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The Bisexual Youth of Color Intersecting Identities Development Model: A Contextual Approach to Understanding Multiple Marginalization Experiences

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This article introduces the bisexual youth of color (BYOC) intersecting identities development model. Grounded in literature regarding racial/ethnic, lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, questioning (LGBQQ), gender identity and adolescent identity development, this model assumes an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1989) in exploring the complexity of intersecting identities for bisexual youth of color. This model represents a dynamic conceptualization of the fluidity with which the identities of sexually fluid youth of color may continually evolve in response to changes within the microsystem and macrosystem of their lives. With potential applications for practice, research, and training, the BYOC intersecting identities development model seeks to fundamentally change clinical, empirical and pedagogical conversations about the identity development of bisexual youth of color.

KEYWORDS *bisexual, LGBT, youth, people of color, multicultural, identity development*

This article proposes a model of identity development for bisexual youth of color drawing from the literature on racial/ethnic, lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, questioning (LGBQQ), gender identity and adolescent identity development. There has been a general call to the field to develop

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conceptual models clinicians may use to attend to the intersecting identities clients present within counseling and psychotherapy, particularly those clients who hold historically marginalized identities (Firestein, 2007; Inman, 2008). The response to this call has been slow, however, leaving significant gaps in practice and training with regard to clients whose identities intersect at locations of oppression.

Literature regarding youth of color has sometimes focused exclusively on race, without integrating exploration and discussion of sexual and gender fluidity (Fleming, Catalano, Haggerty, & Abbott, 2010; Tiet, Huizinga, & Byrnes, 2010). Previous literature on LGBQQ youth has included bisexual youth in its title but rarely pays specific attention to the unique stressors bisexual youth may encounter (D'Augelli, 2006; Marshal, Friedman, Stall, & Thompson, 2009). Similarly, scholarship on bisexual youth focuses on issues of sexual orientation and occasionally gender identity, leaving issues of racial/ethnic identity development relatively unaddressed (Entrup & Firestein, 2007; Zhao, Montoro, Igartua, & Thombs, 2010).

The purpose of this article is to expand the body of literature regarding bisexual youth of color, using Feldman and Elliott's (1990) definition of middle and late adolescence (age 15–20 years). In doing so, a review of racial/ethnic identity development, LGBQQ adolescent identity development, bisexual identity development and gender identity development is provided. The article proposes a bisexual youth of color (BYOC) intersecting identities development model (see Figure 1) that assumes an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1989) in exploring the complexity of intersecting identities for bisexual youth of color. This model represents a dynamic conceptualization of the fluidity with which the identities of sexually fluid youth of color may continually evolve in response to changes within the microsystem (e.g., primary social support and youth resilience) and macrosystem (e.g., sociopolitical context) of their lives. Although the model is inclusive of a range of identities, it is intended for clinical use with cases in which bisexual, broader LGBQQ, gender and racial/ethnic minority identity issues are most salient. A case example is provided to illustrate application of the model.

RACIAL/ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

The racial/ethnic identity of bisexual youth of color is rarely explored in counseling and psychological research, which is not surprising as issues of race and ethnicity are often overlooked in research regarding sexual minority youth in general (Berlan, Corliss, Field, Goodman, & Austin, 2010; Corliss et al., 2010). Racial/ethnic identity development models generally share a focus on the ways in which youth begin to understand their status in relation to a particular ethnic group (Holcomb-McCoy, 2005). These models also

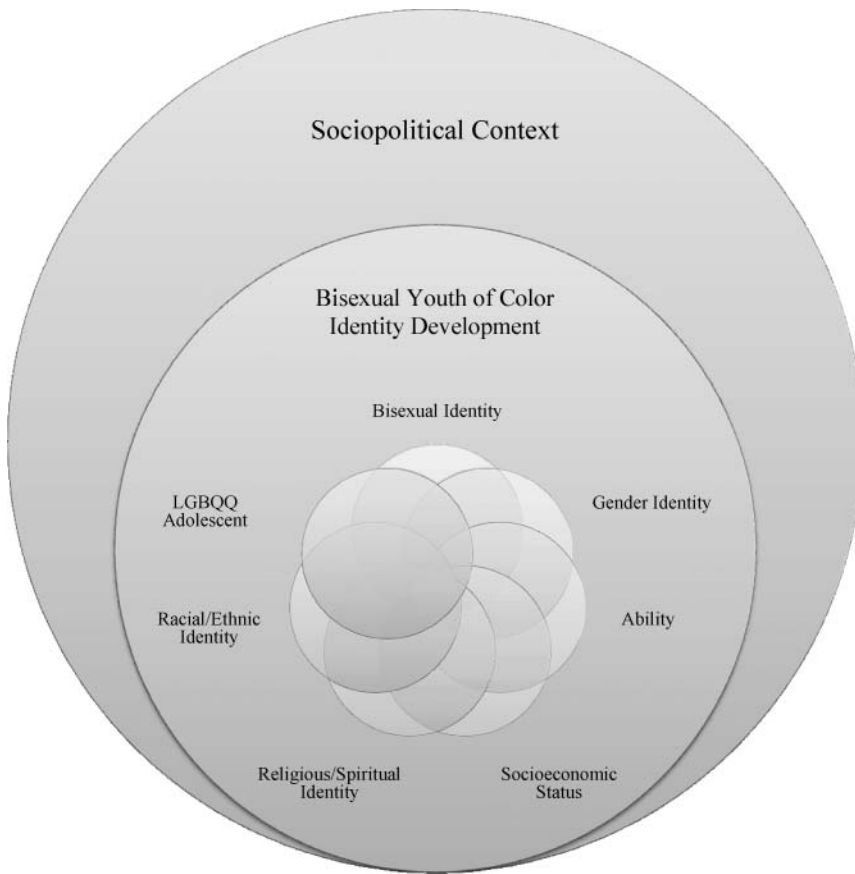


FIGURE 1 The bisexual youth of color intersecting identities development model. LGBQQ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, questioning.

explore the processes through which youth of color understand how their racial and ethnic groups are perceived by others (Phinney, 1993; Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2009).

For instance, Phinney (1993) proposed three stages of ethnic identity development for ethnic minority youth. She based her model on existing models of identity development and racial/ethnic identity development and explored her model through qualitative interviews with 10th graders. In the first stage, unexamined ethnic identity, a youth's ethnic identity is rarely explored as the youth ascribes to majority culture values and attitudes. The second stage—ethnic identity search/moratorium—includes a “growing awareness that not all cultural values of the dominant group are beneficial to ethnic minorities” (p. 69). In the third stage, ethnic identity achievement, youth begin to accept and internalize their ethnicity as an important part of who they are.

Helms' (1990) model of racial identity development centers experiences of racist stereotypes, bias and internalized racism as core components of the model. In this way, the Helms' model acknowledges the lived experiences of people of color as racialized beings. This model identifies five ego statuses (previously termed "stages") of the people of color racial identity development model: conformity, dissonance, immersion, emersion, internalization and integrated awareness. In later writing on the model, Helms (1996) added that these "stages" should not be thought of as linear processes but instead should be viewed as "statuses" that people of color may cycle into and out of based on their racialized experiences. It is important to note that Helms recognized the unique differences between racial and ethnic group experiences. However, Helms also asserted that most people of color share experiences of being treated as non-White individuals in society and therefore share similar coping strategies in common. Therefore, it is important to understand how coping strategies related to racial/ethnic identity development influence the well-being of bisexual youth of color.

Rivas-Drake et al. (2009) used an ecological framework to examine the racial/ethnic identity development of 483 urban sixth graders in New York City. Their findings suggested that the ethnic identity socialization of these youth was positively correlated with that of their parents. In these cases, the youth demonstrated an increase in (1) positive thoughts and feelings about their own racial/ethnic group, (2) increased levels of identification with their own racial/ethnic group (ethnic centrality), and (3) an enhanced understanding of ways in which others might perceive the youth's racial/ethnic group.

Rodríguez, Umana-Taylor, Smith, and Johnson (2009) identified important findings with regard to adolescent racial/ethnic identity development across seven studies. These studies tested hypothetical models regarding the extent to which parental racial/ethnic socialization is associated with youth's academic and personal well-being. The authors found across the studies that racial/ethnic socialization messages focusing on cultural pride and preparing youth of color for the potential of racial/ethnic discrimination resulted in higher levels of self-esteem and racial/ethnic identity development among youth. The authors did note discrepancies across the studies between some of the racial/ethnic groups to which youth of color belonged, suggesting a need for additional scholarship regarding cross-cultural comparisons of adolescent racial/ethnic identity development.

Integrating models by Phinney (1993) and Helms' (1990, 1996) model—in addition to noting recent studies on racial/ethnic identity development—it seems clear that counselors and psychologists working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, and questioning youth should explore ways in which the racial/ethnic identity development of bisexual youth of color may be influenced by (1) the degree to which they experience cultural pride and (2) their perceptions of their own racial/ethnic group. Clinicians must also assess the extent to which youth racial/ethnic identity statuses are related to their

personal and academic achievement. In the following section, we review LGBQQ adolescent identity development in general.

LGBQQ ADOLESCENT IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Available literature regarding adolescents who identify as LGBQQ has typically emphasized potential stressors LGBQQ youth may experience regarding identity acceptance and disclosure (e.g., Hershberger & D'Augelli, 2000; Ritter & Terndrup, 2002). In their review of empirical literature regarding LGBQQ adolescents, Anhalt and Morris (2003) noted these youth may experience victimization related to sexual orientation, negative consequences of coming out to others and exposure to high-risk sexual behaviors.

It is within this sociopolitical context that LGBQQ adolescents must explore their sexual identities, connect with the larger queer community, negotiate dating and sexual relationships, consider coming out to family and friends and cope with social environments that may be unsupportive of their sexual orientations (Hershberger & D'Augelli, 2000). Since the late 1970s, several models of lesbian and gay identity have been proposed (e.g., Cass, 1979, 1983; Coleman, 1981; Troiden, 1989). These early models outlined developmental stages through which LGBQQ individuals are assumed to progress as they explore, accept and disclose their sexual orientations.

A full review of these models is beyond the scope of this article; however, it should be noted that the concept of "sexual fluidity" complicates discussions about LGBQQ adolescent identity development. Savin-Williams (2005) defined *sexual fluidity* as "a flexible identity that affords greater freedom of expression, potential, openness, and a breaking of boundaries" (p. 174). With this particular population, sexual fluidity may simply be a by-product of developmental process as adolescents explore new sexual interests (Petersen, Leffert, & Graham, 1995) with or without choosing to label themselves as LGBQQ (Anhalt & Morris, 2003). Alternatively, sexual fluidity that emerges in adolescence may result in a fully integrated bisexual identity (or other bisexual identity label with modifiers, such as "bi-lesbian" or "bi-queer") that remains stable over time (Rodríguez Rust, 2007).

BISEXUAL, QUEER AND QUESTIONING IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

It was precisely these limitations of the early lesbian and gay identity development stage models that prompted demand for more nuanced models reflecting the inherent complexity of bisexual identity development (Fox, 1995; Morrow, 1989; Paul, 1996; Zinik, 1985). Given the variability in bisexual types (Weinberg, Williams, & Pryor, 1994), bisexual patterns (Rust, 1993) and bisexual histories (Zinik, 1995), 1990s literature on this topic clarified

that bisexual identity development should not be expected to resemble the linear process and fixed outcomes suggested by the lesbian and gay identity development models.

Early models of bisexual identity development (Collins, 2000; Weinberg et al., 1994) continued to conceptualize identity in terms of stages but discarded the notion that bisexual identity development ends in universal fixed outcomes. Weinberg and colleagues (1994) developed the following set of stages to describe bisexual identity development: initial confusion, finding and applying the label, settling into the identity and continued uncertainty. Collins (2000) compared processes of identity development for bisexual and biracial individuals, suggesting parallels between the two courses of identity development in the following stage model: Phase I—Questioning/Confusion, Phase II—Refusal/Suppression, Phase III—Infusion/Exploration, and Phase IV—Resolution/Acceptance.

Subsequent shifts in the literature have reflected new trends among youth who identify as bisexual (or some other form of sexually fluid) and eschew traditional sexual identity labels (e.g., Entrup & Firestein, 2007; Russell, Clark, & Clary, 2009; Savin-Williams, 2005). Indeed, Entrup and Firestein (2007) have dubbed today's youth, ages 15 to 35, "The Next Generation" with a "sexuality that is characterized by fluidity, ambisexuality, a reluctance to label their sexuality" (p. 89). Similarly, Savin-Williams (2005) described the recent trend away from sexual identity labels among sexually fluid youth, "These young people are repudiating the appropriateness and artificiality of dichotomous definitions of sexual identity as they challenge cultural definitions of gay lives" (p. 209).

GENDER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Although recent scholarship regarding sexual minority youth has begun to emphasize the significance of sexual fluidity, theorists have suggested that gender identity development has a complex interaction with socialization processes as well (Singh, Boyd, & Whitman, 2010). To date, there has been no specific exploration of the gender identity development of bisexual youth in general or bisexual youth of color specifically. However, there has been a general exploration of gender identity development and related socialization processes.

Szkrybalo and Ruble (1999) suggested three stages of gender identity development for children and discussed gender and sex as interrelated constructs. In the first stage, between age 9 months and 3 years, children develop gender identity, where they are able to label the sex of others and their own sex. Children then achieve the second stage, gender stability, by age 4 years, where they realize their sex remains stable as they grow older. In the third stage, from age 4 to 7 years, children develop gender constancy—or the

realization that their sex identity does not change as their selection of clothing, activities, hairstyles or personality traits evolves over time.

Although Szkrybalo and Ruble (1999) do not specifically integrate the influences of sexism into their theory of early gender identity development, it is important to recognize that significant differences exist in the ways adolescent girls and boys are socialized based on their assigned gender. For instance, Leapner and Brown (2008) explored how sexism specifically influenced the lives of 600 adolescent girls. Their findings suggested the majority of participants experienced high rates of discrimination based on their gender in the classroom and with regard to athletics. More than 90% of the sample reported sexual harassment by peers.

Adolescent boys do not seem to escape the costs of sexism in their own identity development either. Chu (2008) encouraged researchers and theorists of boys' identity development to take a relational approach to understanding their gender socialization and identity processes. Chu suggested there is a cost of the masculine privilege adolescent boys hold, resulting in negative consequences for psychological well-being, social interactions and experiences in relationships.

Priess, Lindberg, and Hyde (2009) conducted a longitudinal study of 410 adolescent girls and boys regarding "gender intensification" (pressure to adopt socialized gender roles) and its relationship to mental health. Their findings indicated girls demonstrated higher levels of femininity at ages 11, 13 and 15 than boys in the study. However, diverging from previous research, the girls and boys did not report differences in masculinity. In addition, levels of masculinity predicted fewer depressive symptoms when the youth in this study experienced moderate levels of stress. The authors indicated a need for researchers to revisit conceptualizations of gender identity development within a more modern framework.

A MODEL OF IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT FOR BISEXUAL YOUTH OF COLOR

Each of the above models describing racial/ethnic identity, LGBQQ adolescent identity, bisexual identity and gender identity development has contributed significantly to our understanding of the developmental processes for adolescents. However, their singular focus on one aspect of identity has rendered application of these models to youth with "multiple minority" identities challenging. For example, racial/ethnic minority identity models may not capture the full experience of bisexual youth of color. The same criticism may be levied against the LGBQQ adolescent identity models, in their failure to account for cultural factors that may affect development. In addition, LGBQQ models sometimes focus more on the experiences of lesbian and gay youth, ignoring variations in sexual and gender fluidity.

Psychologists seeking to understand bisexual youth of color and other individuals who are marginalized on multiple fronts must often resort to additively applying the above models in an effort to understand the complexity of intersecting identities. Although resourceful, this approach cannot account for the exponential or interactive effect of one aspect of minority identity exacerbating another. Indeed Jamil, Harper, Fernandez, and the Adolescent Trials Network for HIV/AIDS Interventions (2009) noted that many racial/ethnic minority identity models promote immersion in communities of color (Cross, 1978; Helms, 1990) at a time when LGBQQ youth of color may feel uncomfortable in communities of color that retain heterosexual and homophobic attitudes (Chung & Katayama, 1998; Parks, 2001). In addition, LGBQQ youth of color may encounter racism from White lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) counterparts, which prohibits full access to the queer community support suggested by the LGBQQ adolescent identity models (Harper, Jernewall, & Zea, 2004; Martinez & Sullivan, 1998).

The field of psychology is beginning to recognize the importance of exploring intersections of identities like race and sexual orientation (e.g., Jamil et al., 2009). Consistent with this trend, this article proposes a model of identity development for bisexual youth of color. The bisexual youth of color intersecting identities development model, hereafter known as the BYOC intersecting identities development model, includes aspects of the four identity models discussed above (racial/ethnic, LGBQQ adolescent, bisexual and gender identities) but differs from its predecessors by directly addressing intersections of these identities within the sociopolitical context. The proposed model's emphasis on intersecting identities therefore encourages a more holistic view of identity development among bisexual youth of color, as compared to previous models that attended only to singular aspects of identity.

Although the model is inclusive of a full range of identities, it is intended for clinical use in cases where bisexual, broader LGBQQ, gender and racial/ethnic minority identity issues are most salient, as empirical research literature (e.g., Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2004, 2008) has identified specific stressors associated with the intersection of sexual, gender and racial/ethnic minority identities. In addition, bisexual people of color may experience unique stressors, such as bi-phobia and limited support, that tend to isolate them further from racial/ethnic, heterosexual and LGBT communities (Collins, 2000, 2007; Ferrer & Gómez, 2007; Scott, 2007).

Description of the BYOC Intersecting Identities Development Model

Specifically, the BYOC intersecting identities development model posits that the resiliency of bisexual adolescents of color affects and is affected by these intersections of identities. For example, exposure to multiple forms of marginalization often places individuals at risk for mental health issues

(Greene, 1997; Meyer, 2003). When this occurs, resiliency of bisexual adolescents of color is affected by intersections of identities. If, however, individuals learn to adapt and overcome different types of discrimination, they emerge strengthened by adversity and better prepared for the next set of challenges. Indeed, Meyer (2003) emphasized the importance of “stress ameliorating factors” (p. 677) in addressing minority stress. In the best of circumstances, experiences with marginalization bring not only stress but potential resources like group solidarity and cohesiveness that mitigate adverse mental health effects of minority stress (Miller & Major, 2000; Postmes & Branscombe, 2002). When this occurs, resilience of bisexual adolescents affects intersections of identities.

The BYOC intersecting identities development model is depicted graphically in Figure 1. The illustration of this model includes two large concentric circles that encompass a cluster of seven smaller circles. The largest concentric circle represents the sociopolitical context (macrosystem) in which the bisexual youth of color lives. The smaller concentric circle symbolizes the bisexual youth of color identity development (microsystem). The cluster of seven smaller circles signifies distinct, but overlapping, identity development processes (racial/ethnic, LGBQQ adolescent, bisexual, gender identity development, ability, socioeconomic and religious/spiritual). The areas of overlap represent intersections of these different aspects of identity. The conceptualization of a single racial/ethnic identity development process was intended to highlight themes common to many people of color groups (e.g., Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1998; Helms, 1990; Phinney, 1993) rather than minimizing differences between groups. As mentioned above, the model is inclusive of a range of identities but is intended for clinical use in cases where bisexual, broader LGBQQ, gender and racial/ethnic identity issues are most salient. The case example provided below therefore focuses on the model's application to bisexual, broader LGBQQ, gender and racial/ethnic minority identity issues.

SOCIOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

Consistent with the authors' commitment to social justice, this model adopts a community psychology perspective by making explicit the sociopolitical factors (macrosystem) that affect the mental health of bisexual youth of color in the largest concentric circle, sociopolitical context. Whereas previous identity models (e.g., Helms, 1990; Phinney, 1993; Szkrybalo & Ruble, 1999; Troiden, 1989; Weinberg et al., 1994) acknowledged social environment factors only from the perspective of individual thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, the BYOC intersecting identities development model explicitly incorporates elements of Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological systems theory like the macrosystem (laws, customs, attitudes and values of one's community) as well as the microsystem (people and circumstances to which individual is

exposed on a daily basis). Although similar to the ecological systems theory in its acknowledgement of macrosystem and microsystem, the BYOC intersecting identities development model differs in its emphasis on intersections of identity within the microsystem.

BISEXUAL YOUTH OF COLOR IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Within the sociopolitical context (macrosystem), the bisexual youth of color identity development (microsystem) smaller concentric circle includes the various identity development processes the individual may experience (i.e., racial/ethnic, LGBQQ adolescent, bisexual, gender identity development, ability, socioeconomic and religious/spiritual). The BYOC intersecting identities development model posits these aspects of identity may interact throughout the youth's development. This is represented graphically in Figure 1 as a cluster of seven smaller overlapping circles depicting racial/ethnic, LGBQQ adolescent, bisexual, gender identity development, ability, socioeconomic and religious/spiritual identity development.

The conceptualization of LGBQQ adolescent identity development and bisexual identity development as distinct identity development processes within this model may initially seem confusing, as LGBQQ identity development should by definition include bisexual identity development as well. The inclusion of bisexual identity development as a construct separate from LGBQQ identity development within this model, however, was intentional. As noted above, in theory and in practice 'GBQQ' often really includes only 'LG.' The supposed inclusion of 'B' and even 'QQ' in the 'LGBQQ' acronym often represents well-intentioned, but unfulfilled, efforts at including issues that are never really addressed in some settings. In addition, bisexual youth may experience unique stressors as compared to their lesbian and gay counterparts, such as complex identity development processes (Fox, 1995; Morrow, 1989; Paul, 1996; Zinik, 1985), "double discrimination" from lesbian/gay and heterosexual communities (Ochs, 1996, p. 217), and significantly less social support and resources than lesbian and gay peers (Mulick & Wright, 2002; Ochs, 1996; Weiss, 2003). For these reasons, the BYOC intersecting identities development model explicitly identifies bisexual identity development as a distinct and significant process. The model also includes LGBQQ identity development to represent the acculturation youth often experience to the general nonheteronormative community.

Although Figure 1 is by necessity a static illustration, the model itself is intended to be viewed as a dynamic conceptualization in which (1) components of the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem (i.e., racial/ethnic identity development, LGBQQ adolescent identity development, bisexual identity development and gender identity development) and (2) areas of overlap, which represent intersections of identities within

the bisexual youth of color identity microsystem, may increase or decrease in size depending on the individual's sociopolitical context (macrosystem) and personal resilience (found within the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem).

For example, many youth of color are raised within families that share the youth's racial and ethnic identity. If family support is strong enough to offset racial and ethnic discrimination encountered at the sociopolitical level, then healthy racial and ethnic identities are more likely to develop. This trajectory is even more probable if youth resilience is also present within the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem.

However, families of color may or may not have experience with or knowledge of concepts of sexual and gender fluidity. Limited understanding of these concepts may lead to limited support for the sexual and gender minority identity development of youth. In the worst cases, outright rejection of sexual and gender minority identities can significantly impair development of LGBQQ adolescent, bisexual and gender minority identity development.

In this case, the graphic representation of the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem would include a larger circle for racial/ethnic identity development, meaning this area has grown in response to support within the microsystem (e.g., parental assistance, youth resilience) sufficient to offset racial and ethnic discrimination at the macrosystem (sociopolitical context) level. Smaller, overlapping circles for LGBQQ adolescent identity development, bisexual identity development and gender identity development within the same graphic representation would suggest these areas are limited in their development due to limited support within the microsystem and macrosystem levels.

To continue with this example, bisexual youth of color who subsequently manage to befriend other sexual minority peers during adolescence could then experience growth in LGBQQ adolescent identity development within the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem. The presence of youth resilience within the microsystem would support this growth and be more likely to compensate for any heterosexism within the sociopolitical context at the macrosystem level. A graphic representation of the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem at this phase would include two larger circles for racial/ethnic identity development and LGBQQ adolescent identity development, indicating both aspects of identity have experienced growth.

In cases where such youth receive support for sexual minority identity as a general concept but do not receive specific support (or worse, discrimination and rejection) for bisexual and any gender non-confirming identities, then the graphic representation would still include two smaller circles for bisexual identity development and gender identity development. This illustration would indicate minimal development

of bisexual and gender identities, due to limited support for these aspects of identity within the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem.

Using the same example, bisexual youth of color who subsequently locate support for their bisexual identities (perhaps through a peer, teacher or parent educated about sexual fluidity) could then continue with bisexual identity development within the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem. Again, the presence of youth resilience would support this process and likely offset bi-phobia encountered within the sociopolitical context at the macrosystem level. A graphic representation of the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem at this phase would include three enlarged circles for racial/ethnic identity development, LGBQQ identity development and bisexual identity development.

If a bisexual youth of color in this situation felt that hir¹ gender identity was not congruent with hir sex assigned at birth, then additional support would be needed for healthy gender identity development. If the gender nonconfirming bisexual youth of color in this case were to receive such support from peers or adults in hir life, then growth of gender identity development within the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem is more likely to occur. The presence of youth resilience would increase the likelihood of this trajectory, as it could compensate for transphobia encountered at the sociopolitical context of the macrosystem level. A graphic representation of the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem at this phase would include a fourth enlarged circle for gender identity development along with enlarged circles for racial/ethnic identity development, LGBQQ identity development, and bisexual identity development. It should be noted that bisexual and other sexually fluid individuals may or may not identify as gender nonconforming, as gender identity is a construct often related to but distinct from sexual orientation. Although beyond the scope of this article, changes in identity development regarding ability, socioeconomic status and religious/spiritual affiliation may also support or exacerbate the development of other intersecting aspects of identity among bisexual youth of color.

Thus far, the examples used to illustrate application of the BYOC intersecting identities development model have focused on differences in development among racial/ethnic, LGBQQ, bisexual and gender identity development within the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem with the acknowledgment that other aspects of identity like ability, socioeconomic status and religious/spiritual identity may influence development. This model is also intended to portray a dynamic conceptualization in which areas of overlap among racial/ethnic, LGBQQ, bisexual and gender identities may increase or decrease in size depending on the individual's sociopolitical context (macrosystem) and personal resilience (found within the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem). These areas of overlap

are intended to illustrate intersections of identities within the bisexual youth of color identity microsystem.

For example, larger areas of overlap between racial and ethnic identity development, LGBQQ adolescent identity development and bisexual identity development might occur in situations where bisexual youth of color are raised in cultural traditions that are more permissive of sexual fluidity (e.g., two-spirit tradition in some Native cultures). Similarly, areas of overlap between racial and ethnic identity development and gender identity development may also emerge for youth exposed to cultural traditions that tolerate increased gender fluidity. Increased intersection of identities may also occur between LGBQQ adolescent identity development and bisexual identity development in cases where bisexual youth of color discover LGBTQQ communities that are inclusive and affirmative of bisexual individuals. Although racial/ethnic, LGBQQ adolescent, bisexual and gender identity development processes within the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem can and should be viewed as distinct, increased intersections among these aspects of identity may reduce internal conflict, support youth resilience and therefore help bisexual youth of color better negotiate challenges within the sociopolitical context of the macrosystem level.

It should be noted that the BYOC intersecting identities development model is intended to permit fluidity within the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem (i.e., aspects of identity development, primary social support system, youth resilience) as well as acknowledge shifts in the sociopolitical context level of the macrosystem. In creating a model of intersecting identities for bisexual youth of color, it seemed especially important to acknowledge the fluidity inherent in a bisexual identification process that may develop, and redevelop, over time. It should also be noted that the examples provided above depict only one possible trajectory for the development of intersecting identities among bisexual youth of color. Given the diversity among bisexual youth of color, their microsystems and their macrosystems, it would be reasonable to assume that their development might follow any number of trajectories in a variety of sequences.

Clinical Application of the BYOC Intersecting Identities Development Model

A clinical case example is provided to illustrate application of the BYOC intersecting identities development model. Because the model is intended for use with cases in which bisexual, broader LGBQQ adolescent, gender and racial/ethnic identity issues are most salient, this fictional case example focuses primarily on these issues. The significance of other identity issues regarding ability, socioeconomic status and religious/spiritual affiliation is

acknowledged. Use of this model in clinical settings should include attention to these and other aspects of identity in the broader context of counseling.

CASE VIGNETTE

Lupe is a 19-year-old, single, bilingual, second-generation Mexican American who identifies as a bisexual. She was assigned the female sex at birth and uses female pronouns but identifies as “stud” or “butch.” She is a sophomore in college, majoring in chemistry. Originally from a rural, agricultural town, she now lives on campus and is active in student organizations affiliated with her college and the campus Multicultural Center. Lupe is the first in her family to attend college, but she helps her parents manage the family’s restaurant when she returns home during winter and summer breaks. Raised Catholic, she now describes herself as “spiritual” but no longer attends church. She denied any disabilities at the present time.

Lupe’s family discovered her same-sex attraction when they found her kissing a female friend in high school. Since then her father has struggled to accept his eldest daughter might be *lesbiana*, while her mother avoids eye contact and refuses to speak to any of Lupe’s female friends, fearing they might be girlfriends. In fact, Lupe has had romantic and sexual relationships with mostly women but some men as well since then. When asked about her sexual identity, however, she rolls her eyes and sighs, “I’m bi, I guess . . . I like being with girls or guys . . . but I don’t dare tell my parents. The last thing I need is them getting their hopes up and thinking I’m going to get married in the church and produce grandkids, like they always wanted.”

Despite having a growing network of LGBT and heterosexual friends, Lupe reports reluctance to share her bisexual identity with any of them. Biting her lip, she explains, “I hear how all my lesbian friends talk about bisexuals . . . like we’re all ‘sluts’ or just ‘going through a phase.’ What would they think of me if they found out? And I would never tell my straight guy friends . . . they’re cool and will play ball with me, but if they thought there was a chance for them, they’d probably ask for a three-way or something. And with me being butch and all, that’d probably confuse everyone even more.”

Lupe presents in counseling with moderate symptoms of depression and anxiety regarding recent changes in her social support network. She reports her girlfriend ended their one-year relationship a few months ago. Since then, Lupe has “hooked up” occasionally with “a couple” of women and one male friend. She has also been experiencing increased tension in her friendships. Lupe lost contact with her girlfriend’s friends following the “break up,” her roommate has been asking questions about why Lupe is avoiding their male friend (with whom Lupe recently had sex), and she is currently “not talking to” two good friends following a heated debate about state and federal immigration policies in class.

CASE CONCEPTUALIZATION

The BYOC intersecting identities development model will be used to formulate a case conceptualization of Lupe.

Sociopolitical context. The sociopolitical context, or macrosystem, in which Lupe lives includes a national debate regarding immigration policies and federal laws that are not fully inclusive of LGBT rights. As a bisexual youth of color, Lupe's mental health is likely affected by laws, customs, attitudes and values that treat her differently on the basis of her sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, race/ethnicity or other aspects of her identity. In particular, her identity as a Mexican American youth may place her at risk for stereotyping, prejudice and implicit bias (American Psychological Association, 2010) by anti-immigration individuals or groups who assume all Latinas/os are undocumented. As noted in the case vignette, the tension surrounding the national debate on immigration has already affected some of Lupe's friendships, following a heated classroom debate about the role of immigrants in the economy. In addition, Lupe's experiences growing up in a rural town with limited LGBT resources may have increased feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Bisexual youth of color identity development. Throughout her adolescence, Lupe's overall development may be influenced by the interaction of racial/ethnic, LGBQQ adolescent, bisexual, gender identity, ability, socioeconomic status, religious/spiritual and other identities. This discussion focuses on ways in which racial/ethnic, LGBQQ adolescent, bisexual and gender identities interact within the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem, because the model is intended for cases in which these issues are most salient.

Racial/ethnic identity development. An intake evaluation with Lupe revealed early awareness of her racial/ethnic identity development. Growing in a rural, agricultural town where Latinas/os and Anglos interacted only in occupational settings, Lupe relied upon her family and community for support when Anglo classmates used racial slurs to describe her and her monolingual parents in elementary school. Although challenging, Lupe described these experiences as significant in solidifying her sense of herself as a Mexican American individual with a strong sense of cultural identity. She credited her family and community for helping her maintain cultural traditions like making tamales at Christmas and visiting the cemetery in observance of *Día de Los Muertos*.

The BYOC intersecting identities development model can therefore be used to understand Lupe's racial/ethnic identity development as a bisexual youth of color within the sociopolitical context of a rural, agricultural area with few LGBT resources and a history of tension between Latinas/os and Anglos. With family and community support, her racial/ethnic identity development flourished in spite of the sociopolitical context within the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem.

LGBQQ identity development. Although aware of her interest in females and males at an early age, Lupe reported trying to “push away” these thoughts, focus on “boy crushes” in junior high school and trade pants for dresses along with her female friends. Her sense of isolation was acute at this age. She explained, “I didn’t even know what ‘gay’ or ‘stud’ or ‘butch’ meant at the time, never even heard of anyone like me . . . never saw anyone like me.” Confused by these feelings, Lupe had the vague sense that, “There are certain things you just don’t talk about in the family . . . Mexican girls are supposed to grow up, get married, have kids, and take care of the family.” When she did finally act on her strong attraction to a female best friend in high school, Lupe recalled feeling tremendously conflicted about “being a total embarrassment to the family . . . the whole town could find out.” When her parents did finally discover Lupe’s relationship with her best friend, their disappointment and anger about her presumed *lesbiana* identity challenged her development as a nonheterosexual adolescent.

In regards to LGBQQ identity development, the BYOC intersecting identities development model can be employed to understand Lupe’s experiences as a nonheterosexual adolescent coming of age in a Mexican American family in a rural town. Again, the influence of the sociopolitical context is apparent. Growing up in rural area with limited LGBT resources exacerbated her sense of isolation and hindered LGBQQ identity development. The model also emphasizes that Lupe’s development as a nonheterosexual youth must be viewed in the context of her racial/ethnic identity development. In Lupe’s case, the cultural heritage that protected her from racial slurs and other forms of discrimination in childhood initially seemed to detract from her LGBQQ identity development within the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem.

Bisexual identity development. Lupe described her process of coming to terms with her bisexual identity as even more isolating, “With all my gay friends, ‘finding themselves’ made them part of something bigger, something special; there were others like them . . . with me, being ‘true’ to me, being honest about my feelings . . . somehow that suddenly made me ‘a slut,’ ‘into threesomes.’ They say, ‘bisexuality doesn’t even exist.’ How come it’s okay to talk about me like that, but they get so mad if straight people talk about them that way?” As mentioned in the case vignette above, Lupe is reluctant to reveal her bisexual identity to family and friends. She fears additional questioning of her nonheterosexual identity by her parents and outright rejection from her lesbian and gay friends.

The BYOC intersecting identities development model can again be used to understand Lupe’s bisexual identity development within the sociopolitical context. In addition to living in a heterosexist society, Lupe is exposed to stereotyping, prejudice and bias regarding her bisexual identity from lesbian/gay and heterosexual communities. The sociopolitical context clearly

inhibits healthy development of her bisexual identity. The model honors Lupe's experience of marginalization within lesbian/gay communities by conceptualizing her bisexual identity development as overlapping, but distinct, from her development as a nonheterosexual adolescent. Within the model, her bisexual identity development must be understood in the context of her racial/ethnic and LGBQQ adolescent identity development processes within the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem. Her strong cultural affiliation with her family promotes racial/ethnic identity development while currently inhibiting LGBQQ adolescent and bisexual identity development. Lupe's growing sense of LGBQQ adolescent identity prompts her to conceal her bisexual identity to ensure a strong connection with the larger LGBT community.

Gender identity development. Even before her parents discovered her relationship with a high-school girlfriend, Lupe recalled "getting hassled" by her mother about her manner of dress and involvement in athletic activities. She recounted, rolling her eyes, "It was always like . . . 'Oh *mija*, why don't you ever try to look *nice*? You know, wear dresses and a little lipstick, like the other girls.'" Lupe confided that her identification as a "stud" and her "butch" gender presentation also complicated efforts to 'come out' to lesbian and gay peers, "I tried telling my ex-girlfriend I'd slept with guys before, that every once in a while I like it with guys . . . and she just started laughing hysterically, couldn't stop . . . basically she just didn't believe me . . . and I never brought it up again."

Even though Lupe does not report struggling with gender identity issues, her concerns about gender expression and its impact on other aspects of her identity can still be addressed by the BYOC intersecting identities development model. When viewed within the sociopolitical context, Lupe's nontraditional gender presentation exposes her to stereotyping, prejudice and bias from others who expect a more traditional gender expression from a Latina individual assigned the female sex at birth. The development of her gender identity/expression may also be understood in terms of her racial/ethnic, LGBQQ adolescent and bisexual identity development within the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem. Given Lupe's report, it would seem her strong racial/ethnic identity is currently in conflict with the development of LGBQQ and bisexual identities and a nontraditional gender expression. Although her LGBQQ adolescent identity development is generally compatible with her "butch" gender presentation, Lupe expressed concerns about her nontraditional gender expression interfering with her bisexual identity development.

Ability, socioeconomic status, religious/spiritual affiliation and other aspects of identity. Although ability, socioeconomic, religious/spiritual and other identities are beyond the scope of this case example, the vignette suggests that Lupe's socioeconomic status (e.g., first-generation college student) and religious/spiritual affiliation (e.g., Catholic family) may be relevant

to case conceptualization and treatment planning. Although the BYOC intersecting identities development model is intended for use with cases in which bisexual, broader LGBQQ, gender and racial/ethnic minority identity issues are most salient, the model acknowledges the potential influence of other aspects of identity within the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem. Use of this model in clinical settings should include attention to these and other aspects of identity in the broader context of counseling.

TREATMENT PLANNING

As illustrated above, the BYOC intersecting identities development model acknowledges the influence of the sociopolitical context (macrosystem) on the bisexual youth of color identity development (microsystem), which includes the intersection of racial/ethnic, LGBQQ adolescent, bisexual, gender identity development, ability, socioeconomic and religious/spiritual identities. In practice, this model could be used to conceptualize the case of Lupe and develop appropriate clinical interventions. Although a variety of theoretical orientations could be paired with the case conceptualization generated by the BYOC intersecting identities development model, it is clear that a systemic, multiculturally competent and bi-affirmative approach is needed in working with Lupe. Systemic interventions that honor her intersecting identities may include psychoeducation about the potential impact of the sociopolitical context (including inclusive bibliotherapy assignments, as appropriate), exploration of her identities and their intersections and referrals to community resources that honor multiple aspects of her identity as a bisexual youth of color (e.g., culturally diverse support group for LGBT youth, culturally diverse community conference for butches, bi-affirmative youth action groups, etc.). It is acknowledged that availability of community resources may depend upon one's geographic location.

CONCLUSION

The BYOC intersecting identities development model was created in response to traditional identity models regarding racial/ethnic identity, LGBQQ adolescent identity, bisexual identity and gender identity that have tended to focus exclusively on singular aspects of identity development. Acknowledging the complexity of intersecting identities for bisexual youth of color, the BYOC intersecting identities development model represents a dynamic conceptualization of identity development influenced at the microsystem level (by primary support systems and youth resilience within the bisexual

youth of color identity development) and the macrosystem level (sociopolitical context). Within the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem, it is expected that various aspects of identity may develop at different rates. This model also asserts that overlaps, or intersections, of development between and among identities are expected and even beneficial to bisexual youth of color. Being able to understand different aspects of their identities, in relation to one another, may help bisexual youth of color resolve any internal conflicts, strengthen resilience, seek support from others and eventually negotiate challenges associated with the sociopolitical context.

Although theoretical in nature, the BYOC intersecting identities development model lends itself to clinical application, experimental research and enhancement of graduate training programs. Within clinical settings, therapists may use this model to help clients understand the complexity of intersecting identities, set appropriate developmental goals and intervene at the microsystem level (through an affirmative approach to individual psychotherapy) and the macrosystem level (allowing clients to empower themselves through advocacy, when appropriate).

Though conceptually based, it is hoped this introduction of the BYOC intersecting identities development model will encourage future research on intersections of identities among bisexual youth of color. We reiterate the need to understand the specific ways in which identities intersect for groups marginalized in multiple ways. The BYOC intersecting identities development model is intended to generate research questions and provide conceptual literature in which future research might be grounded. For instance, the model may be used conceptually to guide a qualitative examination of the ways in which identities intersect in the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem among different racial/ethnic groups. Quantitative research might test the relationships at intersections of identities within the bisexual youth of color identity development microsystem for salience among bisexual youth of color. Other research might use the BYOC intersecting identities development model to examine constructs like resilience, academic achievement and social support among bisexual youth of color. Mixed method studies could illuminate the efficacy of the model in practitioner training, supervision and practice.

Finally, the BYOC intersecting identities development model is intended to enhance existing diversity curricula in counseling and psychology graduate programs. This model intentionally emphasizes intersecting identities, includes concepts of youth resilience, focuses on fluidity and assumes an ecological perspective. In short, the BYOC intersecting identities development model seeks to fundamentally change clinical, empirical and pedagogical conversations about bisexual youth of color and the complex ways in which they may develop, and redevelop, over time.

NOTE

1. This article used Bornstein's (1998) version of gender-neutral pronouns (i.e., *bir* instead of her or him) to refer to gender nonconforming individuals.

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