is important in gaining an understanding about sexual identity and community among ethnic and racial minority women. Please take your time and answer all of the questions thoughtfully and honestly. I greatly appreciate your willingness to take the time to participate in this important project.

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Sincerely,

Monique Carry
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Sociology
Emory University

Emory University, Sociology Department
(Version 3 2/2/09 - English)

Title: Sexual Identity and Community among Black and Latina Same-sex Attracted Women

Principal Investigator: Monique Carry

Introduction and Purpose: You are being asked to volunteer in a research study. The purpose of the research is to understand views of sexual identity and community among Black and Latina women that self identify as lesbian, bisexual, queer, questioning, or has some same-sex attraction. You must be 18 years or older to participate in this survey.

Procedures:
If you are taking this survey online:
There are seven sections in the following questionnaire. Your participation should take about 30 minutes to complete the entire questionnaire. Please follow the directions in each section and complete each section in the order presented. There are menu keys located at the bottom of the screen to help you navigate the survey. After you have completed the questionnaire be sure to completely exit out of your browser by clicking the "X" at the top of the page.

If you are taking this survey by mail:
There are seven sections in the following questionnaire. Your participation should take about 30 minutes to complete the entire questionnaire. Please follow the directions in each section and complete each section in the order presented. After you have completed the questionnaire, place it into the stamped addressed large mailing envelope provided and mail the packet within one week.

You may have received more than one packet. Please give the extra packet or packets to a friend(s) who either is lesbian, bisexual, or is wondering if she has any same-sex attraction.

Risks, Discomforts, and Inconveniences: While this research involves no perceived risk, we are aware of the courage it requires to share your experiences with others. If by completing these questionnaires, questions regarding your sexual identity arise, with which you would like some assistance, if you are completing this survey online, a link to a list of appropriate resources is provided. If you are completing this survey by mail, a list of appropriate resources is enclosed in your packet.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits as a volunteer. However, a future benefit that may result out of this research is culturally relevant information to help improve services available to Black and Latina lesbian and bisexual women.

Confidentiality: Your participation in this study is voluntary, confidential, and anonymous. There will be no way to identify your responses.
Online Participants: Data from web-based surveys will be maintained behind a secure firewall. The data will only be able to be accessed by the principal investigator via a user id and password. All pieces of data are connected to this access code and cannot be accessed by anyone else. IP addresses will not be captured or stored in any way in web-based questionnaire's database. Electronic data will be deleted at the conclusion of this study.
Participants completing survey by mail: To insure that you cannot be identified, it is important that you *do not* put your name on the envelope or anywhere on the survey materials. Hard copies of the survey will be destroyed at the conclusion of this study.
People other than those doing the study may look at study records. Agencies and Emory departments and committees that make rules and policy about how research is done have the right to review these records. So do companies and agencies that pay for the study. The government agencies and units within Emory responsible for making sure that studies are conducted and handled correctly that may look at your study records in order to do this job include the Office for Human Research Protections, the sponsor(s), the Emory University Institutional Review Board, and the Emory Office of Research Compliance. Companies and other groups that pay for studies and that are listed in consent documents also will have the right to look at your records. In addition, records can be opened by court order or produced in response to a subpoena or a request for production of documents. We will keep any records that we produce private to the extent we are required to do so by law. We will use a study number rather than your name on study records where we can. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results.

Contact Persons: If you have any questions about this study call Monique Carry, 404-727-7510 or Dr. Corey Keyes, 404-727-7894. Please contact the Emory University Institutional Review Board if you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research study toll free at 1-877-503-9797; email irb@emory.edu; or write to the office at 1599 Clifton Road, Atlanta GA 30322.

Study Findings: Included with your survey is a postage paid postcard. If you would like to receive the results of this study please, return the postage paid postcard or email Monique Carry ccarry@emory.edu.

It's Your Choice: You are free to choose whether or not you want to take part in this study. You can change your mind and stop at any time without penalty. This decision will not adversely affect your relationship with the researchers or Emory. It's your choice."

☐ I consent to participate

☐ I decline to participate

Appendix 2. Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION I**:** Read each question and answer the following statements as accurately as possible.

1. How many times in your life have you been discriminated against in each of the following ways because of such things as your race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or other characteristics? (If the experience happened to you but for some reason but for some reason other than discrimination, enter "0".)

	# of Times
You were discouraged by a teacher or adviser from seeking higher education	
You were denied a scholarship	
You were not hired for a job	
You were not given a job promotion	
You were prevented from renting or buying a home in a neighborhood you wanted	
You were prevented from remaining in a neighborhood because your neighbors made your life uncomfortable	
You were hassled by police	
You were denied a bank loan	
You were denied or provided inferior medical care	
You were denied or provided inferior services by a plumber, car, mechanic, or other service provider	

How often on a day-to-day basis, do you experience each of the following types of discrimination?

	NEVER	**RARELY**	**SOMETIMES**	**OFTEN**
You are treated with less courtesy then other people	1	2	3	4
You are treated with less respect than other people	1	2	3	4
You receive poorer service than other people at restaurants or stores	1	2	3	4
People act as though they think you are not smart	1	2	3	4
People act as if they are scared of you	1	2	3	4
People act as if they think you are dishonest	1	2	3	4
People act as if they think you are not as good as they are	1	2	3	4
You are called names or are insulted	1	2	3	4

You are threatened or harassed	1	2	3	4

If you never in your life had any of the discriminatory experiences described in the previous section, go to Section II. Otherwise continue to question 2.

2. What was the main reason for the discrimination you experienced? (If more than one main reason, check all that apply).

Your age	____
Your gender	____
Your race	____
Your ethnicity or nationality	____
Your religion	____
Your height or weight	____
Some other aspect of your appearance	____
A physical disability	____
Your sexual orientation	____
Some other reason; Please specify _____	____

3. Overall, how much has **gender** discrimination interfered with you having a full and productive life?
1. A lot
2. Some
3. A little
4. Not at all

4. Overall, how much has discrimination by **race** interfered with you having a full and productive life?
1. A lot
2. Some
3. A little
4. Not at all

5. Overall, how much has discrimination against your **sexual orientation** interfered with you having a full and productive life?
1. A lot
2. Some
3. A little
4. Not at all

6. Overall, how much harder has your life been because of discrimination?
1. A lot
2. Some
3. A little
4. Not at all

SECTION II: For each statement listed below place a number 1 – 5; Where 1 = you **disagree** strongly with that statement, and 5 = you **agree** strongly with that statement.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5

Disagree Strongly — Somewhat Agree — Agree Strongly

1	I act as if my lovers are merely friends.	_____
2	I can't stand lesbians who are too "Butch." They make lesbians look bad.	_____
3	I feel bad for acting on my lesbian or bisexual desires.	_____
4	Lesbian couples should be allowed to adopt children the same as heterosexual couples.	_____
5	I feel comfortable being a lesbian / bisexual.	_____
6	I am familiar with lesbian / bisexual music festivals and/ or conferences.	_____
7	I am familiar with lesbian / bisexual books and / or magazines.	_____
8	I feel comfortable talking about same-sex behavior in public.	_____
9	Children should be taught that being gay is a normal and healthy way for people to be.	_____
10	Just as in other species, female same-sex behavior is a natural expression of sexuality in human women.	_____
11	I feel comfortable with the different types of women who make up the lesbian / bisexual community.	_____
12	I frequently make negative comments about other lesbians / bisexuals.	_____
13	Growing up in a lesbian family is detrimental for children.	_____
14	I am comfortable being an "out" lesbian / bisexual. I want others to know and see me as a lesbian / bisexual.	_____
15	I hate myself for being attracted to other women.	_____
16	Attending lesbian / bisexual events and organizations is important to me.	_____
17	I am proud to be a lesbian or bisexual.	_____
18	I wish some lesbians wouldn't "flaunt" their lesbianism. They only do it for shock value and it doesn't accomplish anything positive.	_____
19	Being part of the lesbian / bisexual community is important to me.	_____
20	I am not worried about anyone finding out that I am a lesbian / bisexual.	_____

SECTION III: Below are 12 different relationships you may have in your life. Please circle the number for each relationship that best describes that person's knowledge of your sexual orientation.

1 = Person definitely does NOT know about your sexual orientation status
2 = Person might know about your sexual orientation status, but it is NEVER talked about
3 = Person probably knows about your sexual orientation status, but it is NEVER talked about
4 = Person probably knows about your sexual orientation status, but it is RARELY talked about
5 = Person definitely knows about your sexual orientation status, but it is RARELY talked about
6 = Person definitely knows about your sexual orientation status, and it is SOMETIMES talked about
7 = Person definitely knows about your sexual orientation status, and it is OPENLY talked about
NA = Not applicable to your situation; there is no such person or group of people in your life

1. My Mother	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. My Father	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. My siblings (sisters, brothers)	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. My extended family	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. My new heterosexual friends	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. My work peers	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. My work supervisor(s)	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. My religious friends	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. My pastor, priest	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Causal acquaintances	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. My old heterosexual friends	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. My physician, healthcare professional	NA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

SECTION IV: Below are 10 statements. To the right of each you will find four numbers where
1 = "Not At All True" on the left, to 4 = "Exactly True" on the right.
Circle the number which *best* indicates your feelings about that statement.

	NOT AT ALL TRUE	HARDLY TRUE	MODERATELY TRUE	EXACTLY TRUE
I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.	1	2	3	4
If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.	1	2	3	4
It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.	1	2	3	4
I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.	1	2	3	4
Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.	1	2	3	4
I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.	1	2	3	4
I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.	1	2	3	4
When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.	1	2	3	4
If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.	1	2	3	4
I can usually handle whatever comes my way.	1	2	3	4

SECTION V: There are 6 questions in this section. First read the question. Then for each relationship listed underneath that question, circle the number that best describes your answer to the question for that person or group of people.

1: To what extent could you count on this relationship, group, or person if you needed them?

		NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE	QUITE A BIT	VERY MUCH
Significant other	NA	1	2	3	4
Mother	NA	1	2	3	4
Father	NA	1	2	3	4
Sibling (s)	NA	1	2	3	4
Extended Family (Aunts, Uncles, Cousins, Grandparents)	NA	1	2	3	4
Friends	NA	1	2	3	4
People in your racial / ethnic community	NA	1	2	3	4
The gay community	NA	1	2	3	4
Church	NA	1	2	3	4
People at your job	NA	1	2	3	4

2: How significant is this relationship, group, or person in your life?

		NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE	QUITE A BIT	VERY MUCH
Significant other	NA	1	2	3	4
Mother	NA	1	2	3	4
Father	NA	1	2	3	4
Sibling (s)	NA	1	2	3	4
Extended Family (Aunts, Uncles, Cousins, Grandparents)	NA	1	2	3	4
Friends	NA	1	2	3	4
People in your racial / ethnic community	NA	1	2	3	4
The gay community	NA	1	2	3	4
Church	NA	1	2	3	4
People at your job	NA	1	2	3	4

3: How much do you have to work to avoid conflict with this relationship, group, or person?

		NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE	QUITE A BIT	VERY MUCH
Significant other	NA	1	2	3	4
Mother	NA	1	2	3	4
Father	NA	1	2	3	4
Sibling (s)	NA	1	2	3	4
Extended Family (Aunts, Uncles, Cousins, Grandparents)	NA	1	2	3	4
Friends	NA	1	2	3	4
People in your racial / ethnic community	NA	1	2	3	4
The gay community	NA	1	2	3	4
Church	NA	1	2	3	4
People at your job	NA	1	2	3	4

4: How much does this relationship, group, or person want to change you?

		NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE	QUITE A BIT	VERY MUCH
Significant other	NA	1	2	3	4
Mother	NA	1	2	3	4
Father	NA	1	2	3	4
Sibling (s)	NA	1	2	3	4
Extended Family (Aunts, Uncles, Cousins, Grandparents)	NA	1	2	3	4
Friends	NA	1	2	3	4
People in your racial / ethnic community	NA	1	2	3	4
The gay community	NA	1	2	3	4
Church	NA	1	2	3	4
People at your job	NA	1	2	3	4

5: How positive a role does this relationship, group, or person play in your life?

		NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE	QUITE A BIT	VERY MUCH
Significant other	NA	1	2	3	4
Mother	NA	1	2	3	4
Father	NA	1	2	3	4
Sibling (s)	NA	1	2	3	4
Extended Family (Aunts, Uncles, Cousins, Grandparents)	NA	1	2	3	4
Friends	NA	1	2	3	4
People in your racial / ethnic community	NA	1	2	3	4
The gay community	NA	1	2	3	4
Church	NA	1	2	3	4
People at your job	NA	1	2	3	4

6: To what extent can you really count on this relationship, group, or person to distract you from your worries when you feel under stress?

		NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE	QUITE A BIT	VERY MUCH
Significant other	NA	1	2	3	4
Mother	NA	1	2	3	4
Father	NA	1	2	3	4
Sibling (s)	NA	1	2	3	4
Extended Family (Aunts, Uncles, Cousins, Grandparents)	NA	1	2	3	4
Friends	NA	1	2	3	4
People in your racial / ethnic community	NA	1	2	3	4
The gay community	NA	1	2	3	4
Church	NA	1	2	3	4
People at your job	NA	1	2	3	4

SECTION VI: This is the final section. Your answers to these questions are completely anonymous. These questions are being asked to gather background information about you, the participant.
Today's Date: _____

1. How old are you: _____

2. Which of the following groups comes closest to identifying you? (Check and specify in space)

Black / Black _____

Afro -Caribbean_____
(e.g. Jamaican, Haitian, etc)

African Immigrant_____
(e.g. Nigerian, Ghanaian, etc)

Hispanic / Latina_____
(e.g. Chicana, Dominicana, etc)

Multiracial_____
(List all)

Other_____

3. What is your Nationality?
U.S. Citizen □ Naturalized Citizen □ Non- U.S. Citizen
(Specify)_____

4. What is your current relationship status? (Check all that apply)
Single □ Married to person of same- sex
Dating □ Married to person of opposite sex
In committed relationship

5. Who do you live within your household? (Check all that apply)
Children □ Parents □ Friend (s) / Roommate (s)
No one □ Other Relatives □ My Girlfriend / Partner/ Spouse

What is the total number of people living in your household? _____

6. If you have children, how many children do you have? _____

What is your relationship to the children? (Check all that apply)
Biological Parent □ Foster Parent □ Co-Parent / Step Parent (My partner's child)
Adoptive Parent □ Other (i.e. Aunt, Uncle, Grandparent, etc)

7. What State do you reside in? _____

8. Describe the area where you live:
____ Rural / Country ____ Suburban / Town ____ Urban / City

9. How many years of school have you completed (Check one)

8 years or less (No high school)	□ GED	□ College degree
Some high school	□ Vocational training	□ Some Graduate/ Professional
Graduated from High School	□ Some college	□ Graduate / Professional degree

10. Are you now (Check all that apply)

A student	□ Military	□ On disability
Employed full time	□ Self- Employed	□ Retired
Employed part time	□ On public assistance	□ Unemployed

11. What is your current occupation? (Check one)

Professional / Technical (Doctor, Lawyer)	□ Sales	□ Culture / Arts
Service Sector (food, transportation, hospitality)	□ Clerical	□ Other (specify) _____
Managerial / Administrative		

12. What is your religious affiliation (check one)

Christian / Protestant	□ Muslim / Islamic	□ None
Catholic	□ Atheist / Agnostic	
Jewish	□ Other (specify) _____	

13. Which label is closet to how you describe your sexual orientation? (Check one)

Gay	□ Queer	□ Straight/ Heterosexual
Lesbian	□ Exploring / Curious	
Bisexual	□ Other (specify) _____	

14. Do you have sex with: (Check One?)

Exclusively women	□ Mostly Men
Mostly women	□ Exclusively men
Women and men equally	

15. Do you identify as any of the following;

Femme	□ Stud	□ Soft Stud
Tomboy	□ Butch	□ Other (specify) _____
None of the above		