Understanding Identity Making in the Context of Sociopolitical Involvement among Asian and Pacific Islander American Lesbian and Bisexual Women

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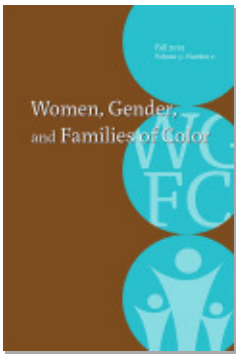

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Understanding Identity Making in the Context of Sociopolitical Involvement among Asian and Pacific Islander American Lesbian and Bisexual Women

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Abstract

This study examines how Asian and Pacific Islander American (API) lesbians and bisexual women form identities within the context of occupying both ethnic and sexual minority social statuses. To do so, we examine the correlates of sociopolitical involvement within minority communities among a sample of 175 API lesbian and bisexual women. The findings suggest that feeling connected to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities plays the most influential role in their sociopolitical involvement within both LGBT and people of color (POC) communities, while comfort in racial communities plays a negative role on LGBT sociopolitical involvement but has no impact on POC sociopolitical involvement. We then discuss implications for identity formation.

Introduction

Many scholars have engaged with social identity theory in order to understand how individuals understand themselves within a group context. This theory holds that individuals, by process of interaction within a collective identity, shape how they understand themselves (Tajfel and Turner 1986). However, Roccas and Brewer (2002) have explained that individuals occupy more than one position; consequently, individuals operate in the midst of competing social identities. Roccas and Brewer call this phenomenon "social identity complexity," in which an individual, by process of dominance and compartmentalization between competing social loca-

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tions, defines her identity per social situation. While we affirm the notion that individuals occupy different social statuses, we question the extent to which behavior functions as a marker of identity, especially in the context of competing identities. That is, in the midst of competing identities, how do individuals not only reconcile their competing identities but also how do these individuals behave as a result of forming these identities? Thus, in order to understand how social identity complexity theory engages the idea of action, identity construction, and behavior, we conducted a study focusing on Asian and Pacific Islander American (API) lesbian and bisexual women and their sociopolitical involvement. This study assesses how these women negotiate their identities in both API and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities by examining these individuals' social ties and connectedness to their communities.

To apply social identity complexity theory to API lesbian and bisexual women, we examine the impact that feelings of community support and connectedness have on one's sociopolitical involvement as a case example. Community connectedness provides emotional and social support (Bourhis et al. 2009). Community connectedness is even more vital for those experiencing multiple forms of oppression (Rust 2000; Reynolds and Pope 1991). As a group who often experiences a variety of oppressions—gender, sexual, racial/ethnic, and, often, class and immigrant status—API lesbian and bisexual women will be used to examine the impact that community connectedness and identity play on sociopolitical involvement.

Feelings of belonging and acceptance are an important aspect of one's identity formation and are directly linked to levels of sociopolitical involvement (Flores et al. 2009; Heath and Mulligan 2008). This feeling of belonging is heavily influenced by one's social location and role within their social group (Yuval-Davis 2006). Exclusion, oppression, and isolation increase the importance of belonging to social groups (Gorman-Murray et al. 2008). This is especially the case for those who experience multiple forms of minority-based oppression, such as those within LGBT communities of color, as they often experience both homophobia within their racial/ethnic communities and racism within their LGBT communities (Lehavor et al. 2009; Coloma 2004; Park 2004).

Literature Review

Social Identity Complexity

In order to examine the intersection of being part of the LGBT community and being API and the processes associated with identity development,

we contextualize social identity complexity as a theoretical extension of social identity theory. Social identity complexity builds upon Henri Tajfel and John Turner's (1986) idea of social identity. This theory holds that individuals develop their identities through a process of "social categorization, social identity, social comparison, and psychological distinctiveness" (Tajfel and Turner 1986, 69). Social categorization refers to a process by which an individual group differentiates itself from other groups. Social comparison addresses how the group then compares itself with others to form its own identities. Finally, psychological distinctiveness addresses a sense of an internal/psychological alignment with a particular group association.

However, social identity theory holds that an individual identifies with one dominant identity, and that identity is influential in the development of her self-concept. To complicate social identity theory, Roccas and Brewer (2002) offer their notion of social identity complexity in which identity is formed through an intersection of different communities as opposed to one dominant identity. In order to form identities in the midst of two or more communities, Roccas and Brewer outline how identities are formed if an individual occupies two or more communities. If the communities do not overlap, Roccas and Brewer argue that an individual's identity develops through the process of intersection, dominance, compartmentalization, and merger (90–91). In other words, an individual can 1) define her identity based on an intersection of the two communities, thus creating a separate identity apart from the two initial communities—intersection; 2) choose a dominant identity and identify with one particular group over others—dominance; 3) maintain different identities and selectively choose to identify with one group or another based on the situation—compartmentalization; or 4) identify with multiple communities so that the individual expands her in-group to be inclusive of multiple communities.

Though initially applied to the identity formation of Asian Australians, this framework has not yet been expanded to Asian and Pacific Islander Americans, let alone, sexual minority API women (Brewer et al. 2013) and their sociopolitical behavior. To do this, we first describe Asian and Pacific Islander Americans and their involvement within feminist rights movements. This will help illustrate the complex relationship between APIs and racial/ethnic and feminist civil rights and the complexity of political identity formation. We will then proceed to describe APIs' current involvement with LGBT rights and the nuances of API identity within the context of contemporary LGBT communities.

Intersectionality

As explained by social identity complexity theory, individuals form identities in the context of multiple groups. This framework, although useful for explaining how individuals create identities, can be expanded by examining how these identities are shaped by the social structure. Using black women as her example, sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (2000) develops her notion of intersectionality, where individuals develop a particular identity as a result of occupying two or more statuses. Yet, where Collins departs from Roccas and Brewer's (2002) understanding is that she connects the development of multiple identities and group participation to the social structure. Collins explains, "United States Black women encounter a distinctive set of social practices that accompany our particular history within a unique matrix of domination characterized by intersecting oppressions" (2000, 23). Here, Collins explains the significance of the group identity "Black women" as a distinct group that has a unique experience and is characterized by a particular "matrix of domination." For Collins, this matrix of domination entails being both black, a racial minority, and a woman, a gendered minority. However, Collins continues, "As historical conditions change, so do the links among the types of experiences Black women will have and any ensuing group consciousness concerning those experiences" (25). Here, Collins explicitly links the experiences of being a black woman to historical conditions. Thus, it is not simply that black women encounter an experience of being a triple minority but that this status is reinforced by the structural conditions imposed by history. Using this framework, we attempt to understand the relationship that API lesbian and bisexual women have with the social structure, starting with the historical relationship between their group and the United States women's rights movement, then moving on to explore the relationship between API women and the nature of their ties with the LGBT community.

APIs, American Feminism, and Social Movements

To contextualize how API lesbian and bisexual women form and politically act upon their identities, we provide a historical context that situates APIs within, and their relationship to, the women's rights movement. After noticing how patriarchy functioned in the context of API struggles and organizing political movements with their male counterparts, API women turned to the women's rights movement to address their concerns with sexism. For example, Wei (1993) understands API women's experiences to be "parallel"

(73) to the feminist movement. Nonetheless, API women found that their culturally specific values of family and community were disregarded by white feminist values of independence, participation in the public sphere, and the rejection of women's role in the domestic sphere (ibid., 74). Feeling as if their values were overshadowed and ignored within mainstream feminist movements, many API women collectively organized and engaged in separate consciousness-raising activities, such as the involvement with separate Marxist, Leninist, and Maoist "rap sessions" and other activities that separated API women from their white counterparts (ibid.).

The schism between API women and women who participated in the mainstream women's rights movement illustrates an important juncture for LGBT rights and API political involvement. While this brief discussion reported largely on the experiences of heterosexual API women within the women's rights movement, it is important to recognize that the feminist movement in the United States was largely rooted in white, middle-class underpinnings. The lesbian and gay rights movement is a direct offshoot of this movement in that it shares the feminist movement's white, middle-class framing. Thus, it is safe to assume that API lesbian and bisexual women will navigate the LGBT community as racial/ethnic "outsiders." API lesbian and bisexual women occupy a space that is positioned within, and outside, the LGBT community.

Interacting with a White LGBT Community

After situating how API feminism was at odds with the white-framed women's rights and lesbian and gay rights movements, we now examine how people of color (POC) experience discrimination within the mainstream LGBT community. Research on homophobia within communities of color often highlights the negative impact homophobia can have not only on identity formation for LGBT racial and ethnic minorities but also on their sense of self-worth (Crichlow 2004; Griffin 2001; Ward 2005). A variety of factors such as family of origin, religious beliefs, and cultural traditions may impact one's choice not only to "come out" to one's families (Chan 1989; Espiritu 2010; Uba 1994) but also to accept one's own sexual orientation as a part of one's identity (Loiacano 1989). For example, Connie Chan's (1989) study, which examines sexuality among APIs, found that only 26 percent had "come out" to their parents, compared to 77 percent who had "come out" to other family members and almost 100 percent of the sample who had "come out" to friends. Chan quotes one respondent as saying, "I wish I could tell my parents—they are the only ones who do not know about my gay identity,

but I am sure they would reject me" (19). Those participants who found it harder to come out in API communities felt this was because homosexuality was viewed as taboo. Operario, Han, and Choi (2008) report that their API gay male sample felt as if they have consistently experienced sexual stigma and discrimination within their racial/ethnic communities. In fact, Chan discovered that the men in her sample experienced more sexual discrimination than race-based discrimination. In her study of API women, Lora Foo (2002) found that 87 percent of lesbians reported being verbally assaulted because they were thought to be lesbians, while over 50 percent reported being threatened with physical violence, and 15 percent reported physical injury. Research argues that the stigmas associated with homosexuality are due to the belief that homosexuality is a "White, western phenomenon" (Chan 1989, 19). Additionally, in some Asian cultures, sexuality is not a means by which to identify oneself (Asthana and Oostvogels 2001; Laurent 2005). Since for many Asians, in both Asia and the United States, sexuality is not perceived to be an identity in the same way in which Western culture views it, this could likely help explain Singh, Chung, and Dean's (2007) finding that API lesbian and bisexual women were less likely to experience internalized homophobia than were their non-API counterparts.

Racial and ethnic discrimination within the mainstream, predominately white, LGBT community is widespread (Han 2007; Loiacano 1989; Nemoto et al. 2003). Studies examining the experiences of APIs within the LGBT community have found that most have felt they were overlooked within the community or have experienced overt racial discrimination (Chan 1989; Dang and Hu 2004). Dang and Hu (2004) found that over 82 percent of their API respondents had experienced racism from white LGBT people. Unlike the API lesbian and bisexual women who felt more discriminated against because they were Asian, the men in Chan's (1989) sample experienced more sexual discrimination within Asian communities than racial discrimination within the LGBT community. Overall, however, Dang and Hu found that most of the people within their sample (53 percent) reported positive experiences within the mainstream LGBT community.

LGBT POC are less likely to be involved in the LGBT community (Loiacano 1989). Research on the racial discrimination experienced by gay and bisexual men of color in white LGBT communities notes the negative ramifications that this discrimination has on their self-esteem and their perception of self-worth (Flores et al. 2009). Lehavor et al. (2009) argued that the connections lesbian and bisexual women feel to the LGBT community were important for these women and provided community support. Due to the

discrimination they experienced, LGBT APIs had to create safe spaces within which they were able to build political and cultural identities that facilitated the integration of their queer, ethnic, and gendered selves. Safe spaces, such as these, protected LGBT APIs in their struggle against racism, sexism, and homophobia emanating from society, their communities, and their families (Aguirre and Lio 2008). Understanding the way in which LGBT POC perceive of and experience racial discrimination may shed light on their level of sociopolitical involvement within both LGBT and POC communities. One way we operationalize sociopolitical behavior is through the measure of "civic engagement."

Civic Engagement

Since we discussed how the women's rights movement as a political movement that involves people feeling included in their respective communities, one way to understand how API lesbian and bisexual women feel bonded to their community is by understanding their sociopolitical involvement or civic engagement within their communities. Although most research that examines civic engagement highlights an individual's participation in political life, civic engagement also consists of political participation, activism, and volunteering (Galston and Lopez 2006; Putnam 1995, 2005; Skocpol and Fiorina 1999). Civic engagement incorporates two interconnected components: sociopolitical involvement and community engagement.

Community engagement consists of service, activism, and volunteerism for the benefit of one's community (Ball 2005). Sociopolitical involvement involves social activism and volunteerism, as well as participating in social and cultural events. Sociopolitical involvement also contains elements of community engagement and is an important part of civic engagement, as it often signifies one's potential for civic and community activism (Harris and Battle 2013; Putnam 2000). Research on sociopolitical involvement emphasizes the importance of community connectedness and feelings of belonging (Heath and Mulligan 2008). Consequently, feelings of belonging within a community may hold important implications for one's level of sociopolitical involvement.

Research maintains that civic engagement and community involvement are particularly important to those facing multiple forms of oppression (Balsam et al. 2011; Poynter and Washington 2005). Previous research has examined the correlates of civic engagement, such as race, age, gender, class, education, family, geographic location, and immigrant status (Putnam 2000; Sander and Putnam 2006; Verba et al. 1995). Research argues that out of all

racial/ethnic groups, blacks and whites in the United States have the highest levels of civic engagement, with blacks reporting slightly higher levels of civic engagement than whites with the exception of voting (Finlay et al. 2011; Verba et al. 1995). Compared to blacks and whites, APIs are significantly less likely not only to vote but also to be civically engaged (Xu 2002). Much of this decreased civic engagement has to do with the fact that APIs are much more likely to be recent immigrants and, as such, are less likely to feel connected to the political and social life of their communities and sometimes are not legally able to vote (Jang 2009; Xu 2002). Even when taking class and education into account, APIs are still less likely to be civically engaged than other racial ethnic groups, including Latinos, another group that has high immigrant and first-generation populations (Jang 2009; Xu 2002). Length of residence and being born in the United States appear to be significant predictors of overall political participation among APIs (Leighley and Vedlitz 1999; Wong 2011).

There appears to be little difference in political participation and voting between API women and men (Lien 2011). Research maintains that levels of civic engagement greatly increase with education (Brand 2010; Campbell 2009; Hoene 2011; Jang 2009). The higher the educational attainment of APIs, the more likely they are to have a party affiliation and vote (Hoene 2011). Although a higher income increases one's chances of registering to vote among APIs, it does not necessarily increase their likelihood to vote (Jang 2009).

Age cohort appears to be the largest determinant for civic engagement among Americans overall, with older Americans participating in more civic activities than younger Americans (Putnam 2000; Sander and Putnam 2006). Among APIs, age does appear to have a significant impact on voting registration rates; however, as with income and education, it does not greatly impact voter turn-out rates. Even though political participation and voter turn-out rates remain traditionally low for APIs, they do have a strong history of community engagement and activism (Aguierre and Lio 2008). For example, "[T]hey have organized worker cooperatives, mobilized community support, and led worker struggles" (ibid., 6).

As the above research argues, feelings of belonging play a central role in one's level of sociopolitical involvement. Research does not sufficiently assess the influence that feelings of belonging have on the sociopolitical involvement of LGBT racial/ethnic minorities. To investigate intragroup marginalization and its effect on feelings of belonging and sociopolitical involvement within both LGBT and POC communities, this paper will examine sociopolitical

involvement among API lesbian and bisexual women. API lesbian and bisexual women provide the framework through which to examine intragroup marginalization and the impact it has on feelings of belonging within minority communities, as they often experience multiple forms of oppression. Thus, we pose the following hypothesis: API lesbian and bisexual women will feel a greater sense of belonging and will consequently exhibit higher rates of sociopolitical behavior within their own communities of color than within the LGBT community.

Methodology

The data used in this paper come from a 2010 survey administered by the Social Justice Sexuality Project. The purpose of this project was to collect data on the experiences of LGBT POC concerning the following five themes: identity (both racial and sexual), physical/mental health, family, religion/spirituality, and sociopolitical involvement. Data were collected from over 5,000 respondents throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. The subset of 175 API lesbian and bisexual women was analyzed for this paper. Since the analysis focuses on the experiences of API lesbian and bisexual women, we have focused on the data from the API lesbian and bisexual women in our sample.

The API lesbian and bisexual women within this sample were between 18 and 78 years of age, with a mean age of 30. This sample of women is relatively young; a little more than half reported being between the ages of 25 and 49 (54.2 percent), while another third were young adults between 18 and 24 (36.5 percent). A little less than one-third of the respondents identified as single (32.3 percent), and about one-fifth are parents (20.7 percent). Most respondents live in urban areas (72.1 percent), and 6 percent live in the southern part of the United States. The average respondent identified as being politically liberal.

Respondents were also fairly educated; a majority of the sample had at least some college education or higher (82.1 percent). Further, while the average respondents made $20,000–$29,999 per year, just over one-fifth made between $30,000 and $49,999 a year (21.8 percent), and over a third made $50,000 a year or greater (37.9 percent). A majority of the respondents in this sample were United States citizens (88.7 percent) or naturalized citizens (5.9 percent).

Finally, although there were some heterosexually-identified women who completed the survey (19.4 percent), they were removed from this sample, as

the purpose was to examine the feelings of sexual-minority women. Although heterosexuals were removed from the sample, as the literature review notes, there is a notable amount of research that posits that APIs view homosexuality as a behavior and not an identity (Asthana and Oostvogels 2001; Laurent 2005). As such, it is likely that many individuals who completed the survey, regardless of their sexual preference, would have identified as heterosexual, although, by Western standards, they would be viewed as homosexual or bisexual. Nonetheless, to reduce confusion, those who identified as heterosexual were removed from this sample.

Measures

To measure belonging, this paper focuses on the correlates of sociopolitical involvement among a sample of API lesbian and bisexual women within both LBGT and POC organizations and events. Sociopolitical involvement was measured by the frequency with which respondents participated in political and sociocultural events, read LGBT or POC newspapers and magazines, used LGBT- or POC-focused social networking sites, received services from LGBT or POC organizations (such as counseling), and/or donated money to LGBT or POC organizations. This survey looked at questions relevant to the LGBT community and not necessarily the people of color community.

The first dependent variable, LGBT sociopolitical involvement, was constructed from six survey items that measured the frequency of participation in LGBT groups, organizations, and activities (alpha = .744). The dependent variable, POC sociopolitical involvement, was similarly constructed from the six survey items that measured the frequency of participation in POC groups, organizations, and activities (alpha = .821).

Research shows that sexual identity has a positive impact on civic engagement among lesbians and gays (Flores et al. 2009; Han 2007; Heath and Mulligan 2008; Lehavor et al. 2009). Research further maintains that racial identity impacts the civic engagement of people of color (Verba et al. 1995). Research overlooks the importance of identity, more specifically, sexual and racial identity on the community engagement and, in particular, the sociopolitical involvement of API lesbian and bisexual women.

Additionally, seven independent variables that measure community and identity were included in this analysis. Five of the independent variables measured community connectedness, levels of comfort and support, and "outness." Two independent variables measured the importance of sexual and racial identity. "Connected to LGBT Community" is created from three combined survey items that measured how connected respondents felt to the LGBT community, other LGBT people, and the problems facing the

Table 1. LGBT and POC Sociopolitical Involvement Among Asian Women N= 174

	Range	Mean	Std. Dev.	Alpha
Dependent Variables				
LGBT Sociopolitical Involvement	1–6	2.948	0.997	.744
POC Sociopolitical Involvement	1–6	2.500	1.134	.821
Independent Variables				
Community				
Connected to LGB Community	1–6	4.071	1.213	.722
Outness	1–5	3.680	1.129	.895
Family Support	1–6	4.20	1.661	
Comfort in LGBT Communities	1–6	4.823	1.597	
Comfort in Racial Communities	1–6	3.839	1.546	
Identity				
Sexual Identity Importance	1–6	5.02	1.230	
Racial Identity Importance	1–6	4.26	1.619	

LGBT community as a whole. The second independent variable, "Outness," consists of six items that examine how "out" (or open about one's sexuality) respondents were with their family, friends, religious community, co-workers, neighbors, and within their online communities. The third independent variable, "Family Support," measured the level of support respondents felt from their families. "Comfort in LGBT Communities" and "Comfort in Racial Communities" are independent variables that measure the frequency with which respondents felt comfortable in the LGBT community regardless of their race and comfortable in their racial/ethnic communities regardless of their sexual identity.

The final two independent variables measured identity. "Sexual Identity Importance" measured how important the respondent's sexual orientation is to her identity. "Racial Identity Importance" measured how important the respondent's race/ethnicity is to her identity.

Demographic variables were also examined. These include relationship status; whether they are a parent; age; whether they are foreign born; if they are a resident of an urban, suburban, or rural area; if they are a resident of the southern part of the United States; political views; education; and income.

Models

To measure the relationship between community, identity, and various demographic variables—such as income, age, political views, education, and residential status—on the sociopolitical involvement of API lesbian

and bisexual women, four multivariate regression analyses were performed. The first examined community connectedness on a level of LGBT sociopolitical involvement. The second model examined community connectedness and identity on a level of LGBT sociopolitical involvement. The third model examined community connectedness on a level of POC sociopolitical involvement. Finally, the fourth model examined community connectedness as well as identity on level of POC sociopolitical involvement.

Results

In the first two models, LGBT sociopolitical involvement was the dependent variable (see Models I and II). Women who felt more connected to the LGBT community had higher levels of LGBT sociopolitical involvement. Yet, outness and the level of comfort these women had with the LGBT community did not impact their level of LGBT sociopolitical involvement. Family support also had no impact on LGBT sociopolitical involvement. However, comfort in racial communities negatively impacts these women's LGBT sociopolitical involvement. All of these relationships held when the importance of identity measures were introduced into the models (see Model II) and when several demographic variables were included (see footnote on Table 2).

Table 2. Unstandardized Regression Coefficients for the LGBT and POC Sociopolitical Involvement Among Asian Women (betas in parentheses)

	Dependent Variables LGBT Sociopolitical Involvement N=174		Dependent Variables POC Sociopolitical Involvement N=175	
	Model I	Model II[a]	Model III	Model IV[a]
Independent Variables				
Community				
Connected to LGBT Community	.134*** (.137)	.280*** (.341)	.258*** (.276)	.259*** (.277)
Outness	.032 (.036)	.024 (.027)	-.073 (-.072)	-.063 (-.063)
Family Support	-.018 (-.030)	-.014 (-.023)	-.059 (-.086)	-.060 (-.088)
Comfort in LGBT Communities	.025 (.040)	.017 (.027)	-.055 (-.078)	-.054 (-.076)
Comfort in Racial Communities	-.179** (-.278)	-.182** (-.283)	-.103 (-.142)	-.105 (-.144)
Identity				
Sexual Identity Importance		-.052 (-.064)		-.024 (-.026)
Racial Identity Importance		-.038 (-.062)		.021 (.030)
Constant	2.455***	2.834***	2.606***	2.598***
Adjusted R^2	.170	.170	.116	.106

† p≤.10 *p≤.05 **p≤.01 ***p≤.001

a. The following demographic variables were included: single, has ever parented, age, foreign born, big city resident, south resident, political views, education, and income. However, none were significant and therefore did not impact the above results.

When POC sociopolitical involvement was the dependent variable (Models III and IV), similar results were produced. This could be given that the women in the sample represent participation in both LGBT communities as well as POC communities. Therefore, as with LGBT sociopolitical involvement, when examining POC sociopolitical involvement for these women, connection to the LGBT community had a positive impact; outness, family support, and comfort in the LGBT community had no impact (see Model III). Interestingly, comfort in racial communities had a negative impact on their LGBT sociopolitical involvement (see Models I and II), but it had no impact on their POC sociopolitical involvement (see Models III and IV). As with LGBT sociopolitical involvement described in Model II, relationships held with the addition of the identity variables, as well as when several demographic variables were included (see footnote on Table 2) in Model IV.

Although comfort in LGBT communities was not a significant predictor of LGBT or POC sociopolitical involvement (see Models I through IV), comfort in racial communities negatively impacted LGBT sociopolitical involvement (see Models I and II), but not POC sociopolitical involvement (see Models III and IV). Similarly, the importance of sexual and racial identity was not a significant predictor of LGBT sociopolitical involvement or POC sociopolitical involvement.

Discussion

The findings of this study support previous research that claims sociopolitical involvement is determined by one's feeling of connectedness to one's community (Flores et al. 2009; Heath and Mulligan 2008). Findings, however, contradict the claim that income, education, age, and immigrant status play a role in this sociopolitical involvement (Putnam 2000; Sander and Putnam 2006; Verba et al. 1995). These findings may result from our analysis of sociopolitical involvement, whereas the other studies examined civic engagement. In addition, whereas previous research examined the experiences of Americans in general, this paper is focused on API lesbian and bisexual women. Regardless, this study highlights the need for more research in this area.

Although our findings that connectedness to the LGBT community influenced LGBT sociopolitical involvement are not surprising, it is somewhat surprising that it also influences POC sociopolitical involvement within this sample of women. It is possible that the support and feelings of acceptance that API lesbian and bisexual women experience within the LGBT community positively influences their self-concept and, thus, their level of connectedness to POC communities. Unexpectedly, comfort in racial communities had

a negative impact on the LGBT sociopolitical involvement of these women but no impact on their POC involvement. It appears that, if they do not feel comfortable in their racial communities, they will be less likely to be involved in the LGBT community. Thus, we are able to accept the hypothesis that API lesbian and bisexual women feel more comfortable dealing with communities of color as opposed to LGBT communities.

If there was high family support and high comfort in ethnic community (indicating an identification with one's ethnic background), political involvement diminished both in LGBT and people of color communities. This reinforces findings that demonstrate low sociopolitical involvement based on high ethnic ties (Green et al. 2013). Likewise, this could show how, for those who are tied to one's own ethnic background, it would be especially difficult to see one's self in the context of a pan-identity (an identity that encompasses different identities, for example, being Vietnamese American instead of Asian American).

On the other hand, increased "outness" meant a lower identification and involvement with POC communities and a higher involvement in the LGBT community. In addition, an increased importance of sexual identity meant a lower participation with POC communities. This means that a dominance effect of identity occurs because these women choose between their ethnic identities and their sexual identities.

This study's implications are interesting to note, as feeling connected to the LGBT community is the most important predictor for involvement in both LGBT and POC communities for the women in our sample. Importantly, comfort in racial communities has a negative impact on their LGBT involvement. As this study has shown, the potential for discrimination these women may experience within the LGBT community has great implications on their lack of participation in social events and issues for not only the LGBT community but for communities of color as well.

The primary strengths of this study include the geographic representation and diversity of the sample. The study's primary limitation is the sample population. As these women were recruited at both LGBT and POC events, it is likely that these women are not truly representative of API. Therefore, arguably, this particular sample may be more likely to participate in sociocultural activities and events, or they may believe that this participation is vital to their identity development, as opposed to the women who do not attend these events. In addition, these women have higher incomes, are younger, and are more educated than perhaps what would be found in the general population of API women.

The primary finding of this study underscores that the most important variable for sociopolitical involvement is feeling accepted by the LGBT community. Future research should explore whether feelings of belonging within POC communities are as important as feelings of belonging within LGBT communities. Additionally, future research should study the influence of community connectedness on volunteerism within both LGBT and POC communities. Finally, more research is needed to examine sociopolitical involvement among API gay and bisexual men to see the role of gender as it relates to the findings presented here.

Conclusion

Using sociopolitical indicators as a marker of identity, our results found that the API women in our sample value their connection to their ethnic communities at the expense of the American LGBT community. Drawing on the literature, we then see how API lesbians and bisexual women create their identities. The results appear to illustrate a trade-off between the identities of being an ethnic minority or being LGBT. In terms of social complexity theory, this means that a dominance effect occurs as these women reconcile their ethnic background with their participation in the LGBT community. In other words, one identity "dominated" the other three identities as indicated by relationships between perceived connectedness to a particular community and behavior. Given how API lesbian and bisexual women reconcile their identities, this then means that there could be added psychological stress on these women to engage in such "reconciliation" processes.

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