Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter now, including display on the World Wide Web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis.

Christopher Kusumonegoro March 25, 2022

Double Invisibility: A Case Study on Identity Formation and Experiences of Gay Asian-American Christian Men

by

Christopher Kusumonegoro

Dr. Frank Lechner
Adviser

Department of Sociology

Dr. Frank Lechner

Adviser

Dr. Tracy Scott

Committee Member

Dr. Peng Yin

Committee Member

2022

Double Invisibility: A Case Study on Identity Formation and Experiences of Gay Asian-American Christian Men

by

Christopher Kusumonegoro

Dr. Frank Lechner
Adviser

An abstract of
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Department of Sociology

2022

Abstract

Double Invisibility: A Case Study on Identity Formation and Experiences of Gay Asian-American Christian Men
By Christopher Kusumonegoro

Gay Asian-American Christian men exist as double minorities—a sexual minority in a heteronormative society and a racial and ethnic minority in White America—and for that reason undergo double invisibility in society. To expand on the limited research available about the intersection of sexuality, Asian identity, and Christian faith presented by Kau and Lam, I carried out a qualitative explorative case study focused on 10 in-depth interviews with gay Asian-American men affiliated with Evergreen Baptist Church of Los Angeles (EBCLA). This research explores how gay Asian-American Christian men form and organize their identities and whether their experiences are consistent with the literature.

Among the participants I interviewed, the formation of Asian, Christian, and gay identities ranged from weak to strong alignment with current identity models as presented in a typology proposed by Kau. My interviewees aligned more closely with what Kau calls the dual identity and complex identity models, capturing the formation and organization process of multiple identities. Interviewees also demonstrated evidence of multiple minority stress, challenging experiences, and rewarding experiences relatively consistent with themes presented in Lam's research. Key findings demonstrate that the stress of being Christian in the LGBT community was significantly lower in this group than past research suggests, which could be attributed to a self-selection bias in my small sample of choosing more gay friends that are already Christian. The interviewees also exhibited lower signs of internalized racism than expected, which could be the result of the majority of participants being raised in diverse communities where being Asian was not a minority experience. Finally, participants exhibited greater signs of empathy and belonging for being gay Asian-American Christian, an empathy likely enhanced by finding EBCLA, a church that provides a space for all three identities to form community.

Double Invisibility: A Case Study on Identity Formation and Experiences of Gay Asian-American Christian Men

by

Christopher Kusumonegoro

Dr. Frank Lechner
Adviser

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Department of Sociology

2022

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction 1
Chapter 2: Background & Literature Review 3
Chapter 3: Methodology 22
Chapter 4: Results and Findings 25
Chapter 5: Discussion 55
6. References 62
7. Appendices 68

List of Tables

Table 1……19
Table 2……21
Table 3……26
Table 4……31
Table 5……33
Table 6……35
Table 7……36
Table 8……40
Table 9……47

Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

Gay Asian Christian men are invisible in society. The experiences of these individuals are rarely discussed because they exist at the crossroads of multiple identities as a sexual minority and racial minority within the context of American Christianity. As a result, their experiences can often be drowned out by the voices of the majority. For this reason, my study focuses on an exploration of identity formation and experiences of gay Asian Christian men to amplify their voices and highlight important findings within this intersectional space.

The stories of gay Asian Christian men play an important role in the way we understand our society. Over the last 25 years, ideological polarization in America has continued to increase (Heltzel and Laurin 2020). Although polarization itself is not new, the increasing divide in discourse poses the question of what we can do to bring greater union, if there is something to do. While my study does not directly address this question, I believe that hearing the stories of individuals who hold two or more identities that are socially dichotomous can breathe fresh insight into this conversation. Rather than remaining invisible, I hope that those at the crossroads of minority identities can be seen with admiration because of their courage to journey into the process of identity integration.

In addition to present day relevance, this study has personal significance for me as a gay Asian Christian individual. I, like many of the interviewees in the study, struggled with coming to terms with my various identities and reconciling them with one another. I have spent many sleepless nights pondering what it means to be gay, Asian, and Christian, individually and together, and what that means for the way I live my life. Additionally, one of my greatest struggles in my own journey was the invisibility of others in my life who shared my identities, leading to my own feelings of isolation and loneliness. Through this study, I hope for the lives of

gay Asian Christian men to be more visible for others and to encourage greater discourse regarding those who hold a double minority status.

To accomplish this, my study is a case study on gay Asian-American Christian men who are affiliated with Evergreen Baptist Church of Los Angeles (EBCLA), or as interviewees colloquially call, “Evergreen”. EBCLA is an American Baptist Church that has its roots in Asian-American activism since the time of Japanese internment camps in the 1940s. Over the past decade, EBCLA has specifically engaged with the conversation of how to better love LGBTQ+ people in the church, leading to the formation of their LGBTQ+ fellowship, The Open Door (TOD), which has gained a total membership of over 260 people throughout their existence. On June 25, 2021, EBCLA released their official statement on love and marriage:

> Evergreen Baptist Church of Los Angeles, being a theologically-diverse church family, affirms the Baptist distinctive of Soul Freedom for our pastors in regard to weddings. Each pastor may discern according to their personal conviction whether they will officiate weddings between any two adults, regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation, under the supervision of the Senior Pastor. (Evergreen Baptist Church of Los Angeles 2021)

The affirmation of Soul Freedom, a Baptist understanding of religious liberty (Byrd 2018), allows for multiple theological perspectives on a variety of topics including those related to LGBTQ+ inclusion, not just love and marriage. Hence, gay Asian-American Christian male interviewees from EBCLA hold a wide variety of experiences and perspectives on identity formation and integration. These insights are valuable and showcase the suitability of EBCLA as the environment to conduct this explorative study.

Chapter 2. BACKGROUND & LITERATURE REVIEW

Christianity in the United States

Evangelicalism

Christianity is a hypernym that captures hundreds of religious denominations in the United States alone. These denominations can fall under certain religious movements, the top three being Evangelical Protestant, Mainline Protestant, and Catholics (Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project 2020b). Three in every four Americans identify as Christian (70.6%), and out of these Christians, one in every four identifies as Evangelical Protestant (25.4%), followed by Catholics and Mainline Protestant, which make up 20.8% and 14.6%, respectively (Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project 2020b). Christianity cannot be used as a term to capture the views and values of a multitude of religious groups without first specifying which religious group we are referring to due to the religious pluralism that exists. Thus, this study focuses on Evangelical Protestant Christianity because the participants in my study first entered Christianity or were raised in evangelical environments before they moved to EBCLA, which, as American Baptist, is a Mainline Protestant denomination.

Evangelicalism encompasses many denominations, the most prominent denominations being Baptist Family at 9.2%, Nondenominational at 4.9%, and Pentecostal at 3.6% (Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project 2020b). Despite the plurality of denominations, most Evangelicals hold these six beliefs: "(a) absolute authority of the Scripture as a source of knowledge of God and how to live a Christian life, (b) Jesus Christ understood as God incarnate and the savior of sinful humankind, (c) the lordship of the Holy Spirit, (d) personal conversion as necessity (being born again), (e) the need to evangelize both individually and as a church, and (f) the importance of the communion of Christians for spiritual sustenance,

fellowship, and development" (Edger 2012:163). Based on these six beliefs, Evangelical denominations debate a number of topics such as that of sexuality. For the purposes of this paper, when referring to Christians, I am specifically referring to Evangelical Christianity unless otherwise stated.

Evangelical Responses to Sexuality

Historically, Christians have advocated for a Biblical conception of sexual purity. In the 1960s, when certain secular groups attempted to increase sexual expression and step out of the boundaries of sex reserved for marriage, Evangelicals responded through the Sexual Purity Movement, championing the belief that only sex within marriage is sanctified and that it is God's design for sexual relations (Edger 2012). These beliefs stem from the deeply held conviction regarding the Bible's absolute authority over Christian life, which is one of the six fundamental Evangelical beliefs.

Applying these convictions to the topic of same-sex orientation, there are 6 "clobber passages" in the Bible that are often cited against the LGBTQ+: Genesis 19:1-13, Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, and 1 Timothy 1:8-11 (Edger 2012). The conviction of heterosexuality and marriage between a man and woman through these passages justified Christian promotion of reparative therapy. By the 1960s and 70s, reparative therapy became Christianity's dominant response to homosexuality, paralleling the Sexual Purity Movement (Anon 2021). Reparative therapy promised either whole or partial sexual orientation change for gay men and lesbians through psychotherapy and prayer. Its efficacy, however, has been hotly contested, sparking debates on both extremes with fundamentalist conservatives on one side and social constructivist progressives on the other. Critics claim that there is no evidence in authentic sexual-orientation change and that psychological trauma can often be

produced. Since reparative therapy's height, formal organizations like the American Psychological Association have denounced the practice and the number of proponents of reparative therapy has declined. In 2013, Alan Chambers, president of Exodus International, the largest ex-gay group for 37 years, rejected reparative therapy and shut the organization down (Lovett 2013, Chon 2020). Amongst the programs that Christians have for LGBTQ+ people, Edger describes that "there are limited resources to help homosexual evangelicals heal from sexual addiction. However, the number of resources for helping gay individuals heal from their homosexuality is vast" (2012:172).

Despite the general cultural rejection of reparative therapy today, the number of adults in the United States who have been through a religious-affiliated reparative therapy program totals around 700,000, with 50% of them having received it as adolescents (Mallory, Brown, and Conron 2021). Reparative therapy programs are now banned in 18 U.S. states and while programs still exist, its decline demonstrates two insights relevant to our study (Mallory et al. 2021). First, the debate around reparative therapy sheds light on the historically contentious relationship between the LGBTQ+ and Christian church. Second, the tail end of reparative therapy means that other Christian narratives about sexuality are coming to light.

Sexual Orientation Identification and Sides A, B, C and X

LGBTQ+ Christians are forming their own perspectives on sexuality and religious doctrine. Increasing affirmation and acceptance of LGBTQ+ identity has led to progress in the acceptance of non-heteronormative identities, yet the integration of these individuals with society has remained an important conversation. Amongst the many topics regarding sexuality, one of the main focuses today lies on the issue of gay marriage. Societally, the Supreme Court's ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) on the legalization of non-heterosexual marriage was a profound

shift in the fight for LGBTQ+ inclusion (Georgetown Law 2022), however, many Evangelical churches remain firmly planted against gay marriage. Even so, not all Evangelical churches hold rigid fundamentalist perspectives. Certain denominations within the Evangelical movement continue to debate the topic, including the United Methodist Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Presbyterian Church (Masci and Lipka 2020). Those advocating for the acceptance of gay marriage often identify as progressive Christians and often reject beliefs of conservative Christians on topics such as homosexuality and abortion, which they claim were never explicitly mentioned by Jesus in the Bible (Kristof 2021).

Gay Christians have emerged within this debate holding a variety of perspectives. Since the conversation can be complicated to parse, gay Christians have developed signifiers over the past two decades to indicate their general theological perspectives on faith and sexuality. First and foremost, Yarhouse identifies three tiers of language around homosexuality. First, same-sex attraction is "the most descriptive way people can talk about their feelings. This is the part of the equation they can't control". Many individuals who first experience same-sex attraction may describe their feelings this way. Second, homosexual orientation is "[same-sex attraction] that is strong enough, durable enough, and persistent enough for them to feel that they are oriented toward the same sex". Individuals who use this label acknowledge their orientation towards the same sex but may hesitate to claim a gay identity for themselves. Finally, gay identity is "the most prescriptive. It is a sociocultural label that people use to describe themselves, and it is a label that is imbued with meaning in our culture" (2010:58-59 as cited in Chon 2020). The multiple tiers of language around homosexuality demonstrate the social construction of sexuality that is maintained through the relations of power and discourse (Foucault 1990). This language is important in understanding how same-sex attracted Christians integrate their attractions as part of

their identity. For this paper, I will use gay when referring to same-sex attracted, homosexual-oriented, and gay-identifying people and will delineate distinctions when necessary.

Second, there are two sides that describe the dominant gay Christian perspectives around gay identity and relationships that have emerged over time:

> **Side A Theology:** Any theology which fully affirms both LGBTQ+ identity and same-gender sex. Side A theology fully affirms same-gender relationships, marriage, and sex as good and acceptable to God. Side A theology also recognizes that celibacy may be freely chosen for many reasons, including by individuals who identify along the spectrum of asexuality. Individuals within this theological framework may hold a broad range of sexual ethics.
>
> **Side B Theology:** Any theology which affirms LGBTQ+ identities, yet maintains that Christians should refrain from same-gender sex for a variety of personal and/or theological reasons. This includes single, celibate LGBTQ+ Christians as well as those in celibate partnerships and mixed-orientation marriages. These are marriages wherein at least one person is married to a person of a differing sexual identity, such as a heterosexual man married to a gay woman. Within the Q Christian Fellowship community, Side B refers to a theological viewpoint reserved for LGBTQ+ persons only. When celibacy is imposed by cisgender, heterosexual people onto others, it is referred to as non-affirming (Q Christian Fellowship 2021).

In addition to Sides A and B, Sides C and X are less common but important to discuss. Side C gay Christians are "either undecided or in tension around these conclusion" and Side X SSA Christians "believe Christians should disidentify with the gay identity and pursue heterosexuality", a position more common during the height of the reparative therapy movement (Yarhouse et al. 2009:34). The language of gay identity and theological position is important to engage in the stories of gay Asian Christians to understand the nuances of their experiences.

Mainline Protestantism

While Evangelical Protestant Christianity is the dominant Christian movement observed through my research, Mainline Protestant Christianity is important to discuss because of EBCLA's denomination as American Baptist. The name "Mainline Protestant" is derived from

the fact that the majority of the United States Founding Fathers, as well as many U.S. presidents, were part of Christian denominations under the "mainline" movement (Lipka 2015). However, Mainline traditions have been shrinking and have decreased in size by 5 million between 2007 and 2014 (Lipka 2015). This is in large part because Mainline traditions remain one of the most racially White traditions compared to other traditions and that Mainline Protestants remain part of the older generation (Lipka 2015). As Mainline Christians die out, younger generations are more likely to affiliate with Catholicism or Evangelical Protestantism, or to be religiously unaffiliated (Lipka 2015).

Mainline Protestants remain one of the more progressive Christian traditions compared to others. Amongst the most progressive of Mainline denominations include the Episcopal Church in the U.S.A and United Church of Christ where 74% of members in both denominations favor/strongly favor same-sex relationships (Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project 2020d). Among Mainline Protestants overall, 71% favor/strongly favor same-sex relationships, in contrast to Evangelical Protestants whose acceptance of homosexuality was around 36% (Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project 2020c, Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project 2020d). These statistics demonstrate the difference in perspectives around sexuality between the two Christian traditions. In the American Baptist denomination, 45% favor/strongly favor same-sex marriage and 49% oppose/strongly oppose same-sex marriage, making it one of the most conservative denominations amongst other Mainline denominations with regards to sexuality (Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project 2020d). As an American Baptist Church, EBCLA represents the middle ground of affirming and unaffirming theologies around sexuality and marriage, making it an ideal landscape for this explorative study on the lives of gay Asian Christians.

Asian Americans in the Literature

Asian American Experience

Asian Americans face their own struggles, independent of sexuality and faith, living in the U.S as a racial minority group that makes up 7% of the population (Budiman and Ruiz 2021). First, the diverse ethnic groups that make up Asian Americans are often lumped together within this category, ignoring the rich cultures that make it up. Six origin groups make up 85% of all Asian Americans – Chinese, Indian, Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean, and Japanese – and within these cultures there are already stark differences including language, customs, and ideologies (Budiman and Ruiz 2021). Second, the prejudice against Asian Americans manifest primarily due to two stereotypes: the model minority myth and the perpetual foreigner (Lam 2014). The model minority myth is a stereotype that casts Asian Americans as racial success stories: experiencing little discrimination, being academically superior, having few emotional difficulties, and needing little to no support because they have "made it" in society (Murjani 2014). This then perpetuates the cultural expectation that "all Asian Americans are smart, hardworking, and wealthy" (Murjani 2014, 83). Consequently, Asian Americans are often made invisible in their own community if they do not "succeed", increasing the pressure on Asian Americans to "achieve". The model minority myth is reinforced by the perpetual foreigner status that Asian Americans also face. The perpetual foreigner stereotype claims that because Asian Americans are immigrants, they can never truly be American and are thus conditionally accepted into American society. This idea leads to the marginalization of Asian Americans in social, academic, and political realms and instigates the belief that Asian Americans must assimilate, or face being rejected by society (Murjani 2014).

The two dominant stereotypes made of Asian Americans are exacerbated by the powerful force of shame that is used as a tool within Asian ethnic communities in America. (Chon 2020). Smith describes the presence of shame in a study of Asians attending a church in New York:

> "What is shame? Shame is a negative evaluation of oneself resulting in a painful emotion. A person's dignity is exposed as inferior, inadequate, unacceptable, defective, or unworthy. An exposed, shamed person, preoccupied with others' opinions, concludes: "I am an unworthy, incompetent, or bad person. I am worthless and powerless. I feel a sense of shrinking, of being small." (2019:11)

Shame is thus an interaction between one's perceived value and their perception of their value as perceived by others. Yeh and Huang's study of ethnic identity development among Asian American college students also identifies shame as a powerful force in Asian collectivism, noting that "the avoidance of shame was found to be a strong motivating factor in determining their ethnic identification" (1996:656) and that "the process of ethnic identification is unique for Asian Americans in that shame… is a culturally powerful motivating force in defining oneself" (1996:658). Smith identifies patterns associated within Asian shame: (1) family honor is most important, (2) expressing thoughts and emotions is often considered bad or wrong, (3) social expectations are to convey harmony, uniformity, calmness, and control, and avoid the appearance of problems, neediness, or conflict, (4) being collective and communal is often elevated, and becoming an individual or independent is often disregarded, and (5) older age is respected and honored (2019). Understanding the significance of shame in Asian-American communities and the prejudice they face is a necessary step in understanding the experiences of Asian Americans as a racial minority group so that we can explore this group within the context of religion and sexuality.

Asian American Christianity

Among Asians in the United States, 34% identify as Christian: 11% within this group identify as Evangelical Protestant, 17% as Catholic, and 5% as Mainline Protestant (Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project 2020a). This makes Christianity the most prominent religion for Asians, only followed by Hinduism at 16% of Asians. According to Alumkal, the appeal of Christianity to Asian Americans is tied to notions of the model minority myth and perpetual foreigner because Asian Americans are forced to integrate cultural elements within their ethnic communities with those in America (2002). No matter how much Asian Americans try to assimilate, the lack of full acceptance into the dominant culture creates an allure in Christian teachings in that the Christian identity takes precedence over ethnic or racial identity (Alumkal 2002). As a result, Asian Americans can relate to the dominant culture in America by sharing Christian identity as a core identity rather than differentiating themselves racially or ethnically. Christianity's structured theology also reinforces the model minority stereotype that Asians face by providing certainty that one is succeeding in faith (Alumkal 2002). While a core tenant of the faith is being "saved by faith", certain activities such as attending church, tithing, and volunteering become symbols of faith and dedication.

Asian American Sexuality

Christian faith may complement the Asian American experience, but non-heterosexuality complicates the model minority status for Asian Americans instead (Ocampo and Soodjinda 2015). The model minority status is not only generated through society but also applied from within families, generating tremendous pressure to excel academically, in one's career, and overall life outcome. Essentially, to be a good child is to be a successful contributor in society and to raise a family. However, non-heterosexual identities like being gay can disrupt one's

ability to fulfill these expectations (Ocampo and Soodjinda 2015). Being gay as an Asian American can drive them further from their ethnic communities, creating a vicious cycle of mental health illnesses leading to negative performance outcomes, pushing them even further from the expectation to excel. To mitigate the negative impact that being gay has towards Asian Americans' ability to meet familial expectations, gay Asian-Americans may instead double-down on using education and success as a conscious strategy to overcome how their sexuality detracts from the model minority status (Ocampo and Soodjinda 2015).

In addition to discrimination towards LGBTQ+ individuals in the Asian American community, gay Asian Americans do not escape the perpetual foreigner status in LGBT-focused communities such as gay-straight alliances (GSA) either. GSAs are often limiting for students of color because of cultural differences and prejudice towards minority groups (Weitz 2015, Ocampo and Soodjinda 2015). Gay Asian Americans thus face double oppression for being a racial minority and sexual minority in the United States (Chon 2020).

Interaction between Race, Sexuality, and Religion

In reviewing the literature surrounding the intersectionality of sexuality, race, and religion for gay, Asian, and Christian-identifying individuals, there is scant material to draw from. While specific research on gay and Asian, Asian and Christian, and gay and Christian is more evident, research that synthesizes these three identities is extremely limited. Thus, for this study, I draw on two dissertations written by Lisa Kau and Yat Ling Lam to identify important frameworks regarding identity development and themes within the gay, Asian, Christian experience as a foundation for critical analysis in my research.

Kau

Lisa Kau's dissertation critically analyzes the identity formation for Asian American, Christian Faith, and Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) identity, individually, before providing analysis on complex identity formation and organization through additional social psychology frameworks (2020). Kau's analysis is critical in the understanding of how one's identity translates to their experience, yet Kau's dissertation focuses more on how these identities and related experiences can be helpful for clinicians who want to work with LGB Asian-American Christians instead of exploring the range of experiences of LGB Asian-American Christians themselves.

The process of identity formation is not immediate and requires important steps to claiming an identity as one's own. There have been many attempts to create models that break down identity development for specific identities; however, Kau phenomenally synthesizes the most significant models in literature.

Asian American Identity Development

Kau utilizes a popular stage model of Asian American identity that was first introduced by Jean Kim in 1981. This model provides five stages that form a progression from the least to most healthy:

> The first stage, *ethnic awareness*, begins around when the child is three or four years old, when family members serve as their primary model of ethnicity. This is typically when positive or neutral attitudes toward one's ethnic group are formed, which depends on the amount of outside ethnic exposure the child receives. The second stage, *White identification*, begins when the child enters school and encounter racial prejudice from their peers and perhaps even teachers. This results in the child's self-esteem and identity being negatively impacted. The child realizes their "differentness," which kindles self-blame and a desire to escape their racial/ethnic heritage and identify with White society. The third stage, *awakening*, refers to the stage in which the person, if they progress to this stage at all, increases in political awareness… The fourth stage, *redirection*, consists of a renewed connection with the person's Asian American culture and heritage. In this stage, the person often has the realization that White oppression is to blame for the

> damaging experiences of their youth. Rage against racism as well as Asian American self and group pride become prominent themes. The fifth and last stage, *incorporation*, is the highest form of identity evolution… It is marked by the development of a confident and comfortable identity as an Asian American, alongside respect for other cultures and races, including White Americans. (2020:6-7)

Kim's model makes it evident that the experience of "otherness" is tangible throughout the formation of Asian American identity, demonstrating the struggle of Asian Americans as a racial minority group in a predominantly White America. Identity becomes salient because it is put under stress requiring the attention of Asian Americans to process their identity and claim it as their own.

Christian Faith Development

In order to distinguish the steps for Christian faith development, Kau draws upon James Fowler's stages of faith model which is one of the earliest and most popular models of faith development for any faith practice. This model involves six stages that are associated with an average individual's life stages:

> The first stage is called *intuitive-projective,* in which preschool children often mix fantasy and reality and most ideas about God are picked up from parents/caregivers and society. The second stage, *mythic-literal*, is when school-age children start understanding the world in more logical ways. They generally accept what is told to them by their religious community very literally. The third stage, *synthetic conventional*, is typical of teenagers who have experienced different social circles and have a need to integrate various pieces of information. In this stage, the person usually adopts an all-encompassing belief system and is often unable to venture outside of this system… The fourth stage, *individuative-reflective*, begins when the person starts realizing that there are other systems of belief and typically starts in young adulthood. The person begins to critically examine their beliefs and can become disillusioned with their former religion. The fifth stage, *conjunctive faith*, is often reached at mid-life. This is when the person starts to accept that there are paradoxes in life and to recognize the limits of what they can logically understand. They begin to see life as a mystery and often turn to the sacred without being stuck in a theological box… few people reach the sixth and final stage called *universalizing faith*. At this stage, the person can relate to anyone at any stage and from any faith without being condescending but are simultaneously able to challenge the assumptions that others might have. (2020:8-9)

For Christians that grow up in Christian upbringings, Fowler's stages of faith can parallel the development of their faith. As individuals begin drawing upon different identities, perhaps as an Asian American or as an LGBT-identifying individual, incongruencies between identities may force Christians to ask difficult questions to maintain their Christian faith. The stages of faith model demonstrates the back and forth of asking difficult questions to either affirm, challenge, or change faith affiliations. All of this is formative in the development of faith and critical to understand the experiences of Christians.

Sexual Identity Development

Kau approaches sexual identity development using Vivian Cass' sexual identity development model, one of the most popular models for sexual identity development. The Cass Model identifies six main stages:

> The first stage is *identity confusion*. The onset is the first conscious awareness that one might have same-sex attraction in terms of thoughts, feelings, or behavior. This stage is characterized by feelings of inner turmoil and alienation. Unless heterosexual identity foreclosure occurs, the person moves onto the second stage, *identity comparison*, in which the person tentatively commits to their sexual minority identity. As the person increases in awareness of the variances between heterosexual others and themselves, they experience alienation… The third stage is *identity tolerance* in which the person seeks out other sexual minorities or communities in order to relieve their sense of being alone…The fourth stage, *identity acceptance*, is characterized by an increased sense of feeling normal due to increased contact with other sexual minorities, which becomes increasingly important in the person's life. The incongruence between how the person sees themself and their perception of how others view them causes them to move into the fifth stage, *identity pride*. This stage is characterized by an almost complete acceptance of one's gay, lesbian, or bisexual identity coupled with an acute sense of societal rejection. The person often sees the world as divided into two camps: heterosexual and not, and the person's commitment to the non-heterosexual group is strong… At this stage, the person's sexual minority identity is often seen as their primary identity, superseding all other aspects of their life. The sixth and last stage, *identity synthesis*, is reached when the person is able to integrate their sexual minority identity with other important aspects of their identity. Increased contact with supportive heterosexual allies often occurs and the person's personal and public identity becomes more unified. (2020:11-12)

Sexual identity development parallels that of Asian American identity development in that there is a progression of stages: initial awareness, the experience of "otherness", rejection of the status quo and pride in one's minority identity, and a synthesis where there is a peace and balance between the minority group and the dominant group that used to other them. In this way, the discrimination faced by sexual minority groups parallel that of other minority groups. Understanding the existence of double minority status is pivotal to learning about those who identify as gay, Asian, and Christian.

Complex Identity Models

Beyond the development of individual identities, understanding how multiple identities relate is also crucial to learn about intersectional experiences of gay, Asian, Christians. Intersectionality theory, first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe the double minority status of Black women for a legal case, refers to the ways in which structures of inequality are not independent but coexist with other structures of inequality (1989). Thus, experiences of those who are oppressed cannot be looked at through only one lens, but through holistic evaluations. In this case, identity development for gay Asian-American Christian men should not only be looked at as individual stages, but as integrated stages that occur within a person's life.

Kau appropriately acknowledges intersectionality by highlighting two popular models for complex identity development and organization. The first is Terry Gock's stages of dual identity formation that demonstrates stages in which dual identities are formed:

> Gock (1992) delineates five stages of dual identity formation: (a) *status quo*, a stage of accepting one's cultural and family values about race, sexuality, and gender without exploring alternatives; (b) *identity awareness*, where the person first becomes aware of having a sexual identity in addition to a racial/ethnic identity; (c) *dilemma of allegiance*, in which the person experiences personal conflict between their racial and sexual identities; (d) *selective allegiance*, whereby the person more closely identifies with one identity over the other; (e) *identity integration*, in which a hypothetical state of harmony exists between both facets of the self. (2020:16)

The second model by Sonia Roccas and Marilynn Brewer is a complex identity model that presents various ways of organizing dual identities:

> Roccas and Brewer (2002) delineates a social identity complexity model of how people organize their dual identities based on four alternative modes ranging from least to most complex: *intersection, dominance, compartmentalization, and merger*. When using the first mode, called *intersection*, the person defines their in-group as the intersection of the two group memberships, in this case, other LGB East Asian Americans. Those who do not share both identities are considered part of the out-group. When using the second mode of *dominance*, the person identifies with one primary group to which all other identities are subordinated. The in-group is made up of those who share the primary identity and all other group memberships are not seen as full identities but are simply secondary aspects of the self as a member of the primary group… When using the third mode of *compartmentalization*, in certain contexts, one group membership becomes the primary basis of social identity, and in other contexts, the other group membership becomes primary… And lastly, when using the fourth mode of *merger*, the person is able to simultaneously recognize and embrace the parts of their identities that do not overlap. In-group identification is extended to anyone who shares any of one's prominent group memberships, and social identity is seen as the sum of one's combined group identifications. According to Roccas and Brewer (2002), individuals may engage in different modes at different stages of life or under different mental or emotional states. (2020:16)

These two models pair well as a process of identity formation and organization. While they do not specifically address the formation and organization of three identities, such as being gay, Asian-American, and Christian, they provide comprehensive models that give insight on how those with complex identities form their identities and interact with the world around them.

Lam

While Kau focuses on the development of identities, Lam focuses on the lives of gay Asian Christian men through a qualitative exploratory study of 13 participants in semi-structured interviews to create thematic categorizations about life experiences. Lam's research first highlights intersectional experiences by identifying multiple minority stressors before pointing out both challenging and rewarding experiences associated with being gay, Asian, and Christian.

Multiple Minority Stressors for Gay Asian-American Christian Men

Lam approaches multiple minority stress by drawing upon minority stress theory, which defines minority stress as psychosocial stress that occurs by being associated with a particular minority group. Thus, multiple minority stress is the collective stress that culminates from multiple minority identities (2014).

Lam categorizes multiple minority stressors into five categories which can be seen in Table 1: being gay in the Christian community, being gay in the Asian family, being Christian in the LGBT community, being gay and/or Christian in ethnic communities, and being gay and/or Asian in society. Out of these categories, the category in which most participants experienced minority stress, 12 out of 13 participants, was for being gay in the Christian community. These stressors occurred in a spiritual form because of the belief that gay people were sinful, a social dimension in which gay people were ostracized, and a psychological dimension where gay people felt abnormal. The results from Lam's interviews corroborate the existence of multiple minority stress.

Table 1. Frequency of Multiple Minority Stress Among Lam's Participants

Multiple Minority Stress	**Description**	**Frequency (out of 13)**
Being Gay in Asian Family	● Invisibility of gay family members ● Prejudice against gay people ● Ignorance about what being gay means ● Shame about having a gay family member ● Pressure to change ● Burdens from family expectations	10
Being Gay in Christian Community	● Spiritual dimension: gay people were sinful ● Social dimension: gay people were ostracized ● Psychological dimension: gay people were abnormal	12
Being Christian in LGBT Community	● Invisibility of Christians ● Prejudice against Christians	10
Being Gay and/or Christian in Ethnic Community	● Prejudice against gay people ● Pressure to conform ● Pressure to hide ● Prejudice against Christians	8
Being Gay/Asian in Society	● Prejudice against Asians ● Prejudice against gay people	8

Challenging and Rewarding Experiences for Gay Asian-American Christian Men

In addition to categorizing stressors associated with being a multiple minority, Lam identifies both challenging and rewarding experiences for gay Asian-American Christian men. Table 2 displays the comprehensive list of both challenging and rewarding experiences that Lam observed from his 13 gay Asian-American Christian male participants, including their frequency. All 13 participants shared that they faced both challenging and rewarding experiences. Out of the challenging experiences, the most common challenging experience was internalized conflicts between sexuality and faith, which were experienced by all participants. These conflicts could be

broken down into 3 categories: conflict as spiritual exile as a gay person, conflict as psychological alienation when experiencing homosexual love, and conflict as social rejection between the Christian community and the gay community. Out of the rewarding experiences, the most common experience was freedom and acceptance, which was experienced by 12 out of the 13 participants. This was experienced through the freedom of claiming all three identities as a gay Asian-American Christian and acceptance of themselves.

Table 2. Frequency of Challenging and Rewarding Experiences Among Lam's Participants

Experiences of Gay Asian-American Christian Men	**Frequency (out of 13)**
Challenging Experiences	**13**
Internalized conflicts between sexuality and faith	13
Internalized homophobia	10
Internalized racism	4
Loneliness	11
Depression	9
Feeling fragmented and confused	8
Longing (for a partner, an affirming church, or God's presence)	8
Disappointment	7
Feeling misunderstood	6
Hopelessness and suicidal ideation	6
Anger (at God or others)	4
Rewarding Experiences	**13**
Freedom and acceptance	12
Intentional and deepened faith	10
Peace and belonging	8
Survival and growth	8
Gratitude	7
Integration and wholeness	6
Happiness	5
Compassion	5

The list of experiences cataloged by Lam provides a reference point to understanding both the positive and negative experiences that gay Asian-American Christians face.

Research Questions

In this study, I approach identity through a social constructivist lens, which recognizes that identity is developed through the complex interactions between oneself and their surrounding environment (Jackson and Hogg 2010). The stages of identity development presented by Kau reflect the social constructivist view and the experiences catalogued by Lam illustrate the complexity of constructing complex identities throughout one's life.

The work of Kau and Lam offers significant contributions to understanding the experience of gay Asian-American Christians by providing an analysis of identity formation and review of their experiences. Yet, significant gaps remain in the literature as it relates to whether these identity formation processes and experiences are corroborated. The research questions that formed this study were: What will formative experiences for gay Asian-American Christian men reveal about the identity formation and organization models presented? What will the stories of gay Asian-American Christian men reveal about the thematic experiences described by Lam? What insights can be drawn from the identity integration experiences of the interviewees? My research attempts to explore how gay, Asian, Christian men form and organize their identities and whether their experiences are consistent with the literature.

Chapter 3. METHODOLOGY

Since my research is an explorative study that seeks to understand the complex interactions between sexuality, race/ethnicity, and religion, I used qualitative methods through

in-depth interviews. All participants interviewed were screened to ensure that they fulfilled the following criteria:

1. Self-identified as gay
2. Self-identified as Asian
3. Self-identified as Christian
4. Be affiliated with EBCLA or TOD in the past or present
5. Be above 18 years of age

In total, I conducted 10 interviews of gay Asian Christian men. Of the 10, all used "queer" interchangeably with gay to describe their sexuality. 3 identified as Korean American, 3 identified as Taiwanese American, 2 identified as Chinese American, 1 identified as Hong Kong American, and 1 identified as Cambodian American. 9 interviewees were born into an evangelical Christian family and 1 became Christian through an evangelical church during high school. 9 interviewees were Side A and 1 interviewee was Side B. The lowest interviewee age was 24 years, and the highest age was 35 years. Additionally, all participants were born and raised in the United States: 6 participants were raised in Southern California, 1 in the Pacific Northwest, 1 in the South, 1 in the Midwest, and 1 in the Northeast. Participants in this study were given the following pseudonyms to protect their privacy: Dan, Tristan, Kevin, Randall, Tyler, Mike, Stephen, Johnny, Colin, and Martin (Appendix A).

The initial recruitment for interviews started with a post on The Open Door Facebook page with a contact form (Appendix B). From there, further recruitment proceeded through snowball sampling. An email was sent as a follow up with more details about the study and procedures (Appendix C). Interviewees were informed that participation in the study was completely voluntary and that all data from recordings would be stripped of identifiers and their

names replaced using a pseudonym. Informed consent was obtained verbally at the beginning of each interview (Appendix D).

In-depth interviews were designed to be semi-structured (Appendix E) and last between 1-2 hours. To capture the range of interviewee experiences with regards to being gay, Asian American, and Christian, the semi-structured questions tackled each identity individually, then as an intersection of two identities, and finally an integration of all three. Due to the physical distance between EBCLA in Los Angeles and Emory University in Atlanta, interviews were conducted via Zoom, a video platform, and recorded with interviewee consent. After finalizing each recording, each interview was transcribed through a transcription software and checked for accuracy before being entered into MaxQDA, a software for qualitative data analysis, for coding and analysis. I applied deductive coding by using pre-existing theories set by Kau and Lam to test my research questions.

For my deductive codes, I created codes for Asian identity formation, Christian identity formation, sexual identity formation, and identity salience in accordance with Kau's research. Additionally, I coded for multiple minority stressors, challenging experiences for gay Asian Christians, and rewarding experiences for gay Asian Christians in line with Lam's findings (Appendix F).

After coding, I determined alignment between the coded experiences of interviewees and the models of identity formation by observing whether participant descriptions followed the stages described in Kau's research, or if there were any deviations. Participants were in various stages in their identity formation process, which meant that there was a subjective component during analysis when matching experiences to different stages. Strong alignment was determined if a stage was referenced in at least 4 our more interviews, moderate alignment was determined if

a stage was referenced in less than 3 interviews, and weak alignment was determined if there was either no reference to that stage or an alternative formation process was described. For one of the models presented by Kau, Roccas and Brewer's complex identity model for dual identity organization, the model described alternative modes of identity organization and not stages. Thus, the strength of alignment for the model was determined on whether there was evidence of the different modes in the interviews. Each mode was assigned as "yes", having evidence, or "no", having no evidence. For multiple minority stressors, challenging experiences, and rewarding experiences, the frequency of participants that experienced specific events was recorded. I selected only 5 of the most relevant codes in each category of challenging and rewarding experiences to be used as codes in my study because distinctions between specific experiences were blurred in Lam's study. Relevance was determined on whether they were prominent in Lam's original study and stood out as distinct categories in my study as well.

Chapter 4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

After conducting and coding all 10 interviews, I saw patterns that addressed my research questions to a moderate degree. For identity formation, I found that only some of the models that Kau presented were reflected in the lives of the interviewees: weak alignment with Kim's model of Asian American identity development, strong alignment with Fowler's stages of faith model, and moderate alignment with Cass' sexual identity development model. Strong alignment was seen with Gock's stages of dual identity formation and Roccas and Brewer's complex identity model for dual identity organization. The findings demonstrate that complex identity models are incredibly relevant in understanding the formative experiences of gay Asian-American Christian

men. For stressors and experiences, all 10 participants described multiple minority stressors, challenging experiences, and rewarding experiences. The most prevalent multiple minority stressor was for being gay in the Asian Family and being gay in the Christian community, which all 10 participants described. For challenging experiences, the most prominent experience that was described by all 10 participants were internalized conflicts about sexuality and faith. For rewarding experiences, the most prominent experience that was described by all 10 participants was intentional and deepened faith. These findings closely follow findings from Lam with only several frequencies of experiences being distinct: lower frequency of multiple minority stress for being Christian in LGBT Community, lower frequency of internalized racism, higher frequency of peace and belonging, and higher frequency of compassion and empathy.

Identity Formation Process for Gay Asian-American Christian Men

Asian American Identity Development

Interviewees shared formative experiences in their lives about their Asian identity. Table 3 provides an analysis of the alignment between these experiences and Kim's model of Asian American identity development. Overall, there is weak alignment between Kim's model and the experiences of the gay Asian-American Christian men interviewed.

Table 3. EBCLA Gay Asian-American Christian Participant Alignment with Kim's Model of Asian American Identity Development

Stages	Alignment
1. Ethnic Awareness	Strong
2. White Identification	Moderate
3. Awakening	Weak
4. Redirection	Weak
5. Incorporation	Strong

Only several interviewees demonstrated alignment with Kim's model of Asian American identity development. These interviewees that demonstrated alignment grew up in communities where there were fewer Asians, so they felt like they were in the minority. As a result, awareness of racial differences became apparent. Mike grew up in a poor, inner-city neighborhood in the South that was 98% Black. He recalls his experience of forming Asian American identity in solidarity with his other Asian American friends.

> I'm pretty sure this is pretty ubiquitous for most APIs (Asian Pacific Islanders) who live in America, but I call this your "teenage angst Asian pride phase" where you are truly leaning into your ethnic identity to a point to build identity security, meaning that I am proud. If anything, there's a sense of superiority… And that really manifested in probably six or seventh grade because my friend group was in Asian American gangs. They had siblings who were in high school who were also in gangs… And gang life was actually a perpetual norm, it was a self way of success. [So] everyone was in gangs for the most part, but to know that there's an Asian American set of it that could sit with the rest of the general common gangs was a way of pride.

Mike described that he was never part of a gang himself, but the sense of pride and identity from his friends carried over into his own Asian American identity process. This experience demonstrated that Mike had reached the third stage in Kim's model, awakening, because the small community of Asian Americans produced kinship and pride. In contrast to Kim's model, however, Mike and the 2 other interviewees that grew up in communities where being Asian was a racial minority did not grow up in White neighborhoods. Therefore, difference between races was not determined through White identification but comparison with different racial and ethnic groups in general, which deviates from Kim's model. Furthermore, the other 7 interviewees grew up in racially diverse communities where they did not feel like they were a racial minority. These interviewees exhibited no signs of difficulty in developing a comfortable and confident Asian American identity. Thus, they were able to reach the final stage of Kim's model, incorporation,

without having to undergo stages 2 to 4. Altogether, only stage 1, ethnic awareness, and stage 5, incorporation, were discussed by a majority of the interviewees, creating strong alignment. Only 3 interviewees described comparison similar to stage 2, White identification, but even this had exceptions, and stages 3 and 4 were only shared by Mike. As a result, stages 2, 3, and 4 were determined to have moderate, weak, and weak alignment, respectively. Overall, weak alignment was assigned to Kim's model because the most important formative stages were not strongly aligned with the experiences of the majority of interviewees.

While the experiences of the interviewees demonstrate an overall weak alignment to Kim's model, it is still important to consider factors that do form ethnic awareness. Three themes stood out as formative experiences leading to ethnic awareness regardless of comparison to other ethnic and racial groups. These occurred at a young age through one's family: ethnic food, language, and visiting one's country of origin.

When Tristan, a third generation Asian American, thinks about Asian identity, he closely associates his culture with the ethnic food that his grandmother makes.

> The only other thing, which is very common to Asian identity, I think, would be food. So my grandma often makes Zongzi. So it's essentially like Chinese tamales with banana leaves wrapped around. So yeah, we make that probably once or like twice a year. And when we were younger, we used to make a lot of other dumplings and other Chinese foods.

At home and with his parents, Tristan would often eat American food because that is the cuisine that he learned to make. However, Tristan's childhood memories of making Chinese with his grandmother reminds him of his ethnic heritage.

In addition to food, language is an important factor in connecting to ethnic roots. The ability to communicate in a mother tongue solidifies one's connection to their ethnicity. Martin, a

Chinese American raised in Southern California, recalls a formative experience of choosing to learn his ethnic language.

> I would say an important part… of my upbringing was going to Saturday Chinese school… That was something that I voluntarily asked to do. My parents asked me, "Is this something that you would like to do? Would you like to connect with your roots?". My older brother did not go to Chinese school. Part of me might have been like, "Oh, I want to be the better brother or something like that" … But also, I feel like there was a big interest in owning that identity… I think it was learning the culture. There's a lot of art forms, the language, the reading and writing of Chinese and Mandarin, that I think really did solidify that part of my life. So yeah, actually, now that I think about it, I feel like for me, I never have had the weird struggle of being an outsider in either space. I feel that through maybe just training, education, and encouragement, I think, from those around me, I was able to, you know, hold both sides of my identity, the Asian part and also the American part, and let those form one, single identity.

Martin's decision to learn about his culture through language enabled him to reach a stage of incorporation with general ease in order to claim both his Asian and American identities as his own.

Finally, visiting one's country of origin was formative for Asian identity. Dan, a Hong Konger American, describes visits to Hong Kong as an important understanding of his background and how he identifies.

> I don't consider myself having grown up in Hong Kong, but I spent a lot of summers there as a child. My grandma was still living there… so we would go visit her maybe once a year growing up. And then we didn't stop doing that until the SARS outbreak, ironic that we are in Covid now, but that's when I kind of stopped traveling there every year. I probably started going once every three or four years until she passed away pretty early when I was in my early teens probably. I guess I had a lot of unaware socialization of being there quite a bit growing up. You know, thinking about the difference in language, the difference in, from my opinion, difference in mannerisms, difference in physical appearance, I think over time, I was like, "I don't really know anything about China, like being Chinese. I mean yeah, we're Chinese, but like, specifically I'm from Hong Kong and there's people in Hong Kong that don't identify as Chinese, why is that?" I think I kept thinking about that as a kid and it wasn't until like my last year in undergrad that the Umbrella Revolution (a series of protests in Hong Kong) hit, and I was like, "Okay, now I understand", and all of a sudden I'm interested in politics, so that's when I realized, you know the differences in democratic regime [and] polarization across identity. As the situation has kind of gotten worse and worse and worse it's kind of polarized my own identity in terms of ethnic identity.

Dan grew up identifying as Chinese American, but through visits to his country of origin and learning about Hong Kong's political realities, Dan soon began to ethnically identify as Hong Konger American. This shift in identity was a result of his affiliation to his culture and knowledge of its circumstances.

Asian identity is not described as a monolith. Interviewees consistently switched between Asian identity as ethnic identity and Asian identity as pan-Asian American identity. Tyler, a Korean American, shares a formative moment in forming pan-Asian American identity in conjunction with his ethnic identity.

> So to me, I think I started to lean more into sort of the pan-Asian Americanness in like, middle school, you know, with the Wong Fu Production (Asian-American YouTube channel) stuff, because it was also something that was apparent to me because of Sammy, right, who was Vietnamese and like my friend in elementary school… Not that these were like, completely dual or distinct identities, but it was a good mixture of both. Like this Koreanness versus this pan-Asian Americanness and going together and feeling like I'm more Korean or more Asian or whatever. But that sort of solidified in middle school because it was like, "Oh, these [pan-Asian] people are like, second generation, they speak English just like me. They have these similar experiences, even if they don't speak the same language, or, you know, eat the same food… we have very similar characteristics."

Tyler's experience highlights an important factor in Asian identity in that ethnic and pan-Asian American identity are delicately interwoven. Identification with one's ethnic community is just as important as one's identification with the larger pan-Asian community in America. Therefore, we must view the Asian experiences of these Asian Americans as a combination of the two.

Christian Faith Development

Interviewees described their journeys through Christian faith. Table 4 provides an analysis of the alignment between these experiences and Fowler's stages of faith model. In each of the stages, there is strong alignment between Fowler's model and the faith experiences of the gay Asian-American Christian men interviewed.

Table 4. EBCLA Gay Asian-American Christian Participant Alignment with Fowler's Stages of Faith Model

Stages	Alignment
1. Intuitive Project	Strong
2. Mythic Literal	Strong
3. Synthetic Conventional	Strong
4. Individuative-Reflective	Strong
5. Conjunctive Faith	Strong
6. Universalizing Faith	Strong

The faith development process of the interviewees follows Fowler's model closely. A majority of the participants' experiences resembled the different stages in this model. One interviewee, Martin, describes a key moment where he begins to question parts of his Christian identity and the teachings of his faith practice since he was raised. Since he was born, Martin's faith trajectory followed the first three stages of Fowler's model. Questioning his faith would lead him into Fowler's fourth stage, individuative-reflective, which typically exhibited questioning and disillusionment.

> After I graduated was when Donald Trump was elected president. And that was also the time when church became really, really polarizing. You know, I think the church that I had attended was like, "Oh, you better vote Republican, or else you're not a Christian." That's kind of what they imply… I was like, "Oh, I don't feel comfortable about this". And that's kind of when I started to question parts of my Christian identity… I thought it was pretty traumatic for me. I was like, "I hate this. I can't believe this is happening. Like, I don't trust church. No, I don't trust my old friends. I don't trust my old teachers", things like that… And I think there was a lot of just broken broken ties.

Through this stage of questioning, Martin began his journey of reading memoirs, theology, and finding comfort in using the term "gay Christian" to identify himself. He describes his current

stage of faith as accepting theological uncertainty and even accepting people of other faiths, which demonstrates the fifth and sixth stages of Fowler's model.

> I'm even open to the idea that people can be Christian without really being Christian. And by that, I mean, like, there are people at [another church I attend] who don't identify as Christian. They may be like practicing Buddhists, and yet, my identity now has been shaped to a point where I could call that person my sibling, or I could call that person my brother and my sister. Even though they weren't baptized in the church. I think that's kind of like a new place where my identity has kind of shifted.

Not all interviewees shared the same beliefs that Martin holds of a universalizing faith, but most interviewees did describe periods of questioning and reconciling that resemble Fowler's model, making alignment strong. In addition to strong alignment with the stages of faith model, a theme shared by interviewees was that faith was not generated individually but was constructed in community. Dan shares how the stories of others and affirmation of leaders shaped his ability to reconcile identities.

> I felt like it was way more meaningful for me to hear about the stories of other people and how they've navigated these two identities [of being gay and Christian]. For example, a pastor goes up and does like a very powerful sermon about how being gay and Christian. When it comes from the top that these two identities are not inherently separable, that they can be compatible, that was very powerful for me, because I had never heard that before from someone that leads the church. So I remember that being like a time where if there's anyone else that questions [my gay Christian identity], I can kind of lean on what I've heard kind of from like a church pastor, so that was really meaningful. I think the most important part was to realize that there's so many people like me. That they have the exact same story basically.

Dan's testimony showcases the communal element of religious identity formation. This also reinforces a social constructivist perspective of identity because identity is an interactive communication between the way one perceives oneself and the way others perceive that individual. Overall, the experiences of these individuals validate Fowler's stages of faith model demonstrating strong alignment.

Sexual Identity Development

Interviewees shared their journey of forming their sexual identity. Table 5 provides an analysis of the alignment between the experiences of forming sexual identity and Cass' sexual identity model. There is a moderate alignment between Cass' model and the formative sexual identity experiences of the gay Asian-American Christian men interviewed.

Table 5. EBCLA Gay Asian-American Christian Participant Alignment with Cass' Sexual Identity Development Model

Stages	Alignment
1. Identity Confusion	Strong
2. Identity Comparison	Strong
3. Identity Tolerance	Moderate
4. Identity Acceptance	Moderate
5. Identity Pride	Moderate
6. Identity Synthesis	Strong

The formation of sexual identity is different than the development of Asian American and Christian faith development because of the delay in time when people begin to form their sexual identity. While many did face the initial stages of identity confusion and comparison, they did not reach identity tolerance until much later because of barriers presented by their Asian and Christian identities. Dan describes feeling different in terms of his sexual identity yet not processing it.

> I kind of figured things were wonky for me all the way back in elementary school, but I just kind of passed it off… As I am getting older and I'm hitting middle school, I'm realizing the worst place is like PE or gym area because there's just another shirtless guy, and I'm trying very hard not to look… That was the point where I was just like, "I know, there's something wrong with me, but maybe it's still just a phase." And it was just pushing that whole phase idea for the longest time. And I mean even through college I

> was like just kind of finally understanding, "Look, I am obviously attracted to guys. But I can't have that kind of discussion with anyone. So the thought of being at least bisexual was like, alright. Being bisexual means I could still marry a girl and that kind of thing. Alright, like, I can learn to accept that." And that was, that was college where I was [beginning to understand] that I am not straight. But, you know, I was still figuring things out… And I think, like being bisexual wasn't being gay, and it was just a thing of like, alright, I could still be, quote, "normal".

The barriers to developing sexual identity were derived from Asian and Christian values as well as stigma in general society. As a result, stages three to five of Cass' model are complicated by other identities that were formed first. Asian, Christian, and societal values caused multiple interviewees, including Dan, to try fit into what is deemed as "normal". For some, this strategy resulted in leaning closer to Asian and Christian values rather than stepping into identity tolerance, acceptance, and pride in the ways suggested by Cass' model. For others, Cass' model was accurate because they leaned into their sexual identity over their Asian and Christian identities, though this was only a few interviews. Thus, there is moderate alignment with Cass' model because interviewee responses shifted between leaning into existing identities or leaning into sexual identity in the ways expected by the model. To reconcile these differences, we shift to complex models of identity to understand the sexual identity formation of gay Asian-American Christian men.

Complex Identity Formation and Organization

The complex identity formation and organization models that Kau presents are much better models to describe the experiences of the interviewees than single-identity models. Table 6 describes the interviewees' alignment with Gock's stages of dual identity formation while Table 7 displays whether there is evidence of Roccas and Brewer's complex identity model that organizes multiple identities. There is evidence that both models are strong frameworks in describing the multiple identities of the participants.

Table 6. EBCLA Gay Asian-American Christian Participant Alignment with Gock's Stages of Dual Identity Formation

Stages	Alignment
1. Status Quo	Strong
2. Identity Awareness	Strong
3. Dilemma of Allegiance	Strong
4. Selective Allegiance	Strong
5. Identity Integration	Strong

As described in the previous section, sexual identity development occurred at a later stage than Asian American identity and Christian faith identity because of barriers that these multiple identities presented towards one another. Thus, queer identity formation for most participants closely resembles Gock's dual identity model, especially the third and fourth stages of dilemma of allegiance and selective allegiance. Randall demonstrates how the dilemma of having queer, Asian, and Christian identities drove him further into Asian values and Christian identity.

> So I think I started questioning my sexuality really like in elementary school. I would say, looking back, fifth grade was when it was, really obvious, because in fifth grade, you know, we have gym class, right? We're like in middle school and the locker rooms kind of thing. And all my peers were being like, "Oh, I find this girl attractive, or whatever." And I was like, "I don't", and I don't know why, which is a very confusing period of time in an already confusing kind of stage of life as a teenager… As I got older, I think I [felt] this cultural expectation of meeting someone, getting married, kids, like the whole sort of very traditional kind of family that we are expected [to have]. That's when I really [asked myself] how long can I go with living in that kind of liminal type of life – the wishy washy period. And so, I think going back to this conservative church thing, I think part of the reason why I did end up going that route was also probably because for me, if I really wanted to change or something and become straight, for example, I'm going to go all in.

Randall's commitment to Asian and Christian identity drove him further into those communities, which explains the deviations found when evaluating Cass' sexual identity model. However, not

all participants described an allegiance to these two identities. Tyler shares how his allegiance towards his queer identity resulted in skepticism surrounding religion.

> I always had kind of a suspicion towards organized religion, quite honestly. I thought a lot of it was performative at a young age, or so I thought. And I always had kind of a rebellious streak. I think that was just inherent to my character, but I was like, "Oh, I don't want to go to these retreats with people like crying or whatever, and like listening to loud music, and let spirits move or whatever." I thought that was kind of corny. So I kind of was on and off. And obviously, like me being queer shaped that too. I don't know which came first, like me being queer or gay or like this rebellious spirit. But they went hand in hand, I think, in the sense that they kind of validated each other.

The stories of the interviewees demonstrate clear parallels with the dual identity process that Gock illustrates. Since all participants claim being gay, Asian American, and Christian as parts of their identity today, they have also reached Gock's fifth stage of identity integration.

Similar to Gock's model, there is also strong evidence that Roccas and Brewer's complex identity model appropriately describes how participants alternate between different modes of identity organization. Rather than alignment, this model was tested for evidence because alternative modes are described rather than stages, meaning that participants could fluctuate between the four types.

Table 7. EBCLA Gay Asian-American Christian Participant Alignment with Roccas and Brewer's Complex Identity Model

Alternative Identity Organization Modes	Evidence
Intersection	Yes
Dominance	Yes
Compartmentalization	Yes
Merger	Yes

The first mode, intersection, was described tangentially by Martin, who describes that while there may be a significant number of people at the intersection of being gay, Asian American, and Christian, the spaces for these people to come together is very small. Nonetheless, intersections between two identities are also individuals that Martin resonates with, although not to the extent of spaces that might share all three.

> I think that statistically speaking, there are probably a lot of Asian people who are Christian, and out of those people, there are some people who are gay. And I think that's probably a pretty significant population. And that's my guess, but I see a big problem as people not having space to hold all three of those parts of their identity.

While the type of spaces Martin describes are hard to find, they are not nonexistent. Mike describes his experience of creating a space for people who share these identities when he first moved to Los Angeles. While the space was not exclusively for gay Asian-American Christians, many found community and belonging in this space because a large proportion of people that were there did share these identities.

> We were kind of holding solidarity together for [being queer and Christian] and just queer folks from every corner of LA just kept coming to our Bible study. It kept growing and growing and growing and we're like, “Oh shit, we need to do more with this”, so we created a nonprofit 501(c)3. That’s what Moral Compass has become now, and we just hosted events every other week or twice a month or something like that and it started growing… and that's when the full circle of my identity was safe. Compass was mostly Asian, like 50% Asian when I first came in. They were very Christian, and we were very queer. I kid you not we went to a three-hour Bible study then we went to a drag show afterwards. We didn't blink an eye when this happened because most of us were also taking out a lot of repression, like we were all raised in the church–people had trauma. Like losing their entire community and suppressing their queerness so we just, we were going through this thing called second puberty. We're dating or kissing people, we’re exploring sexuality, we were even drinking a lot, but it was healthy in the sense that you have community.

The desire for gay Asian-American Christian community and the creation of spaces like this demonstrate the first mode of intersection. The second mode, dominance, was demonstrated by

interviewees like Johnny, whose convictions and prioritization of Christian identity also shaped his worldview as a Side B Christian who is pursuing celibacy.

> I feel like I just kind of realized that my core identity is like, in Jesus, right? So I think, for me, my relationship with Jesus, as a Christian, that's something that is at the core of identity. And then on to my other things of being Asian and being gay, those are also important, but they're not necessarily things I place at the core… I think for me, I prioritize my Christian identity as the most important thing that kind of shaped my worldview, or like who I am, and then a lot of other things sort of flavor that as well. So I would say, basically, the perspective that I think for me, Side B provides is the traditional focus on celibacy, singleness, like long term.

It is important to note that not all interviewees who prioritize Christian identity end up with the same theological conclusions as Johnny. Other interviewees stated that Christianity dominated their life and their choices, yet maintained convictions of being side A.

The third alternative mode, compartmentalization, was evident through Tyler's organization of identity. He describes the salience of multiple identities that he occupies in his day-to-day life, making it difficult to choose just one identity as the most salient one.

> I do feel that I am a minority, if I can start there, because of [gay, Asian American, and Christian] identities. So that's, you know, like, an objective holding point. And it's like roulette or whatever. And it constantly shifts, like, which one do I feel most like a minority in terms of whatever space that I'm in? So, I work as an instructor's assistant in a very social-justice oriented elementary school, it's like a charter school system. And so for me, most of the kids are Latinx, so my Asianness takes prominence. I'm different. But if I'm, say, driving up to teach my piano lessons, and all of them are Korean, then my Koreanness is emphasized… And then when I'm in Koreatown… if I'm walking with my partner, it's like the gayness comes up. And if I'm with like, my friends who are queer and they're Asian, but they're not Christian, and like Korean, like Christianness comes up. I think that it's just, it's really context dependent. They are really annoying for it to be part of my everyday life. It's not something that I obviously, like, think about. But it obviously affects my social interactions, and I'm always sort of assessing the power dynamic within a given space.

Tyler's organization of identities highlights an important insight–identity salience can come up when it is most in peril or at risk. Assessing which identities become important depending on how one is a minority in a group shapes interactions and is a clear use of compartmentalization.

The fourth mode, merger, was less frequently discussed but still evident in the descriptions that the interviewees provided. Mike shares where he is today in his approach to the three identities.

> I don't think any one [identity of being gay, Asian, or Christian] is more salient than the other today. I truly believe that all three of these things have shaped my life very equally. I've really appreciated that Intervarsity (an inter-denominational, evangelical Christian campus ministry) was really good about interracial theology, like talking about racing theology. And how it really highlighted that when you worship God, you worship with the trueness of who you are, and your ethnicity is part of who you are. So I think my intersectionality of my faith and my race is bounded together. Then in the same vein, I just extrapolate that to like my queerness… So I actually don't feel like one is more salient than the other. You know I feel like different triggers happen but I truly feel like I have a trifecta of like all three of these identities pretty held well together and I just don't care anymore if someone hates me for being Asian, gay, or Christian.

All four alternative stages presented by Roccas and Brewer are mentioned in the experiences of the participants. Thus, both complex identity models that Kau discusses are accurate models that describe the identity formation and organization processes in my sample.

Multiple Minority Stressors for Gay Asian-American Christian Men

Gay Asian-American Christian men experience multiple minority stressors that are consistent with the stressors described by Lam. There are five categories in total with the frequency of participants that experienced these stressors being listed in Table 8. These stressors may play an important role in why complex identity models are better suited in analyzing these identities than individual identity formation models. Only one multiple minority stressor had a frequency that was significantly less than the frequency found in Lam's study, which was being Christian in the LGBT community.

Table 8. Frequency of Multiple Minority Stress Among EBCLA Gay Asian-American Christian Participants

Multiple Minority Stress	**Frequency (out of 10)**
Being Gay in Asian Family	10
Being Gay in Christian Community	10
Being Christian in LGBT Community	2
Being Gay and/or Christian in Ethnic Community	8
Being Gay/Asian in Society	8

Gay in the Asian Family Stressor

Being gay in the Asian family is one of the two biggest stressors experienced by these participants. Stephen draws from a specific experience within his family about Prop 8 (a California proposition intended to ban same-sex marriage that was overturned by the California Supreme Court) that caused significant tension between him and his relatives.

> I still have this one particular memory. [In 2008], we had an extended family Thanksgiving [and] I was starting to kind of wean out the ideas of, "Oh, I don't really feel like being here anymore." I mean, I have my cousins [and] it's not like I wanted to lose connections with my cousins, but it was just knowing how my family was, and especially on my mom's side, they're very conservative. And it was just like, "I don't know, if I can really be around them because they're so negative". And some of them still are. It almost scares me. I just remember I was there that Thanksgiving dinner, and I was sitting with my cousins, and we were just kind of talking about nonsense, pointless things… And somewhere along the time of the conversation, it switched to what else but politics? And of course, the discussion of like, "Did you see [what's] on the ballot this year?" This was like, right after the voting situation that happened [for Prop 8], and they were still tracking it… And, you know, they're being upset about it. And of course, me just sitting there, they're like, "Wait, James, you finally got to vote this year. Like, what did you think?" And I was just like, "I don't really care about politics", [and they said], "Well, you should care at least about this one. I mean, I can't believe all these non-gay people voted ["no"] for this thing" … For me, the thing was, I was like, I need a way to get out of here right now. And I really don't want to talk about this… And after that, I just kind of would come up with excuses, mainly work excuses to just kind of get out of all the family gatherings every year. If nothing else, I tried to escape my mom's side of the

> family gathering. I just couldn't deal with it. So much insanity, and there's just so much negativity in it, you know.

The experience of tension within the family for being gay was a common one for the interviewees. In many instances, like Stephen, this stressor resulted in separation or distance from certain family members. A big factor for this tension is the role of pride and shame that exists within Asian cultures. Kevin illustrates the impact of shame through his own hesitancy of coming out to his family.

> I think a big part or barrier was that feeling of shame and also letting people down. Especially letting my family down, letting my parents down. Growing up and just wanting to be there for family, like family is so important to me. There's that mentality that you don't do things for yourself, like you do things for the collective benefit or the blessing of the whole family. It's also my personality. I'm very easygoing, like I'm an Enneagram 9 (one of the types in the Enneagram personality test), the peacemaker. So, I never really even had my own opinion on things, that was never really important growing up. I would just be the team player. And so the barrier, like shame and letting people down was, I think, why I had waited so long coming out.

With the presence of shame, many of the interviewees turned to career and success as a coping mechanism. Kevin describes his journey of realizing that his motivation to become a doctor was actually a way to hide from the shame of being gay within his family.

> God had to teach me through that whole experience that my identity wasn't based on my career or based on being a doctor. And because at that time, I think like I was mentally just like navigating, "Oh, maybe if I was a doctor being gay wouldn't be as bad, or like, people would not lose respect. Just because I am a doctor, like, at least they would respect me." So God had to sort of let me go through that season… For me, I had invested so much time and money and all that just to not go through with it or to not be a doctor, but I think God reminded me, "No, I have no regrets, like, nothing is wasted. The experience that [God] gave [me] took [me] through China, other people, and even different fellowships. That was not in vain." And so I had to have God sort of remind me that my identity wasn't based on a title or career.

The stories of the interviewees make it evident that there is stress that derives from being gay in the Asian family. Social conservatism, collectivism, and Confucianism are shown to influence Asian values, reinforcing a negative attitude towards being gay in the family. As a

result, shame can manifest, encouraging children to pursue education and career success as a means of validation.

Gay in the Christian Community Stressor

Being gay in the Christian community was the second big stressor that impacted all 10 participants. The stressor manifested both externally within Christian community and internally through values that had been ingrained through those Christian teachings. Colin shares a difficult experience when he realized he needed to leave his church community due to conflicts between his faith and sexuality.

> So I am in LA. I've been going to this other church for maybe like four or five years. And then basically, there was a sermon at that church, where they had a guest speaker come in, and the guest speaker I guess comes in to sort of straighten up churches, to tell them the hard truth that maybe the pastor doesn't want to tell them. And this pastor said, you know, the greatest sort of problems with the modern church is like gay marriage and abortion… I think just the way he presented it was really sort of uncharitable… And then I think the two examples he gave, I think were sort of super lacking in charity. Like one was, he gave a list of progressive Christian authors. He was like, "Jen Hatmaker and Rachel Held Evans are not Christian." And you're like, "How can you say that they're not Christian? Like, that seems a little strong. Also, some of these people are dead, and they died really young. That doesn't really sound very nice of you to say that. And you know I've read some of their writings and was blessed by it." So, again, this is sort of really strange that you're seeing this. And then I think the second part this guy said was the example [of] a lesbian who burned all the parts of her Bible that were anti-gay. He's like, "these people burn Bibles."

Colin concludes realizing that it was time for him to seek a new church community after members in his small group agreed with the pastor's statements and he felt unwelcomed by the community. In addition, Colin felt frustrated that the pastor had chosen extreme examples of progressive actions to reinforce fundamentalist beliefs when he did not talk about the redeemable aspects in progressive Christian beliefs either. Colin would have understood if there was a difference in opinion and others still respected progressive perspectives, however, the lack of charitability was his final straw at that church.

Stressors for being gay in the Christian community were also internalized. Tristan recalls feeling conflicted about being gay within himself, not just from the church.

> I think in the very beginnings, I really struggled with the idea of like, "Oh, is being gay, okay?" I was wavering between Side A and Side B, like being affirming of gay relationships versus like, thinking that gay people either have to live a life of celibacy or have to, like, get into a mixed orientation marriage where they marry like a woman. I felt like I wasn't sure and, "Would it be okay, in God's eyes?"

Neither Side A nor Side B are inherently forms of internalizing stressors of being gay in the Christian community, however, the debate in how one should live represented the struggle that Tristan faced. The experiences of Colin and Tristan are reflected in the different stories of all other interviewees. Understanding the two biggest stressors will play a large role in the challenging experiences associated with being gay, Asian American, and Christian.

Christian in the LGBT Community Stressor

The stress from being Christian in the LGBT community is significantly lower in frequency than in Lam's study. Only 2 out of 10 (20%) of participants suggested the existence of this stressor while 10 out of 13 participants (77%) indicated this stressor in Lam's study. Stress in this realm did happen, but the limited number of interviewees that faced this form of stress understood that it was not out of a place of hate and so experienced minimal stress from it. Tristan describes his experience of facing discrimination for being Christian on dating apps.

> For myself, I went on dating apps. The reason why I went on dating apps was so that I could find another Christian, someone who had similar interests as me because I was looking for a long-term relationship… so I was very open [and] in the very first paragraph said, "I'm a follower of Jesus". And I put that out there and I think, on most of the apps, most people, first of all, didn't care because they're just looking at your profile picture anyways. But I think that the few times people messaged me, and they asked me like, "Oh, how can you be a Christian" or like, "You know, the church has hurt me so much." I realized like, it's not about me being Christian, but it's actually about their own trauma, or the bad experiences they had from other Christians or from churches that they went to in the past. And because it was like through an app, I could just ignore them. And I don't have to take anything they say personally. I feel like I haven't felt any personal judgment or attacks. I think most of it, I've understood it to be like, "Oh, someone's, you

> know, really lashing out because they've been hurt." So I think that's my only experiences of being judged for being Christian and gay.

For other interviewees, being Christian in the LGBT community was rarely something that became an issue. Mike made his statement crystal clear that this was a stressor he did not experience.

> I've never met a queer person who was antagonistic against me for being Christian. I've met Christians who are more antagonistic against me being queer, but granted I have more Christian friends in general.

Mike's response demonstrates two things. First, he did not experience stress for being Christian in the LGBT community and second, that he has more Christian friends than only queer ones. Like Mike, other interviewees also responded that they did not have as many non-religious queer friends and that most of their queer community also happened to be Christian. Thus, in this sample population there is evidence of a self-selection bias towards choosing friends who are already Christian, which could provide reason for the discrepancy in frequency between my sample and Lam's interviewees.

Gay and/or Christian in the Ethnic Community Stressor

Being gay and/or Christian in the ethnic community was a stressor exhibited by several interviewees, but in a limited fashion. All cases of this stressor were for being gay in the larger ethnic community and never for being Christian in the ethnic community. Stephen provides a clear example of the reactions of his ethnic community towards his high school's progress towards LGBT+ inclusion.

> [M]y senior year [of high school], was the first time you know that I'd actually seen any kind of movement, or at least high school movement for GSA… They're creating this Gay Straight Alliance group. Like, I don't know what to do now, you know, but it was kind of one of those things that I just didn't want to say anything. But what I did see was, my senior year of high school, Asian parents who were heavily against that and I'm all of a sudden seeing, you know, some of my friends being pulled from [my high school] our last year. The parents don't want them going to the school anymore because they're like,

> "I can't believe the school district would allow [this high school] to create something like this." And I think they transferred out to another high school in the district. And it was a rough time.

The actions of Asian parents in his school district reinforced Stephen's belief that his ethnic community had conflicts with his gay identity. Tristan also shares an experience that demonstrated his ethnic culture being against queer identity, but from the perspective of his extended family.

> So from my Chinese side, I feel like there's definitely a push to like, not be gay. Actually one of my uncles, my uncle-in-law, he was gay. And he was forced by his mom to marry a woman and to have kids. And basically, my cousins grew up and I think they knew their dad was gay, because he literally had like gay porn all over the house. And he was very depressed because he was forced into that marriage. And he felt like he couldn't really live a happy life. And I think I was able to see like, "Oh, that's literally the example of what the Chinese culture was pushing on me." And I didn't feel like that made sense for me. And I could see the contrast between my life and his life. And I feel like that's an example of what Chinese culture is pushing for. And that's also how I realized like, "Oh, I clearly should not like live my life as a gay man living with a wife and having kids".

In the case of Tristan, seeing an example of the life pushed on him by his ethnic community through the life of a relative showed him that he could not keep living the way his ethnic community wanted him to. In both Tristan and Stephen's case, as well as the other interviewees that exhibited this form of stress, they decided to still form a gay identity and navigate it in their own way, despite what was pushed forward by their ethnic communities.

Gay and/or Asian in Society Stressor

The final stressor demonstrated by the interviewees was being gay and/or Asian in society, both of which were prominent sources of stress. For the stress derived from being gay, Tyler shares a horrific experience with his homophobic college roommate that made him lose 40 pounds that semester due to stress.

> So basically, I had this roommate. I went to music school, which was attached to a university in upstate New York. So I hadn't met him because he's from Orange County– we went to the same pre-music or pre-college music school. So we met at the graduation

> because we're paired up by the Deans… And so I met this guy, and we were cool. I asked him to be my roommate. Bad decision. And then by the end of the summer I asked if he was okay with me being gay… He said it was fine. Or actually, he didn't give me a good answer, which was already a red flag. It wasn't a clear answer. We moved in and like that weekend called me [fag]. And then he turned out to be kind of manipulative, socially manipulative. So it was kind of a frightening experience for me because I had never encountered someone like that. But yeah, he was homophobic.

In addition to discrimination for being gay, other interviewees shared examples of racism towards being Asian, overtly and covertly. One formative childhood experience of overt discrimination for many interviews was with regards to school lunches. Stephen shares how he was bullied for his meals.

> I don't want to over exaggerate that it was difficult, but it was just [something] I had to adapt and transition to… And even like, growing up, like students [would make] fun of my lunches, like, "Oh, what are you eating?", like when they would have a peanut butter sandwich and I would bring my sandwich without peanut butter or jam but with the pork sung, that looks like hair. And they would make just little jokes, like how my food was different.

The racism and homophobia in society faced by the interviewees reinforce the fact that they were minorities living in the United States. As a result, much of their experiences would be shaped by navigating these identities in American culture and with their other identities.

Challenging and Rewarding Experiences for Gay Asian-American Men

Gay Asian-American Christian men recall both challenging and rewarding experiences associated with having the three identities. These experiences parallel those found in Lam's study with only a few instances of difference. One instance was the decrease in frequency of internalized racism but also increase in frequency of peace and belonging and also compassion and empathy. Table 9 depicts the frequency of experiences for the 10 gay Asian-American Christian men. One important factor to note is that although coded experiences parallel Lam's study, there is some subjectivity in categorizing experiences due to the lack of specificity in each

experience described in prior research. As a result, experiences listed by Lam were narrowed into the most relevant codes for this study.

Table 9. Frequency of Challenging and Rewarding Experiences Among EBCLA Gay Asian-American Christian Participants

Experiences of Gay Asian-American Christian Men	**Frequency (out of 10)**
Challenging Experiences	**10**
Internalized conflicts between sexuality and faith	10
Internalized homophobia	8
Internalized racism	0
Loneliness	9
Depression	8
Rewarding Experiences	**10**
Freedom and acceptance	9
Intentional and deepened faith	10
Peace and belonging	9
Survival and growth	8
Compassion and Empathy	8

Internalized Conflicts Between Sexuality and Faith

Internalized conflicts between sexuality and faith were a challenging experience that was most experienced by the participants. Amid stress from being gay in Christian community and being gay in society, many interviewees internalized these conflicts within themselves that created barriers initially in claiming certain identities. Colin describes how when he came out to his friends, he was unaffirming or Side B, in his case because of the guilt and shame he had for being gay and Christian.

> So when I came out to them, I was sort of unaffirming… For Christians, you think it's like sin. And it's like, "Too bad you drew the short straw, and you have to be single for the rest of your life. Cool." And I think in that sense, during that time period of my life, there was a lot of sort of guilt and shame and being like, "God, why? why?" I think it was also a lot of emphasis that life isn't always going to be great for you.

Other interviewees shared in the internalized conflict that Colin experienced. One interviewee, Martin, shares that the conflict within himself wasn't even explicitly taught, just something he implicitly learned through society and carried with himself.

> In childhood, I feel like faith was just something that I tossed around, didn't really understand a lot of it. I do remember a lot of times, praying that God would change me because I thought I was different. And I thought you know there might be something wrong with it. I didn't want to go to hell, obviously. But no one ever explicitly told me that, you know, that gay people go to hell. Yeah, I might have heard about it in like, some kind of media somewhere or something like that, you know, no one ever had a conversation with me about that.

Thus, the internalized conflicts between sexuality and faith are a core experience faced by gay Asian-American Christian men that occur through explicit and implicit messaging in society about the incompatibility of queer identity and Christian identity.

Internalized Homophobia

Internalized homophobia was another challenging experience that 8 of the participants experienced. Similar to conflicts between sexuality and faith, internalized homophobia presented as hatred towards one's sexual identity. Before realizing that he was gay, Martin described how he would have kicked his child out of his house if he found out they were gay in a hypothetical scenario.

> One anecdote was like, we were talking about what happens if my child comes out as gay. I don't think I knew I was gay at that time… but I was like, "Oh, yeah, for sure. I would kick them out" And, I don't think it meant very much to me, even though like, today, I look back and I cringe. So I would say, I don't think the homophobia there was [shame]. I think it was ignorance. And then I think maybe like a year later, I think that's when I really entered adolescence and I started to realize that, you know, I'm attracted to men. And I think that's when I started to wrestle with it.

Another instance of internalized homophobia was with Kevin, who realized he was attracted to males at a young age but did not decide to come out until much later in his life.

> Even knowing that I was gay even in elementary school… Knowing that I was different. Knowing that I was attracted to boys and seeing how that was "not normal" or that was just not standard like that. I sort of told myself I would never tell anyone about this, and I would take it to my grave. And so I have that promise that I made with myself from a very young age, and I like keeping my promises so I think that's what also played a part in me coming out so late.

Internalized Racism

Internalized racism was not experienced by any of the interviewees, in contrast to Lam's study where 4 out of 13, or 30%, described experiencing internalized racism. This finding is significant because there is evidence of being Asian in society as a stressor, yet no participant demonstrated experiences of internalized racism. Martin, who grew up in a diverse neighborhood, shares how he had not become fully aware of ethnic differences in the town that he grew up in.

> In my early childhood, my environment was like, very, I think, predominantly Asian. So I don't know, I don't think I felt all that different. I felt like you know, I was networked with a lot of people and a lot of peers, you know, and friends looked like me and did the same activities as me and ate the same food as me. So in that sense, like, I don't think I was all that aware that, you know, I am different from other ethnic groups. And so, in that sense, like, there wasn't really much of an identity that I owned.

Martin's experience of not perceiving ethnic difference as significant to one's identity is shared by a majority of the interviewees, which could explain a large reason why most interviewees did not experience internalized racism. By seeing other diverse individuals in their towns, interviewees did not internalize any negativity towards what could be perceived as ethnic difference. Surprisingly, those who grew up where being Asian was a minority also did not experience internalized racism. This observation is particularly fascinating and deserves further exploration. Some factors that can probably contribute to this are that these individuals were able

to find Asian American community outside of their schools. As they got older, the ethnic differences they noticed in childhood may not have become internalized as negative because an external community of Asian Americans created a sense of group pride and solidarity.

Loneliness

9 out of the 10 interviewees experienced loneliness, making it a prominent challenging factor that gay Asian-American Christian men experience. In one instance, Colin described how there was loneliness because of the lack of churches that could serve as an understanding community for all three aspects of his identity.

> I think the probably one of the biggest struggles, just in general [is loneliness], probably finding a church that is supporting of all three identities too. You could imagine, there are churches that are Christian and Asian, like I grew up in most of those sorts of types of churches. There are churches that are gay affirming, and or not even gay affirming, but they acknowledge it's an issue, and they will try to support you, no matter what side you take, and are Christian. And these churches tend to be, if they're affirming, tend to be overwhelmingly White, like a lot of Mainline denominations are really White in like the Methodist church or you know, the Episcopalian Church, for example. Or even the churches that are sort of thinking about these questions on being gay and even unaffirming and being Christian, those also tend to be overwhelmingly White.

The loneliness from not having community was not improved when gay Asian-American Christians would speak up either. When Kevin came out to his Asian church, he thought there would be some conversation about sexuality, yet his voice and the topic was shoved under the rug, making him feel even more alone.

> I was like the only one that sort of came out to my church. Or at least being open about it. So I was hoping for more conversations about LGBT issues and also like any topics about that in a church setting. But it got lonely really fast because people were like tiptoeing around this issue or around me like sharing my story… I wasn't even thinking about the whole gay marriage [debate] or if it's a sin or if I would date someone…that was not on my mind. At that time. I just I wanted to share with people… I'm trying not to offend anyone, but I came to find that no one really could relate to me. And that went on for like a year. I was so desperately wanting to find a community that related with what I was going through.

Experiences like these are what drove interviewees to seek spaces like EBCLA. People who did not share these identities were unable to relate with the interviewees, and this loneliness became a critical challenging factor in their lives.

Depression

Depression was another large challenging experience that 8 out of 10 interviewees described. While not all depressive experiences that the interviewees faced were clinically prescribed, interviewees shared clear symptoms of depression because of their identities. In one interview, Stephen describes how his depression led to a suicide attempt.

> For me, [this is] one of the reasons why it's hard for me around the holidays. I reached a point where I had a suicide attempt, it was ugly. And, you know, it was like, I ended up locking myself in my room and I called my therapist, and I was just like, "I don't know what to do right now." He's like, "Alright, first things first." …" I want to make sure you're okay. Like, are you where you can be right now where you're going to be safe?" And I was like, "Not right now." He's like, "Alright, call your friends, call somebody, and find a place where you can be safe for the weekend." because I had my therapy sessions on Mondays… And then so and I went to go see my therapist on Monday and I just, I had like a complete breakdown. I was mentally gone. It was horrific. You know, normally your therapist isn't supposed to physically come in contact, [but because I was bawling] I think he realized I needed physical contact. So at one point of time, he just kind of hugged me for like, a few minutes and just kind of left it at that.

Not every experience of depression led to a suicide ideation. For most participants, depression came in the form of depressive episodes that were characterized by feelings of unworthiness and immense changes in behavior.

Freedom and Acceptance

For positive experiences, freedom and acceptance was experienced by 9 interviewees. For some, there was freedom and acceptance through the act of coming out, like it was for Kevin.

> Coming out was a weight lifted off my shoulder, and mentally I felt so much freer. The hurt and the pain that I was carrying I could let go of. Before I would brush it off as if it

> didn't bother me as much but thinking back it really did. After coming out I could let myself be me.

For others, freedom and acceptance came in a personal way. When Tyler wrestled with a very difficult period in his college years, a spiritual moment brought him freedom and acceptance between his sexuality with his religious identity.

> I was, like, touched by the Holy Spirit. But it was really like, I had this sense. I was in my room, and I was just thinking to myself, and I had this feeling, like this emotional sort of force, because of what I was going through. I had a sense of like, Jesus was with me this whole time. Even had this vision of him, like being right next to me, even in moments where I had, you know, my most low moments of my life. And so I think it was a sense also that I got, like, he loves me, he affirms me, even in my queerness too, and so for me at that point, my faith and queerness was always aligned. And it was always affirming from the start of this journey.

Intentional and Deepened Faith

Intentional and deepened faith was the number one rewarding experience that all participants shared. All interviewees felt like their faith was deepened through their experiences. In Martin's case, he was even encouraged by the conservative pastor of his old church to use this experience to dig deeper into his faith.

> It's really, really interesting, because when I moved to Santa Barbara, my first pastor there, I told him that I was leaving his church because I had realized that, you know, I'm a gay Christian, and I really can't continue. And his main encouragement for me was, "Hey, Martin, I understand why you're doing this, and I just have one encouragement for you. And that is to make your faith your own. And, like, don't do what people tell you to. But you work your stuff out? You know? It's, it's personal, you know?", and I think that was really a really formative encouragement for me, you know? And that's actually the first time someone had told me, "Hey, it's okay to like, disobey your pastor or to disobey your authority. Seek the answer yourself", and that's like, what kind of encouraged me to go read a lot more books and to essentially start that period of deconstruction and break from church until I found one that would accept me for who I was.

Other interviewees shared a similar journey of being intentional with their faith to reclaim it as their own alongside their queer identity. Through this process, many interviewees

described how they picked up on attributes of faith that other Christians struggled to have. Colin recalls a distinct quality of his faith that is different from his friends.

> I remember I was talking to a friend, quite recently, and we were roommates at one time. So we've always had these conversations. And, you know, he's unaffirming, and it's kind of hard. But I remember, because I was like, "Wow, you have your life together, right?" And he was telling me how the thing he struggles with the most is like faith, or knowing if God is even there. And for me, I never really had to struggle with knowing if God is there. I think I struggle a lot with knowing if God loves me or if God doesn't love me. And knowing will God accept me or not, but I never had to sort of struggle with knowing God is there. And I think it might just be a gift, right? For the Holy Spirit to have that gift of being able to know that God is with you. But I do think it's also something that is cultivated, just because when you are always in this sort of position where you can't just go to church and go through the motions, you're always woken up to the reality that life is costly. I'm following Christ, it's really costly. I think because you're awakened to that you just have to depend on him more. You can't just say, "Oh, you know, the Christian life, whatever, I'm just going to live out this life." I think because you have these three identities in you. I think especially the gay aspect of it, I think that does allow you to sort of be awakened to this reality that there is something demanded of you.

Peace and Belonging

Peace and belonging was experienced slightly higher in this sample than in Lam's study. 9 of the participants in this study (90%) shared the positive experience of peace and belonging while 8/13 participants (62%) described this experience in Lam's study. While the difference is not too significant, factors that are relevant to belonging in this study are worth considering. First, a factor shared by a few of the interviewees was that of family. Despite the stressors that exist between being gay in the Asian family, some interviewees were surprised and blessed that it made their family bond stronger. Kevin described how coming out actually revealed the strength in his family bonds.

> I think, growing up with all these three identities, I would say I have always been blessed and fortunate to have the sense that we're going to be like a family, like nothing will kind of break that…For me, I thought being gay would break the family and I think that's why I took so long sharing that part of my identity with family because I was so scared that that would break family, but a positive experience is that I'm still so close and I feel like blood is like thicker than water… Being Asian and being like in this Christian family, we will always just care for and love one another.

The instance of family belonging is important to note but was not shared by many participants as their source of peace. For others, their peace and belonging was through community, particularly in spaces like the one that EBCLA provides. Tyler shares how encouraged he has been through EBCLA's community and how he hopes to share life with them.

> I think Evergreen honestly, it's a really amazing place because they're, you know, very liberal in terms of like, the American political, social scale and are very accepting. Even the unaffirming pastors are. When I say, "Oh, I'm going to TOD", it's like, "Oh, wonderful", you know. Like, you, as an unaffirming pastor, still treat me in a very loving way, or try to advocate for me, or affirm even the fact that I'm trying to find community, that's actually really quite something different. And so I think Evergreen really is unique in that way that I am able to come. I mean, it's not specifically Korean, like, I'm not holding, kimbap, but it's like this pan-Asianness, where it's like we're gonna go to Sunday in the park. And you can come, and I know that you're in TOD. And I know that you're a Christian, obviously. And then we are eating dim sum, it's like, wow, I can actually live and breathe. And so I wouldn't say it's just one experience. I think it's like, I want to do life with them, journey with them, and walk with these people. So that's the positive aspect.

Survival and Growth

8 of the 10 interviewees described rewarding experiences consistent with survival and growth. Mike described how his identities made him resilient and pushed him to grow in his understanding of himself and the Bible.

> I think being queer and being Asian and being othered, like the entire Bible is written from the perspective of this people group. Not for the powerful or the strong or the well resourced, it is for the ostracized. The downtrodden, the people who had no place to stay, those are the people that the Bible has always said the Kingdom of God looks like. So I honestly believe that if it wasn't for me queerness or if it wasn't for my Asianness in this context, I don't think I would be a very good Christian. I would probably be a half ass privileged douche bag Evangelical Christian who's like "Those gays, always pushing their agenda forward". I'd be so unempathetic. So I really feel like my journey being queer and Asian has really exacerbated my growth as a Christian and I don't think the inverse would have been true.

Compassion and Empathy

Compassion and empathy was a positive experience shared by 8 of the participants (80%), which is a higher frequency than was found in Lam's participants, where only 5/13 participants (38%) described this experience. Mike describes the biggest takeaway he has had from his experience as a gay Asian-American Christian man.

> Empathy empathy empathy empathy. There's a very salient issue that the White hetero male is very unempathetic and unaware–it is because they had very little opportunities to feel othered, you know. Like being a minority in the majority context you're always aware of the dynamics of being left out.

With his concise statement, Mike presents the biggest lesson he has learned through his experiences, a lesson shared by many of the other interviewees. The higher frequency of interviewees in this study who shared this rewarding experience than in Lam's study could be attributed to the communities that they have found in Los Angeles, including EBCLA. As a dynamic church community that bridges the various identities, participants in this study had greater compassion for others like them and for others that were hurting too. Additionally, many participants were at a confident place with their identities that they could even empathize with those that they had previously disagreed with. The help of a loving community around them enabled them to share their vulnerabilities and develop their identities safely.

Chapter 5. DISCUSSION

Through my explorative research, I sought to uncover how gay Asian-American Christian men form and organize their identities so that their stories could gain visibility. My hope was to understand how individuals could integrate multiple socially-dichotomous identities to see what insights we could draw from their lives. By interviewing 10 gay Asian-American Christian men

that were affiliated with the EBCLA, some key findings stood out. First, single-identity formation models presented by Kau do not accurately capture the formation process of individual identities in people with multiple identities. Those models ranged in alignment from weak to strong, demonstrating a large discrepancy over how viable they could be in understanding the formation process of others with multiple identities. Second, complex identity models had much greater alignment than the single-identity models. The two models that Kau presented were strongly in line with the experiences of the participants in my study. Third, multiple identities, specifically identities that are polarized in society, can exacerbate the stressors of one another. This was demonstrated in the list of multiple minority stressors that were proposed by Lam and validated in the experiences of my participants. This finding corroborates intersectionality theory and reveals the importance of looking at instances of inequality through a multi-faceted lens. One distinction in my study from Lam's was the lower frequency of stress related to being Christian in the LGBT community, which could reveal a self-selection bias in my sample towards choosing friends that are already Christian.

Minority stressors translated to the challenging experiences that study participants faced. Both participants in my study and Lam's study reveal that there are significant challenges that result from these experiences. A distinction between our studies was that my participants did not experience internalized racism, a finding that warrants further exploration to understand why the difference exists. Furthermore, overcoming these stressors and challenging experiences could produce rewarding experiences. In the case of the participants, some of these rewarding experiences looked like stronger faith and freedom. The role of a supportive community also cannot be emphasized enough. Spaces that validate the existence of multiple identities are indispensable in encouraging one's journey of integrating identities and producing rewarding

experiences, as can be seen through the role of EBCLA as a space for these gay Asian-American Christian men to find community. Community could be a factor for the greater frequency of rewarding experiences related to belonging and empathy described by the participants.

There were several limitations to my study as well. First, because my research was explorative and focused on a small sample as a case study, my findings were not meant to be generalizable. My study was intended as a case study; thus results were informative only to the extent that they are applied to the gay Asian-American Christian men I interviewed at EBCLA. Second, my study focused solely on cisgender men and did not incorporate the experience of gay Asian-American women, gender non-conforming, or trans individuals either. Cultural and religious expectations on individuals who don't identify as cis male could be different, limiting the findings of the study further. Finally, within the male population, my study represented a limited age range from 24 to 35, which is only a little over a decade. This does not describe the experiences of older generations, which could give insight into how identity formation processes and experiences may have changed throughout time or throughout a lifetime.

Future research could address some of the limitations of the current study by incorporating participants of other genders and ages. Additionally, it would be interesting to compare the experience of gay Asian-American Christians with Asian-American Christians of other sexualities such as asexuality or bisexuality. One participant in my study, Tristan, did identify as being on the asexual and aromantic spectrum, and he described how he did feel different from traditional gay Asian-American Christians. Furthermore, a comparison of queer Asian-American Christians and queer Christians of other ethnic groups could be extremely fascinating in understanding the various ways that ethnic culture produces certain experiences. Finally, understanding how class or generation status in the United States plays a role in

experiences as a gay Asian-American Christian could reveal important findings about the way that wealth and immigrant status reinforce certain norms. Interviewees in my study ranged in family income status and generation status, although there were not enough to make any assertions on the way that these factors impact experiences.

Despite the limitations and need for future research, the findings from this study are relevant because they reveal experiences of gay Asian-American Christian men that can often be ignored. The socially-constructed identities of being gay and Christian, which are culturally in opposition to one another, layered with social conservative values in the Asian community, often make gay Asian-American Christians seem rife with contradictions. The complex process of identity integration within gay Asian-American Christians themselves is not a simple process nor an easy one, but a journey interloped with brutal challenges, all in the hopes that one could reach freedom in all identities.

What insights can we take and apply from this study? One insight could be the important role that EBCLA has had on the lives of these gay Asian-American Christians. In a Sunday sermon, church leaders described their vision for the church.

> Our vision is to be a home for the new humanity, and the concept of God's family, God's household that comes out of this text informs how we handle this conversation and really all of life and ministry here at Evergreen. As a family, we don't just accumulate evidence in a discussion like this to pass judgment on one another whatever side we're on. This is not a courtroom, it's a home. We're going to be learning together so that we can better understand and appreciate each other. That's the goal of our learning. Now, I strongly believe that God is not trying to teach us about a singular marriage ethic but rather about the radical unifying power of the cross. (Evergreen Baptist Church of Los Angeles 2020).

As a church, EBCLA acknowledged the complexity of the conversation they are trying to have. In this way, they are a church that invites dialogue about these difficult conversations to bridge people with different convictions and create unity, rather than division. Their dedication to

creating a queer ministry that celebrates people of diverse sexualities and expressions of gender is a commitment to ensuring that their gay members feel like there is a space where they can belong and grow.

Challenging discourses are inevitable in a space like EBCLA, yet a redeeming feature is that these difficult conversations are invited by the church. The tensions and critiques towards a church like EBCLA come from both fundamentalist and progressive camps. Fundamentalists may challenge how the lack of a singular marriage ethic is unbiblical and questions the authority of God's Word. Progressives may criticize EBCLA's slow pace to moving towards full acceptance of gay marriage after having this conversation for over a decade. Cultivating a space like EBCLA is no easy task, yet diving into these criticisms, recognizing they are valid, yet still focusing on finding common ground is what enables EBCLA to be a home for the gay Asian-American Christian men I interviewed. Exploring the totality of arguments in a polarized world and finding middle ground is an attribute shared both by EBCLA and the participants—can this be an insight for our lives today?

Beyond EBCLA, the gay Asian-American Christian interviewees have formed insights that create radical solidarity by themselves. While not discussed in this study's findings, a prominent theme throughout the interviews was advocacy for relationships beyond just marriage, particularly in our societal approach to singleness. Johnny, who is Side B, shares his fears about church with regards to living in celibacy and singleness.

> I think [one of my fears] is just like long term, you know, not exactly knowing how life will look like and not really having structures in the Asian church in place for singles or for non-married, older people. Traditionally, I think my progressive church does have a really good outlook, and it is, it does a good job of including singles, you know, into conversations and sermons, where not everything is about like marriage and like your significant other. But I think, you know, the reality of living as a single older person is still very difficult in an Asian church, So I think that's another difficult part.

Johnny's concerns over living as a single person through life are extremely valid and supported by statements from other interviewees, even though they are Side A. Johnny's qualms point to a cultural idolatry of family that is persistent in Christian, American, and Asian contexts which leads to a lack of support for those who choose to be single. Tristan, a Side A Christian who attended EBCLA for many years, shared similar sentiments as Johnny when analyzing the focus on marriage in the church.

> This is not specific to being gay and Christian, but it's kind of a mixture between Side A and Side B, I feel like a lot of Side A is like, "Oh, we just want affirmation of gay marriage." And then for side B people, it's like, "Well, we also want the church to be a safe space for people who want to be single adults. They don't have to be gay; they can be celebrated. They can choose not to marry for various reasons, but the church should still have structures in place to support them." And I think at Evergreen, it was very Side A where they're just focused on like, getting the affirmation. And I was like, "Well, what about the straight adults who are older, maybe over the age of 50? They don't want to get married. Can the church provide mechanisms for when they get older? Who's going to help take care of them? Can we like inspire more community that doesn't involve just families?

Despite their different theological convictions on marriage, Tristan, Johnny, and a majority of the other interviewees were able to find solidarity not only in their identities, but through a new perspective on relationships that derived from their experiences. Rather than being divisive towards one another on their position towards marriage, solidarity was found in recognizing the need to emphasize new forms of relating that extended past the issue of gay marriage: through life-long friendships and intentional community. It is through this ability to look beyond the dominant discourse around marriage that these gay Asian-American Christian men can advocate for a broader, inclusive community for people of various ideological values and ways of life, whether they be conservative or progressive, queer or straight, single or married or anything in between.

Can we draw from these insights to better understand the structures that are controlling our narratives? Are we letting certain topics get in our way of relating and connecting with one another? Are there lessons to be learned from these stories on how to create more inclusive community? Perhaps. Only one thing is certain, we cannot find out if we continue to ignore the lives of gay Asian-American Christian men and those shrouded in double invisibility. Our first step is to begin to listen, study, and enter the complexity within these intersectional identities.

REFERENCES

Alumkal, Antony W. 2002. “The Scandal of the ‘Model Minority’ Mind?” *Semeia*, 90:237-250. Retrieved 2021 (https://search-ebscohost-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0001417578&site=ehost-live&scope=site).

Anon. 2021. *Pray Away*. Retrieved 2021 (https://www.netflix.com/title/81040370).

Budiman, Abby and Neil G. Ruiz. 2022. “Key Facts about Asian Americans, a Diverse and Growing Population.” *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved 2021 (https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/04/29/key-facts-about-asian-americans/).

Byrd, Don. 2018. “Soul Freedom: A Baptist Perspective on Religious Liberty.” *BJC*. Retrieved December 8, 2021 (https://bjconline.org/soul-freedom-a-baptist-perspective-on-religious-liberty-010518/).

Chon, Anthony Young. 2020. “Addressing Issues Related to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Self-Identifying Christians in the Asian American Church.” dissertation. Retrieved 2021 (https://repository.sbts.edu/handle/10392/6366).

Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1989. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics.” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989(8):139–87. Retrieved 2021 (https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8/).

Edger, Kailla. 2012. "Evangelicalism, Sexual Morality, and Sexual Addiction: Opposing Views and Continued Conflicts." *Journal of Religion and Health* 51(1):162-78 (https://login.proxy.library.emory.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/evangelicalism-sexual-morality-addiction-opposing/docview/922519387/se-2?accountid=10747). doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10943-010-9338-7.

Evergreen Baptist Church of Los Angeles. 2020. *EBCLA Sunday Service - 05/24/20 - Home for a New Humanity*. Retrieved 2022 (https://youtu.be/mCQGSa4BjYo).

Evergreen Baptist Church of Los Angeles. 2021. “On Love and Marriage”. *Evergreen Baptist Church of Los Angeles*. (https://ebcla.org/wp-content/uploads/OnLoveAndMarriage.pdf).

Foucault, Michel. 1990. “Part Two: The Repressive Hypothesis.” Pp. 15–50 in The History of Sexuality, vol. 1. New York: Vintage Books.

Georgetown Law. 2022. “Civil Rights in the United States, A Brief History: A Timeline of the Legalization of Same-Sex Marriage in the U.S.” *Georgetown Law Library*. Retrieved 2022 (https://guides.ll.georgetown.edu/c.php?g=592919&p=4182201).

Heltzel, Gordon and Kristin Laurin. 2020. “Polarization in America: Two Possible Futures.” *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences* 34:179–84.

Jackson, R. L., and Michael A. Hogg. 2010. “Social Constructionist Approach to Personal Identity”. *Encyclopedia of identity* 2010(1):740–742. Retrieved 2021 (https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412979306.n238)

Kau, Lisa W. Z. 2020. "The Effects of East Asian American Identity and Christian Faith on Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Development: A Critical Analysis of the Literature." Order No. 27832587 dissertation, *Fuller Theological Seminary, School of Psychology,* Ann Arbor (https://login.proxy.library.emory.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/effects-east-asian-american-identity-christian/docview/2397845926/se-2?accountid=10747).

Kristof, Nicholas. 2021. “Progressive Christians Arise! Hallelujah!” *The New York Times*. Retrieved 2021 (https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/20/opinion/sunday/progressive-christians-politics.html).

Lam, Yat L. 2014. "Straight and Narrow: The Multiple Minority Stress of Gay Asian American Christian Men as a Catalyst for Spiritual Transformation." Order No. 3665411 dissertation, *Institute of Transpersonal Psychology*, Ann Arbor (https://login.proxy.library.emory.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/straight-narrow-multiple-minority-stress-gay/docview/1649237214/se-2?accountid=10747).

Lipka, Michael. 2015. “Mainline Protestants Make up Shrinking Number of U.S. Adults.” *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved 2021 (https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/18/mainline-protestants-make-up-shrinking-number-of-u-s-adults/).

Lovett, Ian. 2013. “After 37 Years of Trying to Change People's Sexual Orientation, Group Is to Disband.” *The New York Times*. Retrieved March 8, 2022

(https://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/21/us/group-that-promoted-curing-gays-ceases-operations.html).

Mallory, Christy, Taylor N. T. Brown, and Kerith J. Conron. 2021. “Conversion Therapy and LGBT Youth.” *Williams Institute*. Retrieved 2021 (https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/conversion-therapy-and-lgbt-youth/).

Masci, David and Michael Lipka. 2020. “Where Christian Churches, Other Religions Stand on Gay Marriage.” *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved 2021 (https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/12/21/where-christian-churches-stand-on-gay-marriage/).

Murjani, Monisha. 2014. “Breaking Apart the Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Stereotypes: Asian Americans and Cultural Capital.” *The Vermont Connection* 35(10):79–90. Retrieved 2021 (https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/tvc/vol35/iss1/10).

Ocampo, Anthony C. and Daniel Soodjinda. 2015. “Invisible Asian Americans: The Intersection of Sexuality, Race, and Education among Gay Asian Americans.” *Race Ethnicity and Education* 19(3):480–99.

Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project. 2020. “Religion in America: Asian.” *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved 2021 (https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/racial-and-ethnic-composition/asian/)

Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project. 2020. “Religion in America: U.S. Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics.” *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved 2021 (https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study).

Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project. 2020. "Views about homosexuality among Evangelical Protestants." *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved 2021 (https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/religious-tradition/evangelical-protestant/views-about-homosexuality/).

Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project. 2020. "Views about same-sex marriage among Mainline Protestants by religious denomination." *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved 2021 (https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/compare/views-about-same-sex-marriage/by/religious-denomination/among/religious-tradition/mainline-protestant/).

Q Christian Fellowship. 2021. "LGBTQ+ Theology 101". *Q Christian Fellowship*. Retrieved 2021 (https://www.qchristian.org/resources/theology#theologies).

Smith, David J. R. 2019. "A Christian Exploration for Understanding Shame in Asians Attending Queens Christian Alliance Church in Flushing, Queens, New York City." Order No. 27740542 dissertation, *Nyack College, Alliance Theological Seminary*, Ann Arbor (https://login.proxy.library.emory.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/christian-exploration-understanding-shame-asians/docview/2385683166/se-2).

Weitz, Ian. 2015. "Intersectional Experiences: Queer Asian and Asian American College Students at New York State University." Order No. 1593885 dissertation, *State University of New York at Binghamton,* Ann Arbor (https://login.proxy.library.emory.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/intersectional-experiences-queer-asian-american/docview/1708189815/se-2?accountid=10747).

Yarhouse, Mark A. 2010. *Homosexuality and the Christian*. Bloomington, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers.

Yarhouse, Mark A., Stephen P. Stratton, Janet B. Dean, and Heather L. Brooke. 2009. "Listening to Sexual Minorities on Christian College Campuses." *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 37(2):96–113. Retrieved 2021 (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/287118715_Listening_to_Sexual_Minorities_on_Christian_College_Campuses).

Yeh, Christine J. and Karen Huang. 1996. "The Collectivistic Nature of Ethnic Identity Development Among Asian American College Students." *ResearchGate*. Retrieved 2021 (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/14331501_The_Collectivistic_Nature_of_Ethnic_Identity_Development_Among_Asian_American_College_Students).

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Interviewee Pseudonym and Brief Demographics

Pseudonym	Demographic
Dan	Hong Konger American, raised in Southern California, Evangelical Christian family background, side A
Tristan	Chinese American, raised in Southern California, Evangelical Christian family background, side A, identifies on the asexuality/aromantic spectrum
Kevin	Taiwanese American, raised in Southern California, Evangelical Christian family background, side A
Randall	Korean American, raised in the Northeast, Evangelical Christian family background, side A
Tyler	Korean American, raised in Southern California, Evangelical Christian family background, side A
Mike	Cambodian American, raised in the South, Buddhist family background, side A
Stephen	Chinese American, raised in Southern California, Evangelical Christian family background, side A
Johnny	Taiwanese American, raised in Pacific Northwest, Evangelical Christian family background, side B
Colin	Korean American, raised in the Midwest, Evangelical Christian family background, side A
Martin	Taiwanese American, raised in Southern California, Evangelical Christian family background, side A

Appendix B: Facebook Recruitment Post

TLDR: I am writing a senior honors thesis about the changing narratives in churches about sexuality and how it relates to gay, Christian, Asian men. If you identify as a gay Christian Asian man and would like to be interviewed, please fill out this contact form (link) or message me directly on Facebook.

Background:
Hi everyone! My name is Chris, and I am writing a senior honors thesis that is dear to my heart and personal to my own experiences. I am specifically curious about how culture and religious identification may impact sexual identification, and vice versa! The origins behind my research actually did not originate with any intent on writing a paper, just simple curiosity. About a year ago when COVID had placed everyone in lockdown, solitude and silence spurred a desire in me to finally begin my journey about reconciling sexuality and faith. All I wanted in the beginning was to find a person to talk to who could share my experiences of being gay and Christian, and God blessed me with so much more. I have been blessed abundantly with faculty and family that support me as I learn about myself and the queer and Christian space, and I am so grateful for TOD and being welcomed with open arms, even when I've only been able to join virtually! That being said, my journey continues with me hungry to learn more about the vast array of perspectives, affirming and non-affirming alike, and lives of fellow queer Christians.

Request: I hope to be able to interview gay Christian Asian men with a wide array of perspectives. I plan to conduct my interviews throughout January! If you would be willing and interested in being interviewed, you can fill out this contact form (link) or message me directly on Facebook. I can reach out with more information about my thesis and answer any questions you may have.

Appendix C: Initial Recruitment Email

Hello [insert name],

Thank you for signing up as a participant for my honors thesis. Just to reintroduce myself, my name is Chris Kusumonegoro, and I am a senior studying sociology and business at Emory University. I am writing a senior honors thesis about the construction of identity and how it translates to experiences for gay, Asian, Christian men. As one myself, I understand that this can be a sensitive and complex topic, so first and foremost, I wanted to thank you for your courage and willingness to discuss a subject that is rarely covered in both academic and everyday spaces.

Second, the interview details are as follows:
In-depth interviews will take between 1-2 hours on average and discuss facets of gay, Asian, Christian identity, experiences, and the intersections of those identities. Interviews will be recorded via Zoom and transcribed by me. All names and identifiable information will be protected via pseudonyms, locked in a password protected computer, and destroyed once the analysis is complete to protect any private information.

Third, I have attached an informed consent form that will be discussed before the interview which you can review in greater detail. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions about the study or about the process. Your time is a gift to me, your story is meaningful to me, and I want to do everything in my power to respect your privacy and honor your experiences.

Once you have made a decision about participation, please email me back so I am made aware. If you decide you would like to be interviewed, please email me back with time slots (1.5 hour slots at the minimum please) that you are willing to be interviewed for. As a second semester senior, I have a wide array of availability, but please respond as soon as you can because of the time-sensitive nature of my thesis.

Thank you and God bless,
Chris Kusumonegoro

Appendix D: Verbal Informed Consent

Title:

Principal Investigator: Frank Lechner, Ph. D
Co-Investigator: Christopher Kusumonegoro

Introduction and Study Overview
Thank you for your interest in our Sociology research study. We would like to tell you what you need to think about before you choose whether to join the study. It is your choice. If you choose to join, you can change your mind later on and leave the study.

Purpose
The purpose of this study is to understand the variation in identity-formation for gay Asian-American Christian men and the variety of experiences amongst these individuals. The rationale behind this study is that the narrative behind queerness in Evangelical churches in the United States is shifting, thus gay men can hold various perspectives that allow them to connect their sexuality with their faith. Identity formation is complex and so is the range of experiences that gay Asian-American Christian men may face.

Procedures
If you join, you will be asked to participate in an in-depth interview taking between 1-2 hours. You will be one of 10-15 participants in this study. With your permission, the interview will be recorded on Zoom. The interview will be conducted by the Co-Investigator. The interview will be conducted at a time that is convenient for you.

Risks and Discomforts
The only foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with this study are the recall of uncomfortable experiences of your life during the interview, the loss of time while doing the interview, and the possible loss of confidentiality if records are lost or accessed without permission.

Benefits
This study is not designed to benefit you directly. This study is designed to learn more about the intersection of race, sexuality, and faith. The study results may be informative for others on similar journeys in the future.

Storing and Sharing your Information
We will store all interviews using a code. We need this code so that we can keep track of your data over time. This code will not include information that can identify you (identifiers). Specifically, it will not include your name or initials. We will keep a file that links this code to your identifiers in a secure location separate from the data. We will not allow your name and any other fact that might point to you to appear when we present or publish the results of this study. Your data from this study will not be shared with anyone outside this study, even if we take out all the information that can identify you.

We may also place data in public databases accessible to researchers who agree to maintain data confidentiality, if we remove the study code and make sure the data are anonymized to a level that we believe that it is highly unlikely that anyone could identify you. Despite these measures, we cannot guarantee anonymity of your personal data.

Returning Results to Participants
Results from the study will be shared to participants once the honors thesis is complete.

Compensation
You will not be offered payment for being in this study.

Confidentiality
All the information you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence. Access to the data files will be limited to study personnel. Emory will keep any research records we create private to the extent we are required to do so by law. A pseudonym or study number rather than your name will be used on study records wherever possible. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results.

Withdrawal from the Study
You have the right to leave a study at any time without penalty

Contact Information
If you have questions about the study procedures or other questions or concerns about the research or your part in it, contact Christopher Kusumonegoro by phone at 510-361-1373 or by email at ckusumo@emory.edu.

This study has been reviewed by an ethics committee to ensure the protection of research participants. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or if you have complaints about the research or an issue you would rather discuss with someone outside the research team, contact the Emory Institutional Review Board at 404-712-0720 or 877-503-9797 or irb@emory.edu.

To tell the IRB about your experience as a research participant, fill out the Research Participant Survey at https://tinyurl.com/ycewgkke.

Consent
Do you have any questions about anything I just said? Were there any parts that seemed unclear?
Do you agree to take part in the study?
Participant agrees to participate: Yes No

If Yes:
Name of Participant

Signature of Person Conducting Informed Consent Discussion Date Time

Name of Person Conducting Informed Consent Discussion Date Time

Appendix E: Interview Guide

Background

- Where did you grow up?
- Tell me about your family.
- What is your current occupation?
- How long have you been at Evergreen Baptist Church of Los Angeles (EBCLA)?
    - The Open Door (TOD)?
- Describe your experiences being in EBCLA and/or TOD

Asian Identity

- How do you identify ethnically?
- Tell me about being [insert ethnicity] or Asian:
    - What was the experience of learning and potentially owning your ethnicity in America?
    - How, if at all, has being [insert ethnicity] or Asian influenced your life?
    - Are there any key experiences about being [insert ethnicity] or Asian that shaped you as a person?
        - Within your family?
        - Within the [insert ethnicity] or Asian community?
        - Within the United States?

Faith

- Tell me about your faith background.
    - Family faith background
    - Denomination
- How do you identify with faith today? How did you come to realize that your faith was your own?
    - How, if at all, has your faith influenced your life?
    - Are there any key experiences regarding your faith that shaped you as a person?
    - How would you describe how your faith has changed since its inception, if it has at all?

Sexuality

- How do you define your sexual-orientation?
- Tell me about being [insert sexual orientation]:
    - When did you first discover you were [insert sexual orientation] and how did you feel?
        - Go deeper: Tell me more about those feelings, any examples?
    - Was there any opposition to claiming your sexual-orientation, now or in the past?
        - Describe what that opposition was like.

            - If you overcame that opposition, what was that process like
    - How have your thoughts on sexual-orientation changed if it has at all?

Intersectional Identities

Sexuality and Faith

- Tell me about faith and sexuality, what do you currently believe on living as [insert sexual orientation] with your faith?
- How has your faith influenced your sexuality?
    - What were some of the teachings around sexuality that you heard growing up?
    - How did these teachings impact your understanding of sexuality?
    - What was the reaction of your religious community when you shared your sexuality if you did?
- How has your sexuality influenced your faith?
    - Has your sexuality changed your faith? Positive way, negative way?
    - How has the LGBTQ+ community responded to your faith?

Sexuality and Asian Identity

- How has your Asian identity influenced your sexuality?
    - What were some of the teachings around sexuality that you heard growing up?
        - Were these the same as teachings from faith or different?
        - If different, how did these teachings impact your understanding of sexuality?
    - What was the reaction of your ethnic/Asian community when you shared your sexuality if you did?
        - Family?
        - Friends?
        - Community?
        - Was the reaction inside your ethnic/Asian community any different than with people outside of your ethnic/Asian community?

Asian Identity and Faith

- How has your Asian identity influenced your faith?
    - Were there any similarities or differences between Asian values and faith values?
    - What was the relationship between race/ethnicity and faith?
        - Were ethnic/Asian and faith identities integrated? Separate?

Sexuality, Asian Identity, and Faith

- How would you describe the salience of your sexual orientation, ethnic/Asian identity, or faith throughout your life?

    - Which identities do you most often think about? Which identities are more salient than others?
    - Are there any other identities other than these three that are prevalent in your life?
- Describe what it is like identifying with these three identities?
    - Negatives? Positives?
        - If there is something positive: Do you believe this is something distinct to your experience?
        - If there is something negative: What do you wish were different? What would you like to see changed?

Conclusion

- Is there anything else you would like to share that you have not yet had the chance to express about the gay, Asian, or Christian experience? The intersectional experience?
- Do you have any questions for me?
- Thank you for your time!

Appendix F: Coding List

1. Asian Identity Formation
    a. Asian American
    b. Asian Experiences
    c. Asian Values
    d. Family Asian Heritage
2. Christian Identity Formation
    a. Christian Experiences
    b. Christian Values
    c. Family Religious Background
3. Sexual Identity Formation
    a. Queer Values
    b. Queer Experiences
        i. Coming Out
4. Identity Salience
5. Multiple Minority Stressors
    a. Gay in Asian Family
    b. Gay in Christian Community
    c. Christian in LGBT Community
    d. Christian in Ethnic (Larger) Community
    e. Gay/Asian in society
6. Challenging Experiences for Gay, Christian, Asians
    a. Internalized conflicts between sex and faith
    b. Internalized homophobia
    c. Internalized racism
    d. Loneliness
    e. Depression
7. Positive Experiences for Gay, Christian, Asians
    a. Freedom and acceptance
    b. Intentional and deepened faith
    c. Peace and belonging
    d. Survival and growth
    e. Compassion/Empathy