

**INTERNALIZED HOMONEGATIVITY IN THE SOUTH ASIAN LGBTQ
COMMUNITY: A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION
OF RELATED FACTORS**

THESIS

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by

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*for all the women in my life
who make me strong and fearless,
especially my aunt sam*

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ABSTRACT

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This study assesses the influences of ethnic identity, degree of outness and years lived in the U.S. on the level of internalized homonegativity within the South Asian lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual and queer (LGBTQ) community. The majority of the respondents were recruited via the Internet, yielding an analytical sample of 63, (N=63). Statistical analyses revealed that internalized homonegativity is higher among individuals who are not out to everyone and for those who have been in the U.S. for a short period of time. Further analysis indicated that ethnic identity has an inverse effect on internalized homonegativity, as ethnic identity goes up, internalized homonegativity goes down. This finding is contrary to expectations. Additional analyses revealed that ethnic identity is significantly and inversely related to the level of internalized homonegativity for individuals who are not out and individuals who were not born in the U. S. but have lived here for 5-10 years. For this study living in the U.S. reduces the negative thoughts and feelings associated with a LGBTQ identity, while simultaneously increasing the ethnic identification of South Asian LGBTQ individuals.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to assess the influence of ethnic identity on the level of internalized homonegativity within the South Asian lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community, (LGBTQ) in the United States. Specifically, I am interested in investigating the effect ethnic identity has on the level of internalized homophobia within the South Asian LGBTQ community. I am interested in examining the impact that living in the United States has on the level of internalized homophobia among the South Asian LGBTQ community. Further, does the degree of “outness” regarding one’s homosexuality influence the level of internalized homophobia experienced by South Asian LGBTQ individuals?

Empirical studies examining the effects of internalized homophobia have overwhelmingly been conducted with white men and women (Szymanski and Chung 2001, Allen and Oleson 1999, Mayfield 2001). Similar studies measuring well-being during gay identity development are also comprised of predominantly Anglo respondents (Johns and Probst 2004, Halpin and Allen 2004). Because of the lack of diversity in the samples examining the effects of internalized homophobia, it is inaccurate to generalize those findings to the experiences of LGBTQ individuals belonging to ethnic minority communities. Moreover, research is needed to determine how internalized homophobia

affects ethnic sexual minorities, how the effects differ from those experienced by the dominant majority and what can be done to assist ethnic LGBTQ individuals in coping in a racist, heterosexist and homophobic environment. The proposed study seeks to address the role ethnic identification plays on the level of internalized homophobia among South Asian lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer individuals.

Homosexuality studied in a systematic, empirical manner, is a recent scholarship endeavor, having only significantly emerged post-World War II (Sullivan and Jackson 1999). The HIV/AIDS epidemic of the early 1980's propelled social scientists to investigate the sexual practices of men who had sex with men in attempts to quell the number of men contracting the HIV virus. As a result of this effort, gay and lesbian studies as distinct concentrations began appearing in academia. Many of the individuals conducting research concerning the lives of gay and lesbian people and the communities to which they belong were Anglo males, thus resulting in an overrepresentation of white, middle-class male subjects (Sullivan and Jackson 1999). Sullivan and Jackson (1999) further suggest that research concerning the realities and experiences of ethnic sexual minorities have only recently started appearing in scholarly journals and texts. Absent, with a few noteworthy exceptions, from this new genre of studies are the voices of South Asian lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender and queer individuals. A study examining the impact ethnic identity has on the level of internalized homophobia among South Asian LGBTQ individuals must first be situated in the unique and complex sociopolitical space South Asians find themselves in the United States, as well as with the understanding of both the historic and contemporary attitudes many South Asians hold regarding sexuality in general and homosexuality specifically. To do this, a framework that explores how

ethnic identity is formed and what role it plays in the individual's concept of self must be examined. Finally, internalized homophobia must be defined, expounded and operationalized to gain a better understanding of how South Asian LGBTQ individuals manage their minority status in both the dominant culture as ethnic minorities and sexual minorities in their own ethnic communities, and perhaps this dual-minority status in the society at large.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

South Asian Population in the United States

The March 4, 2005 issue of *Entertainment Weekly* listed *Bride and Prejudice*, the adapted Jane Austen classic starring former Miss World, Aishwaria Rai as a must see film for the week. The film, infused with the spontaneous song and dance style, characteristic of Indian Bollywood films is the first of its kind to penetrate the American film market with any noticeable success. The slow but sure entrance of South Asian entertainers to mainstream pop culture as well as the demand for South Asian grocers and clothing stores is a testament to the silent but growing numbers of South Asians in the United States. In large metropolitan cities throughout the U.S. areas where high concentrations of South Asians live and work are being referred to as Little India, much like previous ethnic enclaves such as Chinatown and Little Mexico (Maira 2002). For example, Das and Kemp (1997) have pointed to the emergence of businesses, and social institutions, such as temples and traditional dance academies in areas where there are large concentrations of South Asians, as proof to the formation of distinct ethnic enclaves. South Asians are among the fastest growing immigrant groups in the United States (Collison 2000). Individuals claiming South Asian descent are from countries such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, the Maldives, Kashmir, Myanmar formerly

known as Burma, Nepal, Tibet, and Bangladesh. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, South Asians constitute approximately 2 million people as of 2000, with the majority claiming Indian ancestry (U.S Bureau of the Census 2000).

The only South Asian categories included in the 2000 Census were "*Asian Indian*" and "*Pakistani*"; individuals originating from other South Asian countries were forced to choose "*Other Asian*" or to not respond accurately by choosing a race/ethnicity category that best suited them. However, respondents were given the option of writing in a race/ethnicity of their choice which included, Sri Lankan, Nepali, and Bangladeshi (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000). Given the limited number of categories included in the Census, it is difficult to calculate the specific South Asian population, as well as South Asian population trends in the United States. Although these categories still mask the actual number of South Asians in the United States, the U.S. Census has made progress from the broad 1990 categorization of *Asian or Pacific Islander* as one large group ignoring cultural, geographic and political distinctions. The vast majority of statistics regarding the numbers of South Asians living in the United States are comprised of individuals hailing from India, the largest South Asian country (U.S. Bureau of Census 1990, 2000, Kalavar 1998, Helweg and Helweg 1990).

According to Helweg and Helweg (1990) the Indian population in the United States has grown exponentially. In 1974-1975 there were 75,847 Indians in the United States. By 1980 this figure had grown to 361,544 and by 1990 there were 797,318 Indians living in all 50 states in the United States with New York having the highest concentration and Wyoming having the least (Helweg and Helweg 1990). According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the Asian Indian population had a growth rate of 106%

between the years 1990 and 2000 representing the fastest growing Asian American community (2000). While these numbers are impressive, they may be inaccurate due to language barriers and lack of campaigning about the importance of filling out the Census by governmental agencies in ethnic enclaves (www.indianembassey.org).

South Asian Community and Family Norms

There are no universal community and family norms that can be said to represent all South Asians due to the diverse regions, customs, languages, classes, religions as well as other distinctions that are present among individuals claiming South Asian ancestry. Further, South Asians are usually included in the general perceptions of the U.S. population, with East Asians, Asian Pacific Islanders and Middle Eastern people. As with most ethnic groups in the United States, little distinction is made among the groups despite vastly differing languages, customs and traditions. As a result of this error, stereotypes about Asians and Arabic people in general are often attributed to South Asians as well (Shankar and Srikanth 1998). Despite these gross generalizations and stereotypes, there are some commonalities that many South Asians share: a familial commitment is one example (Chandrasekhar 1954, Ramisetty-Mikler 1993, Ibrahim, Ohnishi, and Sandhu 1997, Das and Kemp 1997, Mathews 2000).

Across all societies families are the transmitters of knowledge and culture, the primary agent of socialization. However, the primacy of family for most South Asians is strong and often supersedes any individual desire or need. This is supported by research that suggests that children of the South Asian descent usually do not make any decisions by themselves (Mathews 2000). Mathews also contends that a hierarchical order exists within the family in which the eldest male often makes the final decisions. South Asian

family norms are both communal, placing the needs of the family above individual needs and patriarchal, giving all or most authority to the male members of the family.

South Asian community and family norms differ greatly from those embraced by American society (Kalavar 1998). While American society focuses on individuality and self-reliance, families can be a source of strength for many South Asians. Suhasini Ramisetty-Mikler (1993) asserts that families serve as a form of security and identity that are often the basic foundations of an individual's life and the primary building block of the South Asian society. The religious texts, traditions and beliefs that are pervasive in South Asian countries reinforce the family as the cornerstone of life. Families serve the function of social organization in the South Asian culture.

Given the importance of family within South Asian cultural norms, marriage is considered an important facet of social life. In fact, marriage is universal across India and is considered to be the most important event in life for Hindus, the dominant religious group in South Asian countries. Chandrasekhar (1954) links the importance of marriage to the Hindu religion. According to Chandrasekar (1954), "the Hindu view of marriage is that it is a sacramental duty and that every man and woman must perforce enter into it, as the married state is one of the fourfold stages-*ashramas*-in an individual's life" (p.339). Furthermore, marriage is supposed to occur once, for good or bad and that one marries the one fated to them (Ibrahim et al. 1997). This view supports the practice of traditionally arranged marriages.

Islam, the predominant religion of Pakistan regards the sacrament of marriage in a similar fashion as the Hindu faith. According to Khan (1997), when a man becomes an adult, marriage is customary. Marriage enables men to fulfill their communal, familial

and societal roles as set forth in the Qu'ran (Khan 1997). Islamic countries, such as Pakistan also adhere to arranged marriage customs. Khan (1997) further suggests that marriage is viewed as contractual with certain expectations and obligations of women and men. It is upon marriage that men are seen as legitimate community members (Khan 1997).

Marriage is of particular importance to South Asian women, both Hindu and Muslim, and can be considered a major determinant of their lives. At the extreme, women are allowed three prescribed roles in life; daughter, then wife, and finally mother (Ibrahim et al. 1997). Motherhood is almost essential to survival for women. Motherhood assures a woman some degree of power in her household, especially if she bears sons. Mothers are revered in the South Asian culture; in fact the *Taittiriya Upanisad*, the sacred scriptures of the Hindu faith, states "reverence of Mother as God," (Kalavar 1998:p.7). Additionally, childbearing signifies a place in the home of the in-laws and helps bond a woman to her husband's family, whom she lives with following traditionally arranged marriages. Finally, women are dependent on their children in old age, particularly their sons, for economic security (Riessman 2000). This ideology, that many South Asians espouse, is rooted in the various religious affiliations in South Asian culture (Kalavar 1998).

South Asian marriage customs are as diverse as its people. However, due to the interdependent nature of South Asian families, marriage partners are often chosen with little regard to personal choice (Bloom and Reddy 1986; Fricke, Syed, and Smith 1986; Malhorta and Tsui 1996). Traditionally, children accept the decisions of their parents because filial piety is considered a value in the South Asian culture where children feel

obligated towards their parents (Ibrahim et al. 1997). Parents select mates for their children and encourage their marriages based on the needs of the larger kinship structure (Das and Kemp 1997; Matthews 2000). Arranged marriages have served to maintain patriarchal control of financial and property resources (Fricke et al. 1986). Because marriages involve the transfer of monetary provisions, marriage partners are chosen with extreme care.

Arranged marriages serve the function of patriarchal wealth maintenance in several ways. Historically, sons worked on family farms with their fathers. The decision to marry was often based on whether a father wanted to split his accumulated land with his sons. According to Caldwell, Caldwell, Caldwell and Pieris (1998), families headed by men sought out brides of the same socioeconomic status so that they would receive a hefty dowry, which could be used to buy more land. The goal of arranged marriages is to increase both the financial opportunities and the important connections and alliances of the family (Fricke et al. 1986). Women are sent to live in the homes of their husbands and their families, and do not acquire any possessions or wealth of their own (Das and Kemp 1997). Further, chastity on the woman's part is necessary so that no prior descendants could lay claim to property or assets owned by a current husband, thus maintaining a male dominated agrarian economy and ensuring the continuation of wealth growth by men (Caldwell et al. 1998).

Family honor and prestige is often displayed by the purity of the female members. According to Margaret Abraham (1995), the religious institutions that dominate South Asian society "play a central role in the reproduction, maintenance and moral legitimation of the South Asian woman's identity as the keeper of the family honor"(p.3).

Additionally, preserving female virginity is so strongly entrenched in South Asian society that many girls are kept secluded at the onset of puberty until a marriage partner can be arranged (Caldwell et al. 1998). Women are often younger than their husbands, have less education and enter the household as the lowest member in the status hierarchy (Das and Kemp 1997). Given their status, women are often seen as nothing more than property.

An extension of the family is the community at large for South Asians. Ibrahim et al. (1997) discuss identity formation among South Asians. The communal ideology of South Asian life suggests that “community is an extended family” and that one has certain obligations towards the community (Ibrahim et al. p. 7). Ramisetty-Mikler (1993) contends that obligation to family and community is rooted in the ethical system of South Asian society. In fact, Islam lays forth six personal responsibilities for every Muslim. Commitment to community through the practice of charity and almsgiving is considered to be one of the more virtuous duties (Chase 1952).

Due to cultural norms, South Asians place a strong emphasis on family and community responsibility. This emphasis creates a sense of belonging which helps create an ethnic identity that exists among individuals of the South Asian descent. According to Nagel (1994), “ethnicity is constructed out of the material of language, religion, culture, appearance, ancestry or regionality” (p. 153). Further, ethnic identity is one’s concept of self that comes from one’s membership of an ethnic group. This membership serves a dual function; providing a sense of belonging and displaying a commitment to one’s ethnic group (Shrake and Rhee 2004). Nagel (1994) goes on to suggest that ethnic identity is specifically concerned with the maintenance of boundaries, establishing an in-group and an out-group.

Along with the establishment of an in-group and out-group, ethnic identity within South Asian families exerts a tremendous amount of pressure on its members to avoid bringing the family shame or stigma (Banerji 1996). Ramisetty-Mikler (1993) further posits that individuals with strong family ties also espouse a strong ethnic identification, thus suggesting that in order to be a “good South Asian” one must be connected to the family and the community elements that define ethnic identification. As previously mentioned, women have three roles they are expected to fulfill in the South Asian culture; daughter, wife and then mother. Further, the expectations for women include chastity, obedience, and attention to parental, spousal or their child’s every need (Das Gupta 1997). Any activity or behavior that threatens the duties and obligations associated with women’s assigned roles is frowned upon and in some instances can be life threatening. Caldwell et al. (1998) have suggested that historically women who were thought to have been sexually active before marriage were killed, however today the penalties are not as extreme. The consequences for premarital sexual activity include the encouragement of suicide. Women suspected of premarital sexual activity are encouraged to commit suicide to avoid bringing their family shame. Another consequence is being deemed unmarriageable which would result in tarnishing the family honor and would cause the dowries of younger female siblings to be quite high (Caldwell et al. 1998).

Although men may experience a greater degree of social freedom, they are not exempt from the rigid and stifling expectations that are the norms of the South Asian culture. Male children are expected to be caretakers of elderly parents, expected to have many sons to carry on the family name, as well as provide financially not only for the

immediate family but the extended family as well which often includes brothers, uncles and cousins (Ramisetty-Mikler 1993, Ibrahim et al.1997). This adherence to the family and customs related to it, which by extension includes the community, can lead individuals to experiences of extreme feelings of guilt and shame if they fail to live up to rigid expectations. In a discussion of Asian American identity development, Ibrahim et al. (1997) suggest that for ethnic minorities, identity is influenced by several factors. These factors include the larger dominant culture, community, religion, social class, educational level as well as gender, and sexual orientation. Das and Kemp (1997) further the discussion of ethnic identity as it relates to South Asians by suggesting that the process of identity formation begins with the family who is charged with preserving and transmitting culture.

In a recent article in the popular Indian magazine *India Currents*, Sandhya Char (2004) stated, "American culture punishes the transgressors by law; Indian culture punishes them by shame." Family prestige and honor are highly valued within South Asian culture (Melwani 1999, Das Gupta 1997) and shame is a mechanism used to enforce traditional codes of behavior prescribed for South Asians. South Asian individuals fear bringing their family shame and being ostracized by their community. Because South Asian individuals identify so strongly with their families and their community, fears of stigma and social isolation act as powerful deterrents to behavior that is seen as socially unacceptable. Although South Asia, India in particular, has a long history of the existence of homosexuality, homosexual behavior is considered socially unacceptable and LGBTQ persons are seen as a disgrace to their family and ethnic groups.

Historical Perspective on Homosexuality in South Asian Societies

In 1991, AIDS Bhedhav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA), a nonprofit organization based in India addressing the AIDS epidemic published a report entitled *Less Than Gay: A Citizen's Report on the Status of Homosexuality in India*. Within that report was a section focusing on the history of homosexuality in India. According to the report, gay and lesbian sexual activity was recorded by sage *Vatsyana* in the *Kama Sutra* during the 4th century (Ratti 1993). Along with mention in the *Kama Sutra*, the existence of *hijras*, transgendered men who dress as women, point to the complex history of homosexuality in ancient South Asian culture. *Hijras*, adopt exaggerated feminine dress, mannerisms and speech patterns. They consider themselves to belong to neither gender, and some are devotees of the Hindu mother goddess, *Bahuchara-Mata* (Penrose 2001). According to Arvind Kumar, *hijras* “have a sanctioned niche in the Indian culture, ..they are despised, feared and ridiculed-yet also respected” (Ratti 1993 p. 87). Further, most Indians believe that *hijras* have special powers due to their gender disruption. These believed powers include both blessings and curses. *Hijras* visit houses to bless weddings and the birth of a male child and expect to be paid. It is considered bad luck to turn away from *hijras* (Ratti 1993). Many *hijras* supplement their income by working as prostitutes in the brothels of the red light districts of many large cities in India (Penrose 2001, Ratti 1993). Walter Penrose (2001) adds to the discussion through his examination of the ancient and pre-colonial texts of India. He has uncovered evidence that women who were thought to belong to a third gender were given specific social and economic roles. These roles included porters and personal bodyguards to kings and queens by women dressed as men (Penrose 2001).

Giti Thadani (1996), author of *Sakhiyani: Lesbian Desire in Ancient and Modern India* has spent her life work traveling throughout India to uncover the existence of same sex desire. Thadani (1996), who has studied archeological sites such as temples suggests that sexuality was fluid before colonialism and the spread of Islam in India. Further, Thadani (1996) points to colonialism as the point in South Asian history where the fluidity of sexuality that included same-sex desire and sexual practices was discouraged and later criminalized. Commenting on Thadani's (1996) work, Cavalcanti (1998) offers the idea of the reconstruction of homophobia by way of British imperialism. Cavalcanti (1998) states, "the British intolerance for effeminacy engendered a nationalist reconstruction which glorified masculinity" (p.3). As a result of this, Cavalcanti (1998) suggests the ideal Indian woman as self-sacrificing and chaste emerged. This image has contributed to the heteronormative order of Indian society today.

Internalized Homonegativity: A Manifestation of Shame and Stigma

An established barrier to an individuals' revealing their sexual orientation that has received much empirical study is internalized homophobia. Internalized homophobia has been linked to high levels of shame in gay men, (Allen and Oleson 1999), has correlated significantly with depression among lesbians, (Szymanski, Chung and Balsam 2001) and is also associated with lower self-esteem and greater reports of loneliness by lesbians (Szymanski and Chung 2001). Before examining the dynamics of internalized homonegativity, it is necessary to understand the processes that LGBTQ individuals negotiate as they develop their sexual identities. Unfortunately, there is no monolithic model, neither theoretical nor empirical that describes the "coming out" or the acquisition of a gay identity which applies to all individuals. There are development models that

describe distinct stages individuals' progress through as they move towards a gay identity. These models emphasize a hierarchal order with those at the end stages possessing a more positive and complete gay identity than those in the beginning stages. One of the most prominent models presented in the literature on gay/sexual minority identity formation is the six-stage model presented by Vivienne Cass.

Cass (1984) developed the *Homosexual Identity Formation* model by conceptualizing homosexual identity as a typological identity. According to Cass,

typological identities arise out of the synthesis of the individual's own perceptions of self (self images) with the individual's own views of how others are believed to perceive this aspect of self...Own views of self as a homosexual are processed cognitively with images of sexual preference believed to be held by others (p.144).

This conceptualization is appropriate for sociological use given that an individual's perception of self is derived from others, most likely people in the individual's intimate daily interactions. The use of Cass' (1984) model also takes into account the stigma that might be associated with others' perception of homosexual identities that can be internalized by the homosexual person, thus leading to internalized homophobia. An additional benefit in using the Cass six-stage *Homosexual Identity Formation* model is that it is gender neutral and can be used to describe the identity formation of both women and men (Cass 1984).

Cass' six-stage *Homosexual Identity Formation* model is presented in Table 1. The first stage *Identity Confusion* involves the one's initial perception that one's thoughts, feelings and behaviors could be labeled as homosexual. This stage is usually characterized by a great deal of confusion concerning one's sexual orientation. The second stage, *Identity Comparison* occurs when individuals' begin to feel the differences

between themselves and heterosexuals. During this stage one could feel ostracized and marginalized from non-homosexuals. Stage three, *Identity Tolerance*, begins when the individual starts to make contact with other LGBTQ people. Although the individual see her/his self image as increasingly homosexual, tolerance of this self image, more than acceptance is an accurate description of the process up and to this point. The next stage, stage four *Identity Acceptance* signals the first stage in which individuals' begin to see their own sexual identity in a more positive light. This stage is also characterized by increased contact with other LGBTQ individuals, which could include joining organizations and associations catering to the needs of homosexuals. In the fifth stage, *Identity Pride* the pendulum swings to the extreme. Individuals feel such pride concerning their sexual orientation that they often submerge themselves in the gay subculture and reject non-homosexuals. The last stage, *Identity Synthesis* occurs as individuals incorporate all aspects of their identity, not just their sexual orientation, into a complete and whole self. *Identity Synthesis* is the final destination of Cass' six stage *Homosexual Identity Formation* model (Cass 1984).

A point of contention with the Cass model is predicated on the linear, goal-oriented process of identity formation. Sexual identity formation should be considered a fluid process. Individuals may skip stages or progress through the stages in a disordered pattern. Further, perhaps not all sexual minorities will acquire their sexual identity in the stage fashion presented by Cass. Contentions aside, Cass suggests that disclosure of sexual orientation begins at stage four and culminates in stage six. As the comfort level of one's sexual orientation increases, the likelihood of disclosure also increases. Disclosure of one's sexual orientation is often called "coming out." In turn, positive

feelings of homosexual identity decrease the negative feelings surrounding a homosexual identity. The experience of negative feelings concerning one's homosexual identity is termed internalized homophobia or internalized homonegativity (Mayfield 2001, Maylon 1981-1982, Sophie 1987). Thus, the relationship between degree of outness and internalized homonegativity suggests that as an individual progresses to the acquisition of a positive homosexual identity, internalized homonegativity decreases. Further, degree of outness may be indicative of the stage of homosexual identity formation of an individual.

Table 1. Six Stage Cass Model of Homosexual Identity Formation

Developmental Stages	Description
1. Identity Confusion	Involves questioning assumptions about one's sexual orientation based on homosexually defined actions, thoughts, and feelings.
2. Identity Comparison	Involves feelings of isolation and alienation as the differences between self and nonhomosexual others become clearer.
3. Identity Tolerance	Increasing commitment to a homosexual self-identity, seeks out other homosexual people to fulfill social, sexual and emotional needs.
4. Identity Acceptance	Selective identity disclosure to others, more positive view of homosexuality and development of a network of homosexual friends, still engaging in passing strategies.
5. Identity Pride	Feelings of pride toward homosexual identity and fierce loyalty to homosexuals as a group, heterosexuals are discredited and devalued.
6. Identity Synthesis	Come to see self as a person with many sides to their character, homosexuality only one of the sides, sexual identity no longer hidden, so disclosure becomes a non-issue.

Source. From "Homosexual Identity Formation: Testing a Theoretical Model." By V.C. Cass, 1984. *Journal of Sex Research*, 20, p. 147-153.

There are several competing definitions regarding internalized homophobia.

Maylon (1981-1982) described internalized homophobia as "the internalization of the mythology and opprobrium" using an object relations framework of contemporary

attitudes regarding homosexuality (p.60). A more simplistic and straightforward definition comes from Sophie (1987) that states internalized homophobia is the internalization of negative feelings about homosexual people. However, for the purposes of this paper I will use the comprehensive definition presented by Dr. Wayne Mayfield, professor of Educational and Counseling Psychology. Mayfield (2001) states that, “internalized homophobia is the internalized negative attitudes toward homosexuality that gay men and lesbians often initially adopt as a consequence of growing up in a heterosexist and antigay society” (p. 54). This definition is the most relevant because it takes into account the structural forces of both the dominant society and the influence South Asian cultural norms have on the individual.

When homosexuality was removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), mental health professionals began using internalized homophobia as a concept that would remove the “disorder” aspect from homosexual individuals seeking treatment for distress concerning their sexuality (Mayfield 2001). Instead practitioners viewed internalized homophobia as a condition associated with living in a homophobic society. Consequently, Mayfield (2001) proposes the use of internalized homonegativity because “it is a more inclusive terms that describes all possible negative attitudes towards homosexuality and gay men and lesbians” (p.54). Additionally, Mayfield (2001) asserts that the term includes both “societal and individual devaluation of gay and lesbian ways of living” thus making it the most appropriate definition for sociological inquiry (p.54).

Internalized Homonegativity Within Ethnic LGBTQ Communities

Due to the lack of empirical research on internalized homophobia or homonegativity and South Asians, studies with ethnic minorities, such as African Americans, Hispanics as well as the larger Asian community, will be incorporated in framing the research questions proposed for this study. Crawford, Allison and Zamboni and Soto (2002) conducted a study that examined the influence of race/ethnicity and sexual identity on psychosocial functioning among African American gay and bisexual men. The authors administered surveys to 174 African American gay and bisexual men. The questionnaire packet was comprehensive and included the use of eleven existing scales measuring items such as life satisfaction, social support, gay and ethnic identity. The significant findings of the study suggest that African American gay and bisexual men who possessed positive self-identification as being both African American and gay also reported that they experienced high levels of self-esteem, practiced safer sex, benefited from stronger social networks and reported an overall satisfaction with their lives (Crawford et al. 2002). In contrast, individuals who possessed negative self-identification of being both African American and gay experienced the lowest levels of the aforementioned outcomes. The work of Crawford et al. (2002) suggested that the more positive individuals feel concerning their multiple identities the more likely they will be able to integrate those identities and live a more fulfilling life. According to the authors, the intersection of ethnic and sexual identity into a complete identity is established by possessing positive attitudes towards both one's ethnic group and homosexuality in general. It is essential that ethnic sexual minorities are engaged in both

their ethnic community and the gay community in order to live a fulfilling and complete life (Crawford et al. 2002).

The experiences of Latina/o sexual minorities offer both similarities and differences to the experiences of African American LGBTQ individuals. Ethnicity has been found to impact the lives of Latina/o LGBTQ individuals in several ways. Specifically, the cultural traditions along with the anti-homosexual position associated with the Catholic Church seem to be detrimental to the psychological well-being of many Latina/o LGBTQ individuals (Baez 1996, Akerlund and Cheung 2000). Akerlund and Cheung (2000) also conclude that racism experienced in the dominant, Anglo society can be a cause of internalized homophobia in ethnic, sexual minorities, including Latina/o LGBTQ individuals. An interesting finding from Colon's (2001) ethnographic study of gay and bisexual Latino men revealed that the "feelings resulting from internalized conflict, [of sexual orientation and ethnic identity]the gay and bisexual Latino male may either attempt to change his appearance so as not to look Latino or gay" (p.84).

Rigid gender roles encouraging staunch masculinity in men have also led to a high prevalence of internalized homophobia among Latino gay and bisexual men. Colon (2001) cites that *machismo*, the Latino concept of manhood acts as a barrier to the positive social functioning of Latino gay and bisexual men. *Machismo*, is the exaggerated masculinity ideology for Latino men that associates virility and prowess with male sexuality. This can be damaging to Latino men who do not reflect that image or perhaps more costly, this could lead to high-risk sexual behavior in an attempt to overcompensate for any perceived short comings. As a result of the internalized homophobia experienced within the Latina/o community, many Latino gay and bisexual

men do not disclose their sexual orientation to members of their community while slowly disintegrating from their ethnic community altogether (Dube & Savin-Williams 1999).

Internalized Homophobia Among South Asian LGBTQ Individuals

Before exploring the internalized homophobia within the South Asian LGBTQ community, it is necessary to understand the coming out experiences of South Asian LGBTQ individuals. There is a lack of studies related to the coming out experiences of South Asian LGBTQ individuals in the United States. However, given that many Western European countries have similar cultural norms and traditions as the United States, the experiences of South Asian LGBTQ individuals living in Europe may give insight into the lives of the South Asian LGBT community in the U.S. Empirical evidence documenting the coming out experience of Western European gay and lesbians is pervasive, however virtually no empirical research has examined the coming out experience of South Asians. An exception is the work of Dinesh Bhugra (1997).

Dinesh Bhugra (1997) conducted a study examining the coming out experiences of South Asian men in the U.K. Bhugra (1997) employed both quantitative and qualitative measures to explore the coming out process as South Asian men disclose their sexuality to their family and friends. Bhugra (1997) suggests that South Asian gay men employ compartmentalization modes in order to manage their gay identity. The South Asian men in Bhugra's (1997) study engaged in compartmentalizing their lives by attempting to hide their sexuality among certain groups, coming out to some groups, while remaining closeted to others. According to Bhugra (1997) respondents were more concerned with concealing their sexual orientation from colleagues. The respondents engaged in a heterosexual facade by "talking about girls" and by asking "female friends

to ring them at work” (Bhugra 1997:555-556). The author further suggests that family and religion play significant roles in the coming out process and that female friends were often the first to be told and parents the last. During the qualitative interviews conducting by Bhugra (1997) three out of the four Muslim respondents expressed difficulty in dealing with their sexual orientation and their faith. Although the author found that religion plays an important role in the coming out process, religiosity was not examined and therefore should be considered an area needing further investigation. Bhugra (1997) concludes that although the coming out experience of South Asian men has some commonalities with the experiences of Western gay men, ethnic identity plays a crucial role in the lives of South Asian men as they undergo the process of disclosing their sexuality to others.

Although the coming out experience is worthy of scholarly inquiry, barriers to coming out must first be addressed. The only published study addressing internalized homophobia within the South Asian lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community was conducted by Ratti, Bakeman and Peterson (2000) in Canada. Ratti et al. (2000) were prompted to investigate this population due to the majority of new HIV/AIDS cases of men who have sex with men occurring among South Asians despite past awareness campaigns focusing on the gay community in the second decade of the AIDS epidemic. Internalized homophobia was included as a variable based on empirical research that suggested hatred of oneself could lead to harmful behaviors such as high risk sexual behavior (Ratti et al. 2000). The researchers hypothesized that South Asian men will exhibit higher levels of internalized homophobia due to limited acculturation to both the majority culture and the gay community (Ratti et al. 2000). By not being a part of these

gay communities and subcultures where HIV/AIDS resources are available, South Asian LGBTQ individuals are likely to put themselves at elevated risks of unwanted sexual outcomes. The researchers sampled 98 homosexual and bisexual Canadian men where 46 had a South Asian descent. The purpose of the study was, “to compare correlates of HIV high-risk sexual behavior among Canadian men of South Asian and European origin who have sex with men” (Ratti et al. 2000).

The *Nungesser Homosexual Attitudes Inventory* was utilized to measure internalized homophobia. As hypothesized, South Asian men included in this sample scored significantly higher for internalized homophobia than their European counterparts. Higher levels of internalized homophobia among South Asian men could indicate that South Asians suffer from

the homophobic messages from both their native South Asian culture and the majority culture. It may also be indicative of dual identity conflict and resulting cognitive dissonance; if their native culture views homosexuality as both an undesirable trait and a Western phenomenon, South Asian men may view being homosexual as bringing shame to their ethnic community and being a repudiation of their culture (Ratti et al. 2000 p. 5).

Despite having higher levels of internalized homophobia, South Asian men in this study did not differ significantly with European men in amount of high risk sexual behavior (Ratti et al. 2000). This could be because the South Asian male population included in this study was rather small, young and highly educated reporting at least an undergraduate degree. The South Asian men in this study also reported high levels of acculturation to both the majority community and the gay community. Although these researchers were interested in exploring how internalized homophobia impacts engagement in high risk sexual behaviors no such links were found, nevertheless in the larger Anglo gay community internalized homophobia increased the likelihood of

engagement in high-risk sexual behaviors. Further, South Asians receive homophobic messages from both their native culture and community and the dominant community.

Ethnic Identity and Internalized Homonegativity

Sullivan and Jackson (1999) contend that ethnic minorities may find it difficult to resolve both their sexuality and ethnic identity often resulting in a failure to integrate these components of their self-concept. As a result of this failure to integrate, many ethnic minorities who are also sexual minorities may experience a greater degree of internalized homonegativity than their white counterparts. In addition, Lukes and Land (1990) suggest that ethnic, sexual minorities participate in a dual process of being rejected. This happens by rejecting the norms, values and customs of their native culture as they process the complexities of their sexual identity. This experience of rejection is often internalized. Ethnic sexual minorities live a life on the periphery of both their ethnic community and the larger, predominantly Anglo LGBTQ community due to their dual minority status.

Ethnic sexual minorities may find it difficult to have a sense of belonging in the larger LGBTQ community, due to their ethnicity. In addition, ethnic sexual minorities may feel excluded and removed from their ethnic community due to their sexual orientation. Further, ethnic sexual minorities often report having to reject an important aspect of their identity, either their ethnicity or sexual orientation in order to belong or “fit in.” This is frequently seen as a cause of distress as ethnic sexual minorities attempt to grapple with their double and triple minority status (Chan 1989, Loiacano 1989, Carballo-Diequez 1989). Dube and Savin-Williams (1999) support this assertion by remarking that “ethnic sexual minorities may be at greater risk for internalized

homophobia and poor mental health because they encounter greater stigma from their ethnic community, racism from mainstream society and racism from sexual-minority communities” (1999:p. 1390).

Within ethnic cultures with rigid gender roles, such as those that exist within the South Asian culture, LGBTQ individuals experience greater distress concerning their sexual orientation. For instance, Loiacano (1989) reports that lesbianism is considered incongruent with what it means to be a Black woman just as Chan (1989) suggests that Asian gay men are considered to be rejecting their most important role in continuing the family name by bearing children. Ethnic LGBTQ individuals report awareness of their same-sex attraction at an earlier age than white LGBTQ persons, which could aid in the integration of ethnic and sexual minority identities. This awareness could be the result of sex segregation, and the intimate nature of same-sex friendships (Dube and Savin-Williams 1999). Khan (1997) suggests that the emotional attachment of same-sex friendships is not only encouraged in Islamic Pakistan but is the subject of song and verse. This could be seen as an advantage for some ethnic LGBTQ persons. The intimate nature of same-sex friendships does not raise suspicion of homosexual activity as it would in other societies where the sexes are not as segregated.

An attempt to reconcile the incompatibility of ethnic and sexual minority status by ethnic sexual minorities has been the creation of organizations, associations and list-servers catering to ethnic-sexual minority individuals. Darryl Loiacano (1989) conducted a qualitative study investigating how Black Americans dealt with issues concerning racism and homophobia. The majority of respondents suggested that joining and becoming involved in clubs, organizations and social groups specifically targeted at

Black lesbians and gay men provided the most effective way to integrate their dual-minority status. Chan (1989) in her study of Asian American gays and lesbians supported this finding as well. Chan (1989) found that Asian American gay and lesbians felt the most complete and accepted in spaces that acknowledged *both* their minority identities, Asian American gay and lesbian organizations were able to meet that need.

The relationship between ethnic identity and internalized homonegativity is multifaceted and complex. The United States has a long and detailed past of discrimination of non-white ethnic groups. According to Porter and Washington (1993), it is the historic discrimination that has occurred in the U.S. that has encouraged the retention of ethnic identity of non-white minorities regardless of the length of time spent living in the U.S. Ethnic enclaves can be considered safe havens for ethnic minorities from the discrimination faced in mainstream society. Because of this, ethnic minorities are vested in maintaining positive relationships with their ethnic communities. Individuals who are enmeshed in their ethnic communities, “involved in social activities with members of one’s group and participate in cultural traditions” can be said to have high levels of ethnic identity (Phinney 1992:p.159).

There are no direct studies on the impact that ethnic identity has on internalized homonegativity, however Shrake and Rhee (2004) examined ethnic identity as a predictor of problem behaviors among Korean Americans adolescents. Results from their study suggest that a high degree of ethnic identity is associated with low levels of problem behaviors. This finding suggests that having a high degree of ethnic identification is beneficial to ethnic minorities. Conversely, perceived discrimination on the basis of ethnicity proved to be a strong, positive predictor of problem behavior. Specifically,

perceived discrimination due to ethnicity was linked to internalizing problem behaviors. Based on the findings of Shrake and Rhee (2004) in all likelihood, individuals who are South Asian and are a sexual minority will fall victim to the internalization of the negative societal attitudes of their ethnic group and the negative attitudes associated with homosexuals and homosexuality. Individuals with a strong ethnic identity are expected to have high levels of internalized homonegativity given the findings of Shrake and Rhee (2004). This possible relationship warrants the investigation of ethnic identity as a predictor of internalized homonegativity.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Stigma is crucial to the maintenance of cultural and normative boundaries within South Asian communities. LGBTQ South Asians are stigmatized for not fulfilling the prescribed social roles of their families and communities. As a result, these individuals, as evidenced by Bhugra (1997) and Ratti et al. (2000), experience great stress in managing their dual, sometimes triple minority identities. It is of empirical significance to examine how South Asian LGBTQ individuals live out their daily lives in the United States. Research is needed to determine how ethnic identity affects internalized homophobia within the South Asian LGBTQ community. This study will address the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between ethnic identity and internalized homophobia within the South Asian LGBTQ community?
2. Does the degree of “outness” influence the level of internalized homophobia in the South Asian LGBTQ community?
3. How does living in the United States, measured in years, affect the level of internalized homophobia in South Asian LGBT individuals?

Relationship of Ethnic Identity and Internalized Homonegativity

Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between ethnic identity and internalized homonegativity within the South Asian LGBTQ community.

Research: A positive relationship exists between ethnic identity and internal homonegativity within the South Asian LGBTQ community.

Degree of "Outness" and Level of Internalized Homonegativity

Null Hypothesis: The level of homonegativity does not vary by degree of outness.

Research: The level of homonegativity does vary by degree of outness.

Length of Time in the United States and Internalized Homonegativity

Null Hypothesis: The level of internalized homonegativity does not vary by the length of time an individual has lived in the United States.

Research: The level of internalized homonegativity does vary by the length of time an individual has lived in the United States.

CHAPTER IV

DATA AND METHODS

A survey was administered to the respondents for the purposes of data collection. According to Singleton and Straits (1999) “surveys offer the most effective means of social description; they can provide extraordinarily detailed and precise information” (p. 245-246). They conclude that purposive sampling is ideal when attempting to study particular aspects or elements within a specific population. I employed purposive sampling techniques in order to gather the data used for the current study.

The respondents for the purposes of this study were recruited from a variety of sources. The primary source is via the Internet. I posted a URL address on various list-servers, newsgroups, and internet websites that cater to South Asian LGBTQ individuals requesting them to participate in a research study concerning ethnic identification and internalized homophobia among South Asians. The sample consisted of persons residing in the United States or U.S. citizens. Individuals who self-identified as South Asian with ancestry linking them to the countries of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Myanmar, formerly Burma, Tibet, the Maldives, Nepal, and Kashmir were included in the study. Participants also self-identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer for the inclusion as a study respondent. All respondents were at least 18 years of age and agreed to sign a consent form outlining the purposes of this research. The respondents

were informed that participation was strictly voluntary and that they were free to stop their involvement at any time. Secondary modes of data collection were through personal contacts, snowball techniques and local postings in areas frequented by LGBTQ individuals.

The majority of the respondents included in this study were recruited via the Internet. I posted a URL address, a brief introduction of myself and the purpose of my study on six list-servers dedicated to addressing the needs of the South Asian LGBTQ community in the United States. Subsequent follow-up messages were sent to the list-servers at the beginning of each week. When respondents arrived at the URL address I provided, they were able to view a webpage displaying information about my credentials and a brief overview of my research goals. Respondents were also provided with information on how to contact me and my supervising thesis chair. A hyperlink entitled "SURVEY" led respondents to a consent form that was required for participation in the current study. Respondents were again given a brief description of the study, advised that the study has been approved by an Institutional Review Board and invited to participate. In order to view the survey, respondents agreed to provide an electronic signature by clicking a button that stated "Yes, continue." Those who did not wish to participate after reading the consent form were able to leave the webpage. Those who continued to participate in the survey were allowed to click one response to each question. Upon completion of the questionnaire, respondents clicked a "submit" button that displayed a "thank you acknowledgement" with a message that advised respondents to contact me or my supervising thesis chair should they have any questions or comments now or in the

future. The questionnaire responses were tabulated by the computer software and sent via email to my secure university email account.

I also collected questionnaires from nine respondents during a pot luck dinner held by the moderators of a Texas list-server catering to the needs of the South Asian LGBTQ community. The data was collected in a private home. Respondents were seated at a table in an area that was away from others and provided some privacy. The respondents were given a brief overview of the research and asked to sign a consent form agreeing to voluntary participation. Additional details regarding data collection at the pot luck dinner can be found in Appendix I. The entire data collection phase was approximately six weeks and yielded a total of 69 respondents. The exact response rate is difficult to calculate due to some individuals having concurrent membership to more than one list-server.

Measures

The *Internalized Homonegativity Inventory* developed by Wayne Mayfield (2001) was utilized for the purposes of this study. Mayfield constructed this inventory guided by the complexity of the definition of *Internalized Homonegativity*. Mayfield incorporates both societal attitudes concerning homosexuality and homosexuals, and individual attitudes related to homosexuality one may internalize into the construction of the scale. This is the first scale to do so. The well-established and utilized *Nungesser Homosexuality Attitudes Inventory* (1983) scale influenced Mayfield's work. The scale consists of 23 items divided into three sub-scales including Personal Homonegativity, Gay Affirmation, and Morality of Homosexuality. The scale is presented in its entirety in Appendix II. The items were summed resulting in a composite score. The overall scale

had a reliability of .91 and each scale had a coefficient alpha of .71 or greater. Due to the high level of reliability this scale is appropriate for use in the current study. The overall reliability of the *Internalized Homonegativity Inventory* (IH scale) was .91 for the current study, matching that of the seminal Mayfield study.

The *Multi-Group Ethnic Identity Scale* was developed by Jean S. Phinney (1992). To my knowledge this scale has never been administered to South Asians specifically but has been given to Asian Americans. Phinney (1992) developed the scale to examine the effect ethnic identity had on self concept in adolescents, using previous scales such as the *Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status*. The scale is comprised of three sub-scales, Positive Ethnic Attitudes and Sense of Belonging, Ethnic Identity Achievement, and Ethnic Behaviors or Practices. The items of this scale are listed in Appendix III. The overall reliability for Phinney's study using college samples was .90, thus making it appropriate for this study. The reliability of this scale in the current study is 0.84, which is somewhat lower than Phinney's study. This high reliability suggests that the scale is also acceptable current use in this study. This scale was constituted by summing the items for a net score. Additionally, measures were taken so that high scores indicated a high ethnic identity and low scores indicated a low ethnic identity.

The survey consisted of three parts: a.) socio- demographic items b.) an adaptation of the *Multi-Group Ethnic Identity* questionnaire and c.) an adaptation of an *Internalized Homonegativity Inventory* scale. The socio-demographic items, which are listed in Appendix IV, include basic information such as sex broken down into; female, male, female to male and male to female. Age with age grouped into intervals of; 18-24, 25-29, 30-34, 35-40, 40+. Sexual orientation response categories were; lesbian, gay,

bisexual, transgender/transsexual and queer. Relationship status comprised of: single, married to someone of the opposite sex, partnered to someone of the same sex, and divorced individuals. Length of time out was indicated by: less than a year, 1-4 years, 5-10 years, 11-14 years and 20+ years. The categories of Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Bangladeshi, Kashmiri and Bi-racial made up the race/ethnicity variable. Religion was comprised of Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist and Other. The ability to speak English, ability to speak another language other than English, and whether the respondent and the respondent's parents were born in the U.S. were all posed as yes/no questions. The respondent's living arrangements were indicated by; live with family, live on a college campus, live alone, live with a partner, and live with roommates. Response categories for living environment were urban, rural and suburban. Income was divided into under \$25,000, \$25,000-49,000, \$50,000-75,000 and \$75,000 or more.

Included in the demographic section are the independent variables "degree of outness" and "years of living in the United States." "Degree of Outness" is measured by the question "Describe your degree of outness" with response categories, "closeted," "out to only family," "out to only friends," "out only online," and "out to everyone." For the purposes of analysis, individuals who were "closeted", "out only to family", "out only to friends", and "out only online" were combined to represent those that are conditionally out. The recoded variable had response categories, 1= "out to everyone" and 0= "not out to everyone". Individuals who describe their "outness" as "out to everyone" are uniquely different from those individuals who are conditionally "out." The amount of time living in the United States is measured by two questions, "Were you born in the United States," and "If not, how long have you lived in the United States?" The responses to the latter

were, “less than a year,” “1-4 years,” “5-10 years,” “11-15 years,” and finally “20+ years.” The interval “16-19 years” was inadvertently omitted, however for analysis purposes this question, years lived in the U.S., was combined with information on place of birth to create a new variable. This new variable measured the effect that living in the United States had on the level of internalized homonegativity within the South Asian LGBTQ community. The response categories of this variable were “born in the U.S.,” “not born in the U.S. and lived in the U.S. less than 4 years,” “not born in the U.S. and lived in the U.S. 5-10 years,” and “not born in the U.S. and lived in the U.S. 11+ years.” I further transformed the variable so that individuals born in the U.S. and those not born in the U.S. but have lived in the U.S. for 11+ years were combined and those not born in the U.S. and have lived in the U.S. less than 10 years were combined as well. It is assumed that those who have resided in the United States for more than 11 years do not differ substantially for those who were born in the U.S. given the relative young age of the sample.

The South Asian LGBTQ population in the United States has not been empirically studied. The scales that have been used to measure constructs like internalized homophobia have been developed with the white, male, middle-class gay population in mind. Due to this, the *Internalized Homonegativity Inventory* may not capture the complex experiences the South Asian LGBTQ community faces as both sexual and ethnic minorities in the United States. Factors such as sexual minority status within the South Asian culture, race/ethnicity minority status in the dominant society, dual-minority status in the general population, as well as immigration and citizenship issues all may influence and impact the experiences of South Asian LGBTQ individuals. However, use

of the *Internalized Homonegativity Inventory* is appropriate for use in this study for two reasons: the high degree of reliability associated with this scale and the lack of research on South Asian LGBTQ individuals in the United States. This study should serve as a springboard to future research concerning this population.

Data Collection via the Internet as a Methodology

Given the relatively small non-random sample it is imperative to stress that the analysis and findings are specific to this study and should not be generalized. Additionally, this study should not be generalized to the South Asian LGBTQ community due to the online recruitment of respondents, thus excluding individuals in the South Asian LGBTQ community who are not online and do not have access to the Internet. The rationale for utilizing the Internet to access respondents comes from the invisibility of South Asians in the larger gay community. Given that many South Asians struggle with coming out, they are less likely to frequent gay spaces and are less likely to join groups dedicated to serving the needs of the LGBTQ community.

According to the 1998 *!OutProud!/Oasis Internet Survey of Queer and Questioning Youth*, 51% of individuals under the age of 25 come out on the Internet *before* they come out in their “real life.” Additionally, 68% of the respondents stated that being online was helpful in accepting their sexual orientation and 51% responded that being online has been crucial to accepting their sexual orientation. Although the overwhelming majority of the respondents were gay, white males, the results should be considered applicable to South Asians given their affluence and educational status that lends to easy access to the Internet (*!OutProud!/Oasis Internet Survey of Queer and Questioning Youth* 1998:17-18). The Internet has given South Asian LGBTQ individuals

the opportunity to “virtually” meet and connect with others. In addition, the Internet has provided a space where groups of South Asian LGBTQ individuals can be contacted thus allowing researchers to reach a population that may not have been identified by traditional research methods. This is supported by the work of Mustanski (2001) that suggests Internet data collection allows respondents to maintain their anonymity, but provides a medium to access those who may have been unreachable in the past. Thus, sexual minorities are excellent groups for use of this methodology.

The Internet has provided sexual minorities with safe spaces to explore their sexual orientation. In fact, of the six list-servers where I posted my URL address, three mention providing a safe and supportive space as one of their goals or purposes. In support of this, Mustanski (2001) stated that sexual minorities have set up “virtual communities for discussion, support, networking and entertainment purposes” (p. 4). Having a safe and supportive space to navigate the complex nature of sexual orientation is clearly an advantage of using the Internet as a data collection methodology. The ability to remain anonymous can be advantageous; however caution must be heeded when data is collected in an anonymous online fashion. Data collection via the Internet is susceptible to threats of external validity. Respondents could lie about their identity, submit multiple responses as well as generally sabotage results. In attempt to reduce the number of multiple submissions, I checked the IP address on each questionnaire for duplication. Only one submission was duplicated, and the duplicate was discarded. Further, as previously mentioned, those in lower socioeconomic and educational strata and those who are technologically disadvantaged are not included when online data collection methods are utilized (Mustanski 2001). On the other hand data collection via

the Internet can transcend geographic boundaries allowing for a more diverse sample as well as reduce the level of social desirability from respondents (Mustanski 2001).

Statistical Analyses

Bivariate analyses were used to test the relationship of the key dependent variable internalized homonegativity with ethnic identity, outness and years lived in the U.S. T-tests were used to compare the mean difference in the level of internalized homonegativity for those who are “out to everyone” and those who are not out to everyone. ANOVA was then used to further determine the difference in the mean level of internalized homonegativity by degrees of outness. T-tests were also used to compare the mean difference in the level of internalized homonegativity between those born in the U.S. or those not born in the U.S. and lived here for 11+ years, and those not born in the U.S. lived here less than 10 years. I conducted a correlational analysis in order to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between ethnic identity and internalized homonegativity. Furthermore, multiple regression analysis was adopted to predict internalized homonegativity by ethnic identity after controlling for various factors that are related to internalized homonegativity.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Sample Characteristics

The SPSS statistical software package was utilized for the purposes of data analyses. A total of six respondents were deleted from the respondent pool due to erroneous responses yielding an analytical sample of 63 (N=63). The means of the Internalized Homonegativity and Ethnic Identity and their respective sub-scales are presented in Table 2. The mean of the Internalized Homonegativity scale is 52.56. The mean indicates that this sample has a low level of internalized homonegativity. The mean of the Ethnic Identity scale is 59.98. The mean implies that this sample espouses a high degree of ethnic identification.

Table 2:
Frequency of Dependent and Independent Variables

Variable	Range	Alpha	Mean	SD
Dependent Variable				
<i>Internalized Homonegativity Scale</i>	23-161	.90	52.56	21.43
Subscale 1: Morality of Homosexuality	5-35	.54	7.90	3.79
Subscale 2: Personal Homonegativity	11-77	.91	26.74	14.08
Subscale 3: Gay Affirmation	7-49	.75	17.74	6.89
Independent Variable				
<i>Multigroup Ethnic Identity</i>	20-80	.84	59.98	6.60
Subscale 1: Affirmation and Belonging	5-20	.82	8.31	2.90
Subscale 2: Ethnic Identity Achievement	7-28	.68	12.24	3.32
Subscale 3: Ethnic Behaviors	2-8	.40	4.13	1.40

N=61

Source: South Asian LGBTQ data set 2005, 1 High values indicate high levels of the variable

Descriptive statistics for the sample are provided in Table 3. The sample is slightly over-representative of males with 57.1% of individuals responding as male, 39.7% as female and 3% of individuals responding to the sex demographic of female to male. The young are also over-represented with 54 respondents under the age of 34 making up approximately 85.7% of the total sample. In terms of racial and ethnic make-up of the sample, 85.7% of respondents described their race/ethnicity as Indian, 9.5% Pakistani, 3.2% Sri Lankan, and 1.6% bi-racial having at least one parent of South Asian descent. The sexual orientation of respondents is as follows: 17.5% lesbian, 54% gay, 14.3% bisexual, 1.6% transgender/transsexual, and 12.7% of individuals identifying as queer. Overwhelmingly, the respondents (82.5%) described their living environment as urban. The living arrangement of the sample is as follows: 39.7% of respondents currently live alone, 25.4% live with roommates, 14.3% live with a partner, 14.3% live at home with parents or family, and 6.3% reside on a college campus. Slightly over half (55.6%) of the sample described their religion as Hindu, with the remaining 14.3% identifying as Muslim, 11.1% as Christian, 1.6% as Buddhist, and 15.9% describing their religion as Other. All of the respondents spoke English and 84.1% of respondents spoke a language other than English. Approximately 73% of the sample recorded their income to be less than \$50,000, with 34.9% of respondents making less than \$25,000, and 38.1% making between \$25,000 and 49,000. The majority of the respondents, 66.7% described their relationship status as single, 4.8% are currently married to someone of the opposite sex, 22.2% are partnered with someone of the same sex and 3.2% are divorced.

The other sociodemographic variables of interest are “outness” and the length of time one has lived in the United States. The sample included 39.7% of individuals who were out to everyone. Most of the sample (57.1%) has only recently come out and have

been out for less than 4 years, 25.4% have been out for 5-10 years, and 6.4% of individuals have been out for 11+ years. This is perhaps due to the relatively young age of the sample. Only one individual had a parent or parents, who were born in the United States. In fact, only 19% of respondents were born in the United States suggesting that the vast majority of the sample (81%) is foreign born, having immigrated to the United States at some point in their young lives. A reported 15.9% of respondents have been in the U.S. for less than 4 years, 28.6% have been in the U.S. for 5-10 years, and 27% have been in the U.S. for 11 or more years.

Table 3: Frequency of Sociodemographic Controls

Sociodemographic Controls	N	Percentage
<i>Age</i>		
18-24	15	23.8
25-29	23	36.5
30-34	16	25.4
35-39	5	7.9
40+	4	6.3
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	25	39.7
Male	36	57.1
<i>Sexual Orientation</i>		
Lesbian	11	17.5
Gay	34	54.0
Bisexual	9	14.3
Transgender/Transsexual	1	1.6
Queer	8	12.7
<i>Current Relationship Status</i>		
Single	42	66.7
Married Opposite Sex	3	4.8
Partnered Same Sex	14	22.2
Divorced	2	3.2
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>		
Indian	54	85.7
Pakistani	6	9.5
Sri Lankan	2	3.2
Biracial	1	1.6

N=63

Source: South Asian LGBTQ Dataset 2005

Table 3 Cont': Frequency of Sociodemographic Controls

Sociodemographic Controls	N=63	Percentage
<i>Religion</i>		
Hindu	35	55.6
Muslim	9	14.3
Christian	7	11.1
Buddhist	1	1.6
Other	10	15.9
<i>Ability to speak language other than English</i>		
Yes	53	84.1
No	10	15.9
<i>Birth in the United States</i>		
Yes	12	19.0
No	51	81.0
<i>Lived in the United States (years)</i>		
Less than a year to four years	10	15.9
Five to ten years	18	28.6
Eleven or more years	17	27.0
<i>Parents Birth in the United States</i>		
Yes	1	1.6
No	62	98.4
<i>Living Arrangements</i>		
Live with family	9	14.3
Live on a college campus	4	6.3
Live alone	25	39.7
Live with a partner	9	14.3
Live with roommates	16	25.4
<i>Degree of "Outness"</i>		
Closeted	4	6.3
Out to only family	4	6.3
Out to only friends	26	41.3
Out only online	4	6.3
Out to everyone	25	39.7
<i>Length of time "out"</i>		
Less than a year	7	11.1
One to four years	29	46.0
Five to ten years	16	25.4
Eleven to fourteen years	3	4.8
Twenty or more years	1	1.6
<i>Living Environment</i>		
Urban	52	82.5
Rural/Suburban	11	17.5
<i>Income</i>		
Under \$25,000	22	34.9
\$25,000 to \$49,000	24	38.1
\$50,000 to \$74,000	10	15.9
\$75,000 or more	7	11.1

N=63

Source: South Asian LGBTQ Dataset 2005

Bivariate Analyses

Degree of Outness and Internalized Homonegativity

I conducted t-tests in order to determine if there is a difference of means for individuals who are “out to everyone” and individuals who are not out to everyone on the Internalized Homonegativity Scale. Results of the analysis are presented in Table 4. Individuals who are out to everyone had a mean internalized homonegativity score of 42.040 and individuals who are partially out or closeted had a mean score of 59.861. The difference in means is highly significant at the $p < .001$ level. The results suggest that individuals who are out to everyone experience significantly lower levels of internalized homonegativity compared to individuals who are not out to everyone. As hypothesized degree of “outness” has an inverse influence on the level of internalized homonegativity.

The above t-tests prompted further investigation into the differences in the mean level of internalized homonegativity by more detailed degrees of outness. The results are also presented in Table 4. The degree of “outness” was operationalized into three categories, “out to everyone,” “out to family or friends,” and “closeted and out only online.” This was done to further explain how degree of “outness” influences internalized homonegativity by using an ANOVA test. Although the ANOVA was highly significant $p < .000$, the results might be unstable given the small sample of individuals who are “closeted or out only online” ($n=8$). Nevertheless, the means indicate the level of internalized homonegativity decreases as the degree of “outness” increases. Those who are closeted or out only online experience the greatest degree of internalized homonegativity while those who are out to everyone are the least affected by negative thoughts or feelings concerning their sexual orientation. Thus, the research hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 4: Analysis of Means of Internalized Homonegativity and Degree of Outness

IH Scale				
<i>Degree of Outness</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>t</i>	
Out to Everyone	25	42.040	-3.47***	
Not Out to Everyone	36	59.861		
Means with 3 Categories of Outness				
<i>Degree of Outness</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	
Out to Everyone	25	42.040	14.155	
Out to Family or Friends Only	28	55.571	21.372	
Closeted, Out Online Only	8	74.875	22.061	
Total	61	52.557	21.429	

N=61 *** $p < .001$

Source: South Asian LGBTQ dataset 2005

Length of Time in the United States and Internalized Homonegativity

For the summative Internalized Homonegativity scale the difference in means for length of time in the U.S. and level of internalized homonegativity is significant, (Table 5). Individuals who were not born in the U.S. and have lived in the U.S. less than 10 years had higher internalized homonegativity scores than those who were born here or have lived in the U.S. for 11+ years. This finding suggests that living in the U.S. has a positive effect on internalized homonegativity: the longer one lived here, the lower their levels of negative feelings or thoughts concerning their sexual orientation. These results are in line with the expectations. The difference in means for the IH subscales, Personal Homonegativity, Gay Affirmation and Morality of Homosexuality were significant at the $p < .05$ level. The results of the sub-scales seem to support the overall findings (results not shown).

Table 5: T-test of Length of Time in the U.S. and Internalized Homonegativity

IH scale		Mean	N	t
<i>Length of Time in the U.S.</i>				
Born in the U.S. &				
Not Born in the U.S., lived 11+years		44.821	28	-2.61**
Not born in the U.S. &				
lived in the U.S. less than 10 years		59.296	27	

** $p < .01$

N=63

Source: South Asian LGBTQ Dataset 2005

Ethnic Identity and Internalized Homonegativity

In this section I examine the relationship that may exist between the dependent and the key independent variable. The correlational analysis revealed that an inverse relationship exists between ethnic identity and internalized homonegativity. There is a moderate, negative correlation between ethnic identity and internalized homonegativity [$r = -.389$, $n = 60$, $p < .01$], suggesting as ethnic identity goes up, internalized homonegativity goes down. This is contrary to the expectations of these two variables.

To understand this relationship further, the sample was broken down into two sub-samples based on the degree of outness and length of time in the U.S. The sample was broken down by those who are “out to everyone” and those who are closeted or only partially out. The sample was also broken down by those who were born in the U.S. and those who have lived in the U.S. 11+ years, and those who were not born in the U.S. and have lived in the U.S. less than 4 years and those who were not born in the U.S. and have lived in the U.S. 5-10 years. Correlational analyses were conducted on the sub samples, however the only statistically significant relationships that were found existed among individuals who are closeted or partially out, and individuals who were not born in the U.S. but have lived in the U.S. for 5-10 years. A moderate, negative correlation between ethnic identity and internalized homonegativity persisted [$r = -.408$, $n = 35$, $p < .05$] for individuals who are not out. As ethnic identity goes up, internalized homonegativity goes

down for individuals who are not out. Similarly, a strong, negative correlation between ethnic identity and internalized homonegativity exists [$r = -.544$, $n = 17$, $p < .05$] for individuals who were not born in the U.S. but have lived here for 5-10 years. In general, these findings indicate the absence of a negative relationship between internalized homonegativity and ethnic identity for those who are out and those who are more enmeshed in the U.S. culture.

Multivariate Analyses

I performed a series of multivariate analyses to expand the understanding of the relationship of ethnic identity and internalized homonegativity by controlling for other variables such as degree of “outness,” length of time in the U.S., age, and sexual orientation. Results of the OLS regression predicting the effect ethnic identity has on internalized homonegativity are presented in Table 6. The model explains 48.3% of the variance of internalized homonegativity. It appears that internalized homonegativity is negatively related to ethnic identity, which is again contrary to expectations. For every unit increase in the level of ethnic identity, internalized homonegativity reduces by 0.976. Among the control variables, the ones that are significant are sexual orientation and sex. For the sexual orientation variable, the difference in the mean level of internalized homonegativity between lesbians and gays is significant. Mean level of internalized homonegativity appears to be lower in lesbians by 36.535 units compared to gays. Additionally, the difference in the mean level of internalized homonegativity for bisexual, transgender/transsexual or queer individuals is lower by 33.664 compared to gays. For every one unit increase in level of ethnic identity, internalized homonegativity reduces by 33.664. The difference in the mean levels of internalized homonegativity

between females and males is significant. For every unit increase in ethnic identity, internalized homonegativity increases 27.921 for males.

Table 6: OLS Regression Analysis Predicting Internalized Homonegativity using Ethnic Identity

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Slope</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>
Ethnic Identity	-.976*	.483
Gender		
Female	27.921*	12.884
Male _a		
Age		
18-24	-3.380	7.781
30-34	-6.487	7.669
35+	-14.240	10.222
25-29 _a		
Sexual Orientation		
Lesbian	-36.535*	16.147
Bisexual,	-33.664**	12.990
Transgender/Transsexual,		
Queer		
Gay _a		
“Outness”		
Out to Everyone	-4.290	6.277
Not out to Everyone _a		
Years Out		
Out 5-10 years	-4.591	8.277
Out 11+ years	-7.438	17.726
Out less than 5 years _a		
Relationship Status		
Partnered	-3.390	6.819
Not Partnered _a		
Race/Ethnicity		
Indian	-16.074	8.643
Not Indian _a		
Birth & Time In U.S.		
Born in the U.S. &	8.163	7.974
Not Born in the U.S.,		
living 11+years		
Not Born in the U.S.,	9.460	10.174
lived less than 4 years		
Not born in the U.S.,		
lived in U.S. 5-10 years _a		
F= 2.004		
df= 44		

a = Reference Group

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

N=43

Source: South Asian LGBTQ data set 2005

To gain a better understanding of why the direction of the relationship between internalized homonegativity and ethnic identity is contrary to the hypotheses in the multivariate model further analyses were done on the sub-samples based on outness and length of time in the U.S. Recall, this same strategy was used in the bivariate correlational analyses. The model predicting internalized homonegativity using ethnic identity for the sub-sample of individuals who were not born in the U.S. and who have lived here for less than 10 years was significant. The results are presented in Table 7. Concerns of multicollinearity between the sexual orientation lesbian and sex resulted in the omission of the sex variable for this analysis.

Ethnic identity is highly significant in predicting the level of internalized homonegativity among individuals who were not born in the U.S. and have lived in the U.S. for less than 10 years. The direction of the relationship similar to the previous results, suggest sexual orientation is significantly related to internalized homonegativity. Mean level of internalized homonegativity appears to lower in bisexual, transgender/transsexual or queer individuals by 44.872 units compared to gays. Additionally, individuals 35 and above, marginally ($p < .056$) have lower mean levels of internalized homonegativity than individual in the 25-29 age range.

Table 7: OLS Regression Analysis Predicting Internalized Homonegativity using Ethnic Identity: Sub-sample Not Born in the U.S. and lived in U.S. for 5-10 Years

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Slope</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>
Ethnic Identity	-3.058***	.544
Age		
18-24	-5.221	7.275
30-34	-10.544	7.721
35+	-38.916#	17.689
25-29 _a		
Sexual Orientation		
Lesbian	2.996	14.486
Bisexual,	-44.872**	10.603
Transgender/Transsexual,		
Queer		
Gay _a		
“Outness”		
Out to Everyone	-2.914	6.942
Not out to Everyone _a		
Years Out		
Out 5-10 years	31.368	23.385
Out 11+ years	-1.618	26.776
Out less than 5 years _a		
Relationship Status		
Partnered	-9.936	8.219
Not Partnered _a		
Race/Ethnicity		
Indian	-6.169	10.431
Not Indian _a		
F=6.428		
df= 20		

_a = Reference Group

$p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .000$

N=19

Source: South Asian LGBTQ data set 2005

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between ethnic identity and internalized homonegativity within the South Asian LGBTQ community considering such factors as the degree of outness and time spent in the United States. The results of this study offer both expected and unexpected findings. As expected degree of outness and length of time in the U.S. have inverse effects on the level of internalized

homonegativity. Contrary to the expectations, as ethnic identity goes up internalized homonegativity goes down. There are several factors that may shed light on these findings.

The effect outness has on the level of internalized homonegativity is not surprising given past literature. This study found that, to come out of the closet is in essence, a declaration that one is content with their sexual orientation. Coming out of the closet signals the acceptance of a homosexual identity by an individual. Cass (1984) suggests that individuals begin to disclose one's homosexual identity during stage four, Identity Acceptance. Individuals who are conditionally out, those who are "out to only family", "out to only friends" and "out only online" comprise approximately 53.9% of this sample. Using Cass' model, these individuals are somewhere between stage four and stage five, Identity Pride. It can be assumed that these individuals are in the process of synthesizing the seemingly incongruent components of their identities and creating a more integrated self. Based on Cass' six-stage model, individuals who are "out to everyone," have successfully completed the stages presented in the *Homosexual Identity Formation* model and have come to see their identity as a blend of all the components that make up their self identity.

The results of this study suggest that the years an individual has lived in the U.S., affects individual's level of internalized homonegativity and ethnic identity. Although the U.S. does not recognize many of the basic civil rights of its LGBTQ citizens, homosexuality is certainly more tolerated here than in the South Asian countries. As individuals become more acculturated, this proves to be an inevitable result of living in the U.S., levels of internalized homonegativity decrease. As the findings indicate, the level of internalized homonegativity was the lowest for U.S. citizens of South Asian

descent, followed by those who have lived in the U.S. for more than 11 years.

Individuals who were not born in the U.S. and have lived here for 5-10 years had the highest levels of internalized homonegativity. This suggests that the duration of time in the U.S. impacts the level of internalized homonegativity for some South Asian LGBTQ individuals.

An additional factor that must be considered is the existence of a gay identity in the U.S. that is not available in South Asian countries. It can be said that same-sex desire and homosexual behavior exists across all societies. In fact, Khan (1997), Thadani (1996), Seabrook (1999) and Kala (1991) all describe instances and reference the existence of homosexual behavior throughout South Asian countries, specifically India and Pakistan. However, until recently having a gay identity, uttering the words “I am lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer” was inconceivable to many South Asians. It is only with the increased visibility of a South Asian LGBTQ identity that individuals are beginning to live fully actualized lives as South Asian LGBTQ people.

The recent increase of gay visibility in India and other South Asian countries is, perhaps due to the globalization of LGBTQ images and subcultures from the U.S., Australia and western European countries. On July 2, 1999, 15 gay individuals walked down the streets of Calcutta, India in the country’s first gay pride parade. The walk was named the *Friendship Walk*, in an effort to depoliticize the event. Those who participated passed out flowers and brochures while visiting governmental offices with the intent to increase the visibility of gays and lesbians in India (www.gaytoday.com). By 2003, the Calcutta *Friendship Walk*, renamed the *Walk on the Rainbow* had increased its participants to 35 (www.queerday.com). Additionally, India has a gay magazine, *Bombay Dost* that is published and distributed in India for gay and lesbian South Asians

(www.gaytoday.com). The increase in visibility is not to suggest that being LGBTQ in India is easy, however the increased visibility could aid in the explanation of the inverse relationship between ethnic identity and internalized homonegativity.

This study also revealed that as ethnic identity goes up, internalized homonegativity goes down. As stated previously, this is contrary to the expectations. It was hypothesized that a high degree of ethnic identification would result in high levels of internalized homonegativity based on the literature review. Past literature has suggested that the South Asian culture has stringent norms concerning marriage and family because of the conservative nature of sexual norms in that culture. Heterosexual sexuality in general is a taboo subject, much less any alternative sexuality. This is evident by the restrictive edicts placed on the movements of South Asian women in an effort to control their sexuality (Caldwell et al. 1998). Additionally, the emphasis on marriage and procreation within the South Asian culture would suggest any deviation from those norms would be highly discouraged. Further, the use of stigma and shame as mechanisms of social control would act as powerful deterrents to any non-heterosexual sexuality.

The inverse relationship that exists between ethnic identity and internalized homonegativity could possibly be explained by several factors. First, this study is situated in the U.S. and despite years lived in this country, South Asians are considered a minority group. Given their minority status, South Asians may have a strong sense of ethnic identification as a means to combat experiences of racism and discrimination. Similarly, simply being in a foreign country with differing values, customs, and beliefs could encourage the retention of staunch ethnic identification. Having a strong ethnic identification could create a sense of belonging that may not be experienced in the larger society.

Additionally, compared to the rigid and conservative sexual norms of the South Asian culture, the U.S. has rather lenient views regarding sexuality. As a result, South Asians in the U.S. may develop liberal attitudes concerning sexuality in general and homosexuality specifically. This could explain the overall low level of internalized homonegativity for the entire sample. Being in the U.S. reduces the negative thoughts and feelings associated with a LGBTQ identity, while simultaneously increasing the ethnic identification of South Asians. Ultimately, this suggests that having a positive ethnic identity and a low level of internalized homonegativity are both markers of a positive self-identity and should be considered ideal for South Asian LGBTQ individuals. An interesting aspect of this finding is that this unexpected relationship prevailed for individuals who are not out and those who have lived in the U.S. for a short duration of time. More research needs to be performed on these unique sub-groups because they are faced with pressing sexuality issues, conflicting South Asian norms and immigrant statuses. Moreover, these sub-groups yielded the significant unexpected findings.

Limitations

There are several limitations that should be considered when reviewing the results of this study. First, the analytical sample size is quite small ($n=63$). The small sample size hampered the performance of some statistical analyses. Statistical analyses with small sample sizes can produce unstable results. In addition, the small sample prevented the use of some statistical tests such as ANOVA due to small comparison groups. However, reliable results applicable only to non-random samples can be obtained with sample sizes of less than thirty (Agresti and Finlay 1986). The sampling method utilized for this study was non-random; therefore these findings cannot be generalized outside the parameters of this study. Another limitation of this study concerning the sample was the

data collection method. Although, data collection via the Internet is a growing methodology there are threats to both external and internal validity that continue to make the method less than desirable and can result in spurious relationships. In addition the sample is comprised primarily of individuals who are acquainted and familiar with the Internet. This may have impacted the results.

Perhaps the biggest limitation of this study lies in the measurement instruments. The *Multi Group Ethnic Identity* scale was designed, as are most survey instruments, with college students in mind. Further, the instrument was not intended to be used with South Asians, as they still are considered a micro-minority in the United States. South Asians may have distinct ethnic identity dimensions that the scale was unable to measure given the nature of the questions. Similarly, the *Internalized Homonegativity Inventory* was designed to be utilized with gay males and is undoubtedly created from a U.S. ethnocentric perspective. The scale ignores the collective nature of the South Asian culture, by neglecting familial and communal aspects that erroneously may be interpreted as internalized homonegativity. Again, the complex nature of ethnic, sexual minority identities may be lost by using these scales. An additional limitation of this study is related to the response categories of some of the sociodemographic control variables. By mistake, I omitted the 16-19 years response on the question assessing length of time out and years lived in the U.S. This should be considered a flaw in the design of the survey.

Conclusion

Beyond the scope of this study and perhaps a potential for future analysis were the comments, reactions and questions that I received from individuals after they completed the survey. I received 12 emails from individuals who completed the survey, most

expressing strong opinions and reactions to various survey questions. One respondent commented directly about the *Multi Group Ethnic Identity* scale stating, “most of your questions are the standard ones that emerge in the context of U.S. racial structures, I would urgently ask you to reconsider how you have set up these questions.” Other respondents found the response categories of sex and sexual orientation to be limiting. For example, one respondent offers this, “sex choices were not very inclusive-would be great to see it as gender (not sex), and would be great to see trans (which can be more than M2F and F2M), intersex, and other at the very least, but ideally a write in box.” These responses point to the need and urgency that these individuals feel regarding the expression of their sexuality that has been rendered invisible for too long. While some of the comments came off as harsh criticisms, they reflect the marginalization that some of the respondents feel regarding their sexual orientation. They want their voices heard and they want an accurate depiction of their experiences. However, data collection via Internet was the only seemingly possible avenue to reach this population. Perhaps, a large, urban city with a high concentration of South Asians would be better suited for a study of this nature.

Although there are some significant limitations to this study, this empirical study did reveal some interesting findings for an invisible population. While it is not my intention to generalize these findings to the larger South Asian LGBTQ community, some inferences can be made from this study. South Asians are by far not a monolithic group and it would be inaccurate to apply these results to the greater South Asian LGBTQ community. However, it can be said that South Asians LGBTQ individuals struggle as they embrace their sexual orientation. Those who are most troubled by

internalized homonegativity are individuals who are not out and individuals who were not born in the U.S. and have not been living in the U.S. for a long period of time. It is perhaps at this stage that individuals are negotiating the impact their ethnic identity has on their sexuality. It can be assumed that at this point one's native culture and the majority culture become blurred. This can be a confusing time and it is not surprising that individuals experience distress. Nevertheless, given the unrelenting support of family and community that is characteristic of the South Asian culture, these individuals arrive at a place where they can take pride in both their ethnic identity and their sexual orientation.

Future Directions

As the South Asian population in the U.S. continues to grow, the numbers of South Asian LGBTQ individuals will undoubtedly increase. Although this study may have offered some insight into the experiences of South Asian LGBTQ individuals, more research is needed. Research involving this population would benefit greatly by the creation and use of measurement scales that are culturally relevant and specific to this group. Barriers as well as risk factors that are unique to South Asian LGBTQ individuals need to be identified and explored. Finally, qualitative research that allows South Asian LGBTQ individuals to use their own voice to describe their experiences and struggles of managing their double and triple minority status in the U.S., as well as some of the positive aspects of their uniquely situated identity is needed.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Notes

One of the most interesting aspects of data collection for this study occurred when I attended a “pot-luck” gathering hosted by the moderators of a list-server for South Asian LGBTQ individuals in Texas. During this gathering, I collected nine surveys from the individuals in attendance. The group was very encouraging and was supportive of my research efforts and goals. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, I will not use direct quotes; instead I will paraphrase the statements I recorded in field notes after leaving the gathering. Several of the attendees commented on the lack of resources for the South Asian LGBTQ community and spoke to the dearth of research that addressed their unique needs. The majority of the individuals cited that until finding the online group, they believed they were the only South Asians who were LGBTQ. Additionally, many of the individuals stated they had never met another South Asian who identified as LGBTQ face to face until they joined the list-server.

Following the dinner, I was able to sit in on a round table discussion of the coming out experiences of the group. This discussion was informal although some members did seem to be taking a leadership role in facilitating the discussion. While the coming out experience is not a direct focus of this study, it is a component of the research question examining the degree of “outness” and its influence on the level of internalized homonegativity within the South Asian LGBTQ community. It was interesting to hear some of the struggles many of these individuals faced as they revealed their sexual

orientation to others. Some of the attendees expressed concern about telling their parents, while others were more concerned about telling their peers. Financial dependence as well as the belief that they would be ostracized from family and friends were the prominent factors preventing the majority of the attendees from coming out and revealing their sexual orientation to others. In fact, financial dependence was so relevant to these individuals that some members encouraged others to stay closeted until they were financially independent from their families.

APPENDIX 2

Multi-Group Ethnic Identity Inventory

Items were reverse coded as necessary. The sub-scales are as followed: Affirmation and Belonging (items 6, 11, 14, 18, and 20); Ethnic Identity Achievement (items 1, 3, 5, 8R, 10R, 12 and 13); and Ethnic Behaviors (item 2 and 16).

1. I have spent time trying to find out more about my own ethnic group, such as its history, traditions and customs.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

2. I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group.

3. I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me.

4. I like meeting and getting to know people from ethnic groups other than my own.

5. I think a lot about how my life will be affected by the ethnic group I belong to.

6. I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to.

7. I sometimes feel it would be better if different ethnic groups didn't try to mix together

8. I am not very clear about the role of my ethnicity in my life.

9. I often spend time with people from ethnic groups other than my own.

10. I really have not spent much time trying to learn more about the culture and history of my ethnic group.

11. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.

12. I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me, in terms of how to relate to my own group and other groups.

13. In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked with other people about my culture.
14. I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group and its accomplishments.
15. I don't try to become friends with people from other ethnic groups.
16. I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs.
17. I am involved in activities with people from other ethnic groups.
18. I feel a strong attachment toward my own ethnic group.
19. I enjoy being around people from ethnic groups other than my own.
20. I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background.

APPENDIX 3

Adapted Internalized Homonegativity Scale

Items were reverse coded as necessary. The sub-scales are as followed Personal Homonegativity (items 5, 3, 17, 20, 13, 18, 16, 7, 15, 23 and 11); Gay Affirmation (items 6R, 9R, 21R, 1R, 22R, 12R and 8R); Morality of Homosexuality (items 19, 16, 4,14 and 2).

For the purpose of this section of the questionnaire, LGBTQ will be used as an inclusive term representing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer. Some items reverse coded as necessary.

1. I believe being LGBT is an important part of me.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

2. I believe it is o.k. for people to have same sex attractions in an emotional way, but it is not o.k. for them to have sex with each other.

3. When I think of my homosexuality, I feel depressed.

4. I believe it is morally wrong for people to have sex with others of the same sex.

5. I feel ashamed of my homosexuality.

6. I am thankful for my sexual orientation.

7. When I think about my attraction to those of the same sex, I feel unhappy.

8. I believe that more LGBT individuals should be shown in TV shows, movies, and commercials.

9. I see my homosexuality as a gift.

10. When people around me talk about homosexuality, I get nervous.
11. I wish I could control my feelings for those of the same sex.
12. In general, I believe that homosexuality is as fulfilling as heterosexuality.
13. I am disturbed when people can tell I am a LGBT individual.
14. In general, I believe that LGBT persons are more immoral than straight persons.
15. Sometimes I get upset when I think about being attracted to those of the same sex.
16. In my opinion homosexuality is harmful to the order of society.
17. Sometimes I feel that I might be better off dead than gay.
18. I sometimes resent my sexual orientation.
19. I believe it is morally wrong for individuals to have sex with those of the same sex.
20. I sometimes feel that my homosexuality is embarrassing.
21. I am proud to be gay.
22. I believe that public schools should teach that homosexuality is normal.
23. I believe it is unfair that I am attracted to those of the same sex.

APPENDIX 4

Sociodemographic Variables

1. Sex

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female to Male
- ☐ Male to Female

2. Age

- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-29
- ☐ 30-34
- ☐ 35-39
- ☐ 40+

3. Sexual Orientation

- ☐ Lesbian
- ☐ Gay
- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Transgender/Transsexual
- ☐ Queer

4. Current relationship status

- ☐ Single
- ☐ Married opposite sex
- ☐ Partnered same sex
- ☐ Divorced

5. Race/Ethnicity

- ☐ Indian
- ☐ Pakistani
- ☐ Sri Lankan
- ☐ Bangladeshi
- ☐ Kashmiri
- ☐ Biracial

6. Religion

- ☐ Hindu
- ☐ Muslim
- ☐ Christian
- ☐ Buddhist
- ☐ Other

7. Do you speak English?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

8. Do you speak a language other than English?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

9. Were you born in the United States?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

10. If not, how long have you lived in the United States?

- ☐ less than a year
- ☐ 1-4 years
- ☐ 5-10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ 20+ years

11. Were either of your parents born in the United States?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

12. Describe your living arrangements.

- ☐ live at home with parents or family
- ☐ live on a college campus
- ☐ live alone
- ☐ live with partner
- ☐ live with roommates

13. Describe your degree of "outness,"

- ☐ closeted
- ☐ out to only family
- ☐ out to only friends
- ☐ out only online
- ☐ out to everyone

14. If out, how long have you been out?

- ☐ less than a year
- ☐ 1-4 years
- ☐ 5-10 years
- ☐ 11-14 years
- ☐ 20+ years

15. Describe your living environment,

- ☐ urban
- ☐ rural
- ☐ suburban

16. Describe your income level

- ☐ under \$25,000
- ☐ \$26,000 to \$49,000
- ☐ \$50,000 to \$74,000
- ☐ \$75,000 or more

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