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Negotiating Multiple Marginalizations: Experiences of South Asian LGBQ Individuals

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Drawing from minority stress (Meyer, 2003) and feminist multicultural (Brown, 1994) theories, the present study investigated the additive and interactive relations between 2 types of external minority stress (heterosexist discrimination and racist events) and 4 internal stress processes related to identifying as a South Asian American lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer (LGBQ) person (internalized heterosexism, acculturation, enculturation, and outness as LGBQ) with psychological distress. With 142 participants, Pearson's correlations, multiple regression, and simultaneous multiple moderation analyses were conducted. Experiences of heterosexist discrimination, racist events, and internalized heterosexism were correlated positively with psychological distress and enculturation was correlated negatively. In a test of the additive model, heterosexist discrimination, racist events, and internalized heterosexism accounted for significant and unique variance in psychological distress, but outness, acculturation, and enculturation did not. To test the interactive model, the simultaneous moderating roles of the internal stress processes were examined in the links between the external minority stressors to psychological distress. Only outness as LGBQ emerged as a moderator. The link between racist events and psychological distress was exacerbated in instances of higher outness, such that respondents with high racist events and high outness reported the highest levels of psychological distress. Clinical implications of these findings are discussed and future research directions focused on the needs of South Asian American LGBQ people are suggested.

Keywords: South Asian, psychological distress, LGBQ, acculturation, enculturation

Research over the past decade has uncovered significant relations between minority stressors (i.e., racism toward people of color and/or heterosexism experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer [LGBQ] people) and psychological distress (Meyer, 2003). Specifically, findings suggest that multiple minority stressors may contribute to greater psychological distress for groups with multiple marginalized identities, such as LGBQ people of color. However, compared with literature regarding solely people of color, or solely LGBQ people, there is a dearth of research addressing LGBQ individuals of color, very little regarding Asian American LGBQ individuals, and nearly no literature addressing South Asian American LGBQ individuals (Huang et al., 2010; Szymanski & Sung, 2010). This paucity of research outlining the impact of multiple minority stressors on this unique population is particularly alarming, given that the South Asian population is one of the fastest growing in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Although the minority stress–psychological distress link is increasingly well-established in the literature for LGBQ people of

color, scholars have called for work that explores the unique aspects of specific subpopulations (Chung & Szymanski, 2006). In addition, positive psychology scholars have called for literature on variables that might promote resiliency for individuals experiencing minority stress (Bowleg, Huang, Brooks, Black, & Burkholder, 2003). For South Asian LGBQ individuals these variables may include levels of acculturation, enculturation, and outness. Research regarding potentially intervening roles of acculturative processes and outness for immigrant populations in North America is in its infancy (Ratti, Bakeman, & Peterson, 2000). As such the present study is the first of its kind to quantitatively examine the applicability of the minority stress framework with South Asian LGBQ individuals and also the potentially moderating roles of acculturation, enculturation, and outness.

South Asian LGBQ Individuals

Asian American immigrants are the fastest growing minority population in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Upon closer examination, South Asian individuals comprise one of the largest Asian immigrant subgroups. The term “South Asian” refers to a diverse group of individuals who consider their ethnic origins to be from the countries of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bhutan. Religions, first language, cultural practices, and social class further enrich the diversity of this group (Choudhury et al., 2009). Even though South Asian communities are diverse and have distinct immigration histories, they share common cultural values such as collectivism, familial piety, and emotional self-control (Durvasula, & Mylvaganam, 1994; Inman,

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Ladany, Constantine, & Morano, 2001; Panganamala & Plummer, 1998).

In the past decade there has been increasing momentum in civil rights movements for South Asian LGBTQ communities (Tremblay, Patternote, & Johnson, 2011)—marked by the increased social activism for LGBTQ rights and the first pride parades in 2010—leading to sentiments that the South Asian LGBTQ movement is headed toward establishing a voice and presence in the South Asian diaspora. Despite these advances in rights of South Asian LGBTQ individuals, the experience of marginalization and oppression by this community remains largely ignored. Furthermore, the influence of social changes occurring in native countries of South Asian individuals living in the United States is neglected and understudied.

Although there has been limited research that examines the experiences of South Asian individuals in the United States (Inman et al., 2001), more often than not, this population is studied under the Asian American umbrella, which focuses primarily on Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Japanese individuals (Uba, 2003). Generalizing these results to South Asians is discouraged, as South Asian culture does not share the Confucian and Buddhist philosophies prevalent in East Asian cultures (Uba, 2003). Furthermore, although experiences of Asian American LGBTQ individuals have been studied, there exists no published literature on the specific experiences of South Asian LGBTQ individuals, despite the multiple marginalizations this population faces both from within the South Asian community and dominant U.S. culture. Subsequently, the unique mental health needs of this population are often overlooked or ignored in psychological literature.

Minority Stress Among South Asian LGBTQ Individuals

An empirically supported way of understanding the experiences of South Asian American LGBTQ individuals, who often encounter multiple forms of marginalization (e.g., racism and heterosexism), may be from a minority stress theory perspective (Meyer, 2003). Minority stress results from “stressful stimuli such as prejudice, discrimination, and attendant hostility from the social environment” on the basis of one’s social standing (Moritsugu & Sue, 1983, p. 164). Although numerous studies have documented how stress related to marginalized statuses has an adverse affect on one’s psychological well-being (Diplacido, 1998; Landrine, Klonoff, Gibbs, Manning, & Lund, 1995; Szymanski & Gupta, 2009a; Szymanski & Gupta, 2009b), it is important to understand and distinguish how the intersectionality of identities influences well-being.

Minority stress theory can be further examined within the context of external and internal stressors (Meyer, 1995; Meyer, 2003). External stressors are experiences of implicit or explicit discrimination based on one’s minority statuses (e.g., heterosexist discrimination and racist events; Szymanski & Sung, 2010), whereas internal stressors include internalized heterosexism, concealment of sexual identity (or degree of outness), perceptions of stigma, and emotional inhibition (Hatzenbuehler, 2009; Meyer, 1995; Meyer, 2003). With regards to the Asian American LGBTQ population, it is likely that the psychological distress experienced from both external stressors (e.g., heterosexist discrimination, racist events) may be exacerbated or mitigated due to other identity

processes (e.g., internalized heterosexism, acculturation, enculturation, outness). Unfortunately, only three known studies (Szymanski & Gupta, 2009b; Szymanski & Sung, 2010; Yoshikawa, Wilson, Chae, & Cheng, 2004) look at Asian American LGBTQ experiences of multiple oppression and psychological health. Szymanski and Gupta (2009b) examined the relationships between external and internal multiple oppressions of Asian American LGBTQ persons and psychological distress. Psychological distress was positively correlated with both external (e.g., heterosexist discrimination and racist events) and internal oppression (e.g., internalized heterosexism), indicating that greater external and internal oppression is related to greater psychological distress. In addition, racist events and internalized heterosexism were the only variables to uniquely predict psychological distress. Racist events as a predictor to psychological distress is suggested to be an important factor due to Asian American LGBTQ person’s experience of racism from both the dominant White heterosexual and predominantly White LGBTQ communities whereas internalized heterosexism is suggested to be an important indicator of Asian Americans’ exposure to cultural heterosexism.

Despite these findings, it could be argued that the minority stress model does not completely address the unique stressors faced by South Asian LGBTQ individuals. Szymanski and Gupta (2009a) suggest that Feminist Multicultural Theory (Brown, 1994) be employed when understanding the impact of systemic oppression on the well-being of marginalized individuals. Feminist multicultural theory suggests that there are four perspectives of understanding the influence of multiple oppressions on minority individuals: primary oppression perspective (an individual with multiple minority statuses will be most impacted by one form of oppression), additive perspective (each oppression faced by a marginalized individual will unite to further negatively impact psychological well-being), interactionist perspective (one mode of oppression might exacerbate the effect of other experiences of oppression), and, lastly, intersectionality perspective (the combination of various forms of oppression might lead to further psychological distress and poor mental health outcomes; Moradi & Subich, 2003; Szymanski & Gupta, 2009b; Szymanski, Kashubeck-West, & Meyer, 2008). The present study explores the additive and interactionist perspectives as they pertain to the marginalization and minority stress South Asian LGBTQ individuals face. These two perspectives are chosen as they complement the minority stress model and add depth to the understanding of unique marginalization faced by this population. Furthermore, no extant research has examined the impact of racism and heterosexism concomitantly (namely additive and interactionist perspectives) for South Asian populations, thus making this study more timely and pertinent.

Forms of oppression (e.g., heterosexist discrimination, racist events, internalized heterosexism) are systematically embedded in society (Tappan, 2006). LGBTQ people of color often have unique experiences of marginalization that are shaped by their racial and sexual oppression. Recent research has also suggested that race/ethnicity and sexual orientation are both intersecting and distinct identities that exert unique influence on an individual’s psychological well-being (Parks et al., 2004; Szymanski & Gupta, 2009a; Szymanski & Gupta, 2009b). It is important to consider the effects of the dominant culture (e.g., racism, sexism, heterosexism) but also the influence of the minority group’s unique culture (e.g., acculturation, enculturation, norms around “coming out”) when

trying to understand the oppression faced by LGBQ individuals of color (Greene, 1994). Thus, race/ethnicity and sexual orientation are both shaped by the dominant culture, are largely influenced within the minority culture and uniquely contribute to the individual's understanding of discrimination and the formation of internalized oppression.

Recent research examining Asian American LGBQ multiple minority stressors in relation to psychological distress found that heterosexist events, racist events, and internalized heterosexism were each positively correlated with psychological distress (Szymanski & Sung, 2010; Yoshikawa et al., 2004). It is important to note that both studies looked at Asian American LGBQ individuals as a homogenous group and did not take into consideration the vast cultural differences within the various subgroups. Yoshikawa, Wilson, Chae, and Cheng (2004) also looked at the mental health of Asian American LGBQ persons. This study found racist events to uniquely predict depression in Asian gay men; yet, heterosexist discrimination was not found to predict depression. Such a finding suggests that for individuals with multiple marginalized identities, the weight of various oppressions may affect psychological distress in different ways. Unfortunately, no known quantitative study has assessed these experiences of multiple oppressions for South Asian LGBQ people. Moreover, limited research has begun to address potential variables that may intervene in the minority stress–psychological distress link.

The Interactionist Perspective: Potential Moderators of the Minority Stress–Psychological Distress Link

Internalized Heterosexism

Internalized heterosexism (IH) refers to the experience of marginalization resulting from adopting the negative messages and attitudes about sexual minorities, LGBQ relationships, and queer identities that are prevalent in society (Meyer, 2003; Szymanski et al., 2008). Feminist and Minority stress theories also suggest that it is the adverse and disempowering cultural attitudes toward homosexuality that give rise to this concept within LGBQ individuals and then results in poorer mental health outcomes (Brown, 1994; Meyer, 2003). Although internalized IH can be present at any stage of an individual's sexual identity, it is usually more salient during the acknowledgment and acceptance stages of the individual's sexual orientation (Cass, 1979).

Numerous studies have looked at the effect of IH on the well-being of LGBQ individuals of color, particularly as they relate to depression and psychological well-being (Frock, 1999; Wagner, Brondolo, & Rabkin, 1997; Zuckerman, 1998; Szymanski, 2005; Szymanski et al., 2001) and found significant positive correlations between psychological distress and IH. Research has also examined the interaction of IH and psychological well-being in racial minority LGBQ individuals and found similar results. For example, Stokes and Peterson (1998) found that IH was correlated negatively with self-esteem in African American men. IH has also been linked to coming out; when compared with their White counterparts, African American men reported higher levels of IH and more discomfort with others knowing about their sexual identity (Rosario et al., 2004). Unfortunately, research regarding IH with South Asian samples is scarce. Ratti, Bakemen, and

Peterson (2000) found that, similar to their non-South Asian counterparts, IH in South Asian Canadian men was positively correlated to high-risk sexual behavior. This study also found that South Asian Canadian men harbored high levels of IH and the authors suggest that this could be due to the fact that South Asian gay men not only receive negative messages about their sexuality from the majority culture but also from their own native cultures.

Acculturation and Enculturation

In the context of minority stress theory, psychological distress can be exacerbated or attenuated through acculturation and enculturation. For Asian American individuals, acculturation can be defined as “the extent to which these individuals have adopted the dominant cultural norms of the United States,” and enculturation is defined as “the degree to which they have retained the norms of their heritage cultures” (Kim, 2009, p. 99). It is important to equally consider the impact of acculturation as well as enculturation for the formation of the personal identity of Asian Americans. Although enculturation equally focuses on the process of learning and retaining Asian cultural norms, acculturation addresses one's adaptation to American dominant cultural norms (Zhang & Moradi, 2012). In balancing between adopting certain aspects of each culture in different situations, individuals' degree of acculturation and enculturation may determine how they form their identity (e.g., racial/ethnic identity, sexual identity).

Some studies support the possibility that individuals can maintain a positive relationship with both cultures and create an integrated, flexible identity (Cuéllar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Miller, 2007). These individuals are able to shift behaviors as needed across different situations to fit both or either cultural standards and are often described as being bicultural. Murray (1992) found that Asian American LGBQ individuals were more likely to be acculturated and to have been more influenced by Westernized ideals of sexuality. Similarly, Chan (1989) noted that Asian American lesbians and gay men identified more closely with being lesbian or gay simultaneous to identifying more strongly with the American cultural aspects of their selves. Notably, even identifying as LGBQ indicates higher levels of acculturation to western culture, therefore making it more difficult for ethnic minorities to come out due to this perception of homosexuality as a “White” phenomenon (Chan, 1995). Therefore, navigating to adjust to varying levels of acculturation and enculturation in addition to the sexual identity development process uniquely affects the psychological distress experienced by minorities.

As literature regarding the interactions of acculturation and sexual identity is scant, it is worthwhile to look at the links between these two constructs and psychological distress among people of color. There has been considerable research around understanding the interplay of acculturation and mental health outcomes, however the results are mixed. For example, some studies have suggested that acculturation is associated with added stressors that may then put minority individuals at risk for greater psychological distress (Organista, Organista, & Kurasaki, 2003) yet some researchers have found that acculturation might lead to successful navigation of dominant cultural expectations thereby increasing self-confidence, general self-efficacy, cognitive flexi-

bility, and access to health and wellness related information (Bell & Alcalay, 1997; Kim & Omizo, 2006).

With regards to South Asian LGBQ individuals, Mehta (1998) reported that higher levels of acculturation predicted more positive mental health outcomes than a strict adherence to more traditional cultural values. Similarly, elderly South Asian individuals who adopted a more bicultural or dominant U.S. cultural identity reported experiencing less depression than their more enculturated peers (Diwan, Jonnalagadda, & Balaswamy, 2004). Thus, it can be hypothesized that higher levels of acculturation may actually serve as a protective factor against internalized heterosexism given that dominant U.S. culture is increasingly becoming more affirming of minority sexuality when compared with traditional South Asian Culture (Chan, 1989).

Sodowsky, Lai, and Plake (1991) also established a link between acculturation and experiences of perceived discrimination. They found that Asian American individuals who reported lower levels of acculturation, less used English in day to day interaction and most affiliated with their ethnic group reported higher levels of perceived discrimination, as related to their racial and ethnic identity (Sodowsky, Lai, & Plake, 1991). In contrast, Mexican individuals who reported higher levels of acculturation and less adherence to their cultural group, reported less experiences of perceived discrimination. Similarly, this study also found that respondents (who were first-generation immigrants) reported higher levels of perceived discrimination and significantly lower levels of acculturation, suggesting that length of stay in the United States could also impact experiences of perceived discrimination and acculturation for Asian Americans. Although this is a singular study in understanding the effects of acculturation on experiences of discrimination, it highlights that acculturation can have mental health implications as they pertain to marginalization.

Similar to literature on acculturation, research on enculturation, especially as it pertains to mental health outcomes for people of color, is also mixed. Kim and Omizo (2006) found that a higher level of engagement and adherence to traditional Asian values was correlated to increased collective self-esteem, positive self-concept, and a trend toward help seeking behavior whereas other studies have suggested poorer mental health outcomes for individuals who remain strongly attached to their own cultural values (Diwan, Jonnalagadda, & Balaswamy, 2004; Mehta, 1998). With regards to sexuality, some South Asian social activists report how homosexuality is often likened to a "White Disease" leading to isolation from one's cultural identity and subsequently increased psychological distress (Kumar, 1986). Thus, it can be hypothesized that South Asian individuals who are strongly enculturated might feel shame and distress regarding their sexuality as it goes against the expectations of South Asian cultural norms.

It should also be noted that some studies have suggested that the links between psychological well-being and acculturation/enculturation might be too complex to explain in a simplistic, linear model (Organista et al., 2003; Ratzlaff, Matsumoto, Kouznetsova, Raroque, & Ray, 2000; Yoon, Lee, & Goh, 2008) and other intervening factors might be at play which explain the correlation between these constructs. For example, Yoon, Lee, and Goh (2008) suggest that social connectedness in ethnic and mainstream communities mediated the relationships between enculturation, acculturation, and social well-being and that perhaps perceived social support and acceptance provides a better framework for

understanding distress as it relates to rejection and retention of mainstream and ethnic values (Yoon et al., 2008).

Outness as an LGBQ Individual

The importance of defining one's sexuality has become increasingly ambiguous, whether taken as a Westernized concept by itself or in the context of cultural, racial, ethnic, or gendered identities (Chan, 1995). Choosing an "atypical" sexual identity equates to a declaration of separateness from the norm of heterosexuality and of individuality as a member of a self-defined LGBQ group (Chan, 1995). Research has found that outness may have positive outcomes for White LGBQ populations; however, the effects of outness for Asian American populations is mixed. For example, Murray (1992) suggests that for Pakistani men, outness was inconsequential as long as the individual adhered to community expectations around heteronormativity.

Furthermore, among minority cultural groups, the integration of a sexual identity may not exist in the same manner as it does for members of the dominant culture. The concept of possessing a sexual identity must be considered in the context of political ramifications. Declaring one's sexual identity is used in Western culture as a strategy for group membership, cohesion, and addressing discrimination. As a resistance against conformity and restriction, declaring one's sexuality and being open about one's sexual expression can be viewed as a type of rebellion and drive for social change. However, in minority cultures that place different priorities on the concepts of individual freedom versus the collective good of the nation, this type of public resistance may not be a useful strategy for mitigating the effects of discrimination (Chan, 1995). Despite this, Szymanski and Sung (2010) found that outness was negatively correlated with psychological distress for a population of Asian American LGBQ individuals. Therefore, although it seems outness plays an important role in buffering the effects of minority stressors, findings about the specific effects are mixed. Not surprisingly, there is no known research addressing outness specifically for South Asian LGBQ individuals.

Purpose of the Present Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how perceived experiences of minority stress and identity-related variables contribute to the psychological well-being of South Asian LGBQ individuals living in the United States. Although the impact of these variables has been studied as it pertains to people of color, there are few studies with Asian Americans, and more specifically South Asian Americans (Choudhury et al., 2009). Thus, the present study aimed to explore both the additive and interactionist models (see Figures 1 and 2) of external and internal minority stress processes with psychological distress among South Asian LGBQ individuals in the United States. More specifically, the study examined the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Racist events, heterosexist discrimination, and internalized heterosexism will correlate positively with psychological distress. Given the lack of empirical evidence describing the roles of acculturation and enculturation in psychological distress and the mixed evidence for the role of outness in psychological distress, no hypotheses with these variables were made.

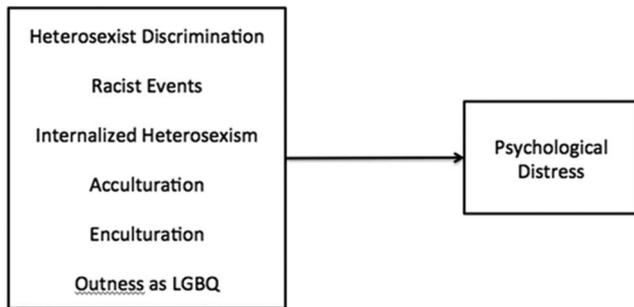


Figure 1. Additive model of external and internal minority stress processes on psychological distress.

Hypothesis 2: Drawing from minority stress and feminist multicultural theories, the additive roles of external (heterosexist and racist events) and internal stress processes (internalized homosexuality, acculturation, enculturation, and outness) were examined in a multiple regression predicting psychological distress. We hypothesized that both of the external stress variables and internalized homosexuality would each account for unique variance in psychological distress. We made no predictions about the roles of acculturation, enculturation, and outness (see Figure 1).

Hypothesis 3: To examine the interactive model posited by the multicultural-feminist perspective, we hypothesized that the two external stressors (heterosexist and racist events) would each interact with the internal stress processes (internalized homosexuality, acculturation, enculturation, and outness) in predicting psychological distress. The interaction of the two external stressors and internalized homosexuality was predicted to exacerbate distress, but no other directional hypotheses were made with the other three internal stress processes (see Figure 2).

Method

Participants

Data from 142 South Asian American participants (67% men, 30% women, 3% genderqueer, transgender, or other gender) were analyzed in this study. Participants ranged in age from 20 to 55 years ($M = 32.45$, $SD = 7.50$, $Mdn = 32$). Approximately 96% of respondents self-identified as South Asian/Asian American and 3% identified as multiracial. Respondents were asked to identify their country of origin and approximately 77% were from India, 10% from Pakistan, 3% from Bangladesh, 3% from Sri Lanka, and the remainder from other countries in South Asia. Approximately 63% of participants had a graduate or professional degree, 26% had an undergraduate degree, 9% had some college, and 2% had a high school degree. Most participants identified as exclusively (70%) or mostly (16%) gay or lesbian, 11% identified as bisexual, and 2% identified as mostly heterosexual (1% did not respond). More than half of the sample (61%) identified as middle class, 21% identified as upper-middle class, 4% identified as upper class, 11% identified as working class, and 2% identified as lower class.

Measures

Heterosexist discrimination. The Heterosexist Harassment, Rejection, and Discrimination Scale (HHRDS, Szymanski, 2006) is a 14-item measure used to assess respondent's experiences of oppressive, heterosexist events. The HHRDS has three subscales: (a) harassment and rejection, (b) workplace and school discrimination, and (c) other discrimination. The scale was originally developed for a Lesbian sample so items were modified to be inclusive of Gay and Bisexual individuals for example, "In the past year, how many times have you been treated unfairly by your coworkers, fellow students, or colleagues because you are a GAY/LESBIAN/BISEXUAL PERSON?" Respondents were asked to indicate how often they have experienced a number of events in the past year on a 6-point Likert-type scale where 1 = *This event has never happened* to 6 = *This event happened almost all of the time*. Items are scored and averaged such that higher subscale and total scores indicate higher levels of heterosexist harassment, rejection, and discrimination over the past year. With regard to validity, the HHRDS has demonstrated predictive validity for psychological distress with a sample of Asian American LGBTQ persons (Szymanski & Sung, 2010). Additionally, in a large sample of Asian American LGBTQ persons, the HHRDS has demonstrated adequate internal consistency yielding Cronbach's alphas of .91 for items comprising the total score (Szymanski & Sung, 2010). The Cronbach's alpha for items in the present study was .89.

Racist events. The daily life experiences subscale of the Racism and Life Experiences Scale (RaLES-DLE, Harrell, 1997; Harrell, Merchant, & Young, 1997) was used to assess the frequency of race-related experiences. The RaLES-DLE is a 20-item measure that asks respondents to how often they have experienced certain events such as, "Being accused of something or treated suspiciously." Respondents rate the frequency of such events on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 = *never* to 5 = *once a week or more*. They are also asked to indicate if their race was involved on a 6-point Likert-type scale where 0 = *never due to my race* to 5 = *always due to my race*. Each of the scores is summed and averaged such that higher scores indicate more race-related experiences. The RaLES-DLE has demonstrated adequate concurrent validity such that scores have been positively correlated with vicarious, direct, and collective racism in a sample of Asian Americans (Alvarez, Juang, & Liang, 2006). In a large sample of

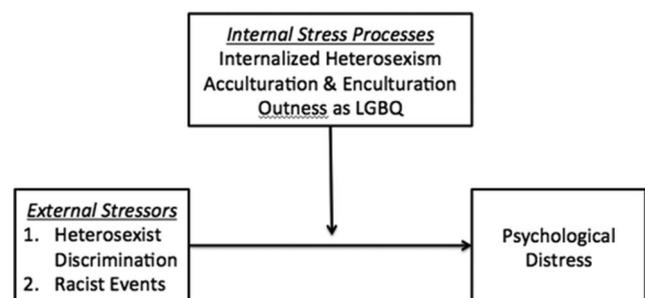


Figure 2. Interactive model depicting the potential moderating roles of internal stress processes on the external stressor to psychological distress links. Two multiple moderation models were run separately to assess (1) heterosexist discrimination to psychological distress and (2) racist events to psychological distress.

Asian American, the RaLES-DLE has demonstrated adequate reliability yielding Cronbach's alpha of .94 (Alvarez et al., 2006). Cronbach's alpha for RaLES-DLE items in the present study was .94 for both frequency of racist-events and race involvement (see Figure 3).

Internalized heterosexism. The Internalized Homophobia scale (IHP, Martin & Dean, 1987) was used to assess respondent's levels of internalized negative attitudes and beliefs about their sexual orientation. The IHP is a 9-item measure used to assess respondent's ego-dystonic attitudes about their sexual orientation. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements such as, "I wish I weren't lesbian/gay/bisexual" on a 5-point Likert-type scale where 1 = *disagree strongly* and 5 = *agree strongly*. Items are scored and averaged such that higher average scores are related to higher levels of internalized homophobia. In terms of validity, the IHP has demonstrated predictive validity for psychological distress with a sample of Asian American LGBTQ persons (Szymanski & Sung, 2010). Additionally, in a large sample of Asian American LGBTQ persons, items comprising the IHP have demonstrated strong internal consistency with Cronbach's alphas of .79 for items comprising the total score (Szymanski & Sung, 2010). The Cronbach's alpha for IHP items in the present study was .88.

Acculturation and enculturation. The Abbreviated Multidimensional Acculturation Scale (AMAS, Zea, Asner-Self, Birman, & Buki, 2003) was used to assess acculturation to South Asian and U.S. cultures. The AMAS is a 41-item measure used to assess acculturation to both U.S. and native culture (in this case self-identified South Asian culture) across three dimensions including (a) cultural identification, (b) language proficiency, and (c) cultural knowledge. Items included in the AMAS were originally developed for a sample of Latina/o Americans and included items such as "I have a strong sense of being Hispanic/Latina/o" and "Being U.S. American plays an important role in my life." Items were modified such that "Hispanic/Latina/o" was replaced with "My culture of origin." Respondents were asked to provide responses on a 4-point Likert-type scale where 1 = *strongly disagree/not at all* to 4 = *strongly agree/extremely well*. Subscale scores are totaled and averaged such that higher scores relate to

more acculturation. With regard to validity, the AMAS has demonstrated appropriate validity in that culture-of-origin scores have correlated negatively with time in the U.S. and U.S. American scores have correlated positively within a large sample of Latino/Latina Americans (Zea, Asner-Self, Birman, & Buki, 2003). Additionally, in a large sample of Latino/Latina Americans, items comprising the AMAS have demonstrated adequate reliability yielding Cronbach's alphas ranged from .90 to .97 (Zea, Asner-Self, Birman, & Buki, 2003). Cronbach's alphas of items in the present study were .89 for the U.S. American subscale and .94 for the culture of origin subscale.

Outness as LGBTQ. The Outness Inventory (OI, Mohr & Fassinger, 2000) is an 11-item measure used to assess respondent's degree of openness about their sexual orientation. Respondents were asked to indicate how open they are about their sexual orientation to various people (e.g., mother, father, heterosexual friends) on a 7-point Likert-type scale where 1 = *person definitely does NOT know about your sexual orientation status* and 7 = *person definitely knows about your sexual orientation status, and it is OPENLY talked about*. Items are scored and averaged such that higher average scores are related to more openness about sexual orientation indicating a higher level of outness. In terms of validity, the OI has demonstrated adequate validity such that scores have negatively correlated with internalized heterosexism in a sample of Asian American LGBTQ persons (Szymanski & Sung, 2010). Additionally, the OI outness to world subscale has demonstrated predictive validity for psychological distress (Szymanski & Sung, 2010). In a large sample of Asian American LGBTQ persons, items comprising the OI have demonstrated strong internal consistency yielding Cronbach's alphas of .80 for outness to family and .83 for outness to world (Szymanski & Sung, 2010). The Cronbach's alpha for items in the present study was .87.

Psychological distress. The Hopkins Symptom Checklist (HSCL-21, Green, Walkey, McCormick, & Taylor, 1988) is an abbreviated version of the HSCL-90 (Derogatis, Lipman, Rickels, Uhlenhuth, & Covi, 1974) and was used to assess overall psychological symptomatology. Respondents were asked to indicate how often they have experienced each symptom during the past week, for example "feeling lonely" using a 4-point Likert-type scale where 1 = *not at all* and 4 = *extremely*. Item scores are averaged such that higher total scores are related to higher levels of overall psychological distress. The HSCL-21 assesses multiple dimensions of distress including performance difficulty, somatization, and general distress. In terms of validity, the HSCL-21 has demonstrated adequate validity through positive correlations with other measures of distress within a large sample of Asian Americans (Su, Lee, & Vang, 2005). Additionally, in a large sample of Asian American LGBTQ persons, items comprising the HSCL-21 have demonstrated strong internal consistency yielding Cronbach's alphas of .93 (Szymanski & Sung, 2010). The Cronbach's alpha for HSCL-21 items in the present study was .92.

Procedures

Participants were recruited through online venues. Specifically, electronic fliers that included links to the survey were sent to Internet communities (e.g., Yahoo and Facebook groups), electronic mailing lists, and virtual discussion boards for South Asian Americans, for sexual minority people, and/or South Asian sexual

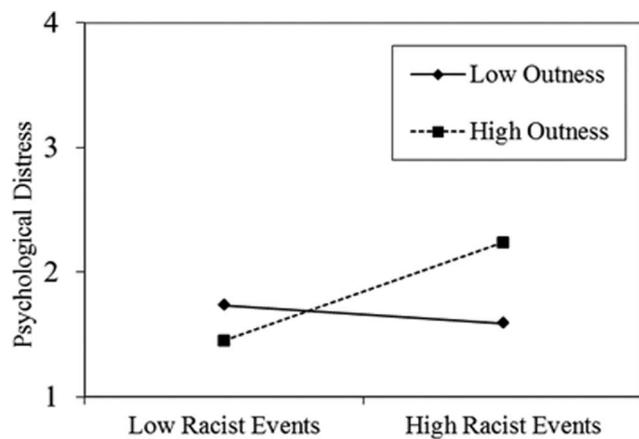


Figure 3. Outness as a moderator in the relation between racist events and psychological distress.

minority people. The inclusion criteria for the study specified that participants be 18 years or older, identify as South Asian American, reside in the United States, and identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. After reading an informed consent form, participants were encouraged to complete the survey if they met the study criteria. Upon data screening, all participants met inclusion criteria.

A total of 302 participants initiated the survey. Of these, 160 entries were removed from the data set because they either did not consent to participate or were missing more than 20% of the items in the survey (the 20% criterion is recommended by prior researchers; Dodeen, 2003; Parent, 2013; Schlomer, Bauman, & Card, 2010). Some of these incomplete entries may have been from individuals who responded to a couple of items to “check out” the survey and then returned to complete the survey at a later time; however, possibility cannot be tested due to the anonymity of the survey. These data cleaning procedures resulted in a final sample size of 142.

Results

Before conducting the primary analyses, the variables were screened for univariate normality (i.e., skewness ≤ 3.0 and kurtosis ≤ 10.0 ; Weston & Gore, 2006). All variables met these criteria. A post hoc power analysis was conducted using G*Power 3 (Faul et al., 2009) with a sample size of 142 and a six predictor variable equation as a baseline. Cohen’s (1977) guidelines were used for this assessment (small [$f_2 = .02$], medium [$f_2 = .15$], and large [$f_2 = .35$]) with an alpha level of .05. The analyses revealed that the statistical power was .19 for detecting a small effect, .94 for detecting a medium effect, and exceeded .99 for detecting a large effect. As such, the sample size surpassed criteria for detecting medium and large interaction effects, but not that for small effects (Aiken & West, 1991). Descriptive statistics, internal consistency reliabilities, and intercorrelations obtained with the current sample for the variables of interest are reported in Table 1. Overall, the present sample’s average scores on these variables were observed to be generally comparable to averages obtained in prior studies with racial and ethnic and/or sexual minority samples (DLE: Hammond, 2010; HHRDS: Szymanski, 2006; HSCL-21: Szymanski & Sung, 2010).

Hypothesis 1: Correlations

To Test Hypothesis 1, which predicted that heterosexist discrimination, racist events, and internalized heterosexism would be

significantly and positively related to psychological distress, bivariate correlations between these variables and psychological distress were examined. To provide some context for the magnitudes of the associations obtained, Cohen’s (1992) guidelines were used to interpret small ($r = .10$), medium ($r = .30$), and large ($r = .50$) effect sizes. As hypothesized, each measure of minority stressors was related significantly and positively with psychological distress with medium effects (magnitudes ranged from $r = .34$ to $.49$, all $p < .001$). In addition, heterosexist discrimination and racist events were correlated positively with large effects. As an exploratory aside, we also examined relations between the aforementioned variables, cultural variables (acculturation, enculturation), and outness as LGBQ. Acculturation was correlated positively and significantly with heterosexist discrimination and outness as LGBQ ($r = .17, p < .05$; $r = .29, p < .001$, respectively); enculturation was correlated negatively with racist events, outness as LGBQ, and psychological distress ($r = -.22, p < .01$; $r = -.17, p < .05$; $r = -.19, p < .05$, respectively); and outness was correlated negatively with internalized heterosexism ($r = -.43, p < .001$). Neither acculturation nor outness were correlated significantly with psychological distress. Please refer to Table 1 for these correlations.

Hypothesis 2: Assessing the Additive Predictors of Psychological Distress

In addition, to investigate Hypothesis 2 (the additive links of external and internal minority stress processes with psychological distress), a multiple regression analysis with psychological distress regressed on heterosexist discrimination, racist events, internalized heterosexism, acculturation, enculturation, and outness as LGBQ, was conducted. As indicated in Table 2, when all of these variables were considered together, only the external stressor variables—perceived heterosexism discrimination ($\beta = .21, p < .05$) and racist events ($\beta = .30, p < .01$), along with internalized heterosexism ($\beta = .27, p < .01$)—accounted for significant and unique variance in the outcome variable with our sample of South Asian LGBQ people. The model explained 36% of the variance in psychological distress.

Hypothesis 3: Tests of the Interactionist Models

To test the feminist multicultural interactive models, two hierarchical multiple regressions were performed. As depicted in Figure 2, the two models examined were (a) the simultaneous mod-

Table 1
Descriptives and Bivariate Correlations

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α
1. Heterosexist discrimination	—						1.66	.66	.89
2. Racist events	.59***	—					1.43	.84	.94
3. Internalized heterosexism	.18*	.16	—				1.58	.79	.88
4. Outness as LGBQ	.11	-.09	-.43***	—			4.11	1.42	.87
5. Acculturation	.17*	.05	-.12	.29***	—		3.36	.41	.89
6. Enculturation	-.16	-.22**	.11	-.17*	-.12	—	2.93	.64	.94
7. Psychological distress	.45***	.49***	.34***	-.10	.03	-.19*	1.87	.57	.92

Note. LGBQ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 2
Heterosexist Discrimination, Racist Events, Internalized Heterosexism, Outness as LGBQ, Acculturation, and Enculturation as Simultaneous Predictors of Psychological Distress

Variable	B	β	T	Total R^2	Adj. R^2	F	df
Heterosexist disc.	.18	.21	2.33*	.36	.33	12.37***	6,135
Racist events	.20	.30	3.35**				
Internalized hetero.	.20	.27	3.40**				
Outness as LGBQ	.00	.00	.04				
Acculturation	.00	.00	.00				
Enculturation	-.11	-.12	-1.66				

Note. LGBQ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer; Adj. = adjusted; disc. = discrimination; hetero. = heterosexual.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

erating roles of internal stress variables (internalized heterosexism, acculturation, enculturation, outness) in the link of heterosexist discrimination to psychological distress; and (b) a parallel set of analyses was conducted these internal stressor moderators in the link of racist events and psychological distress. For these analyses, the predictor variables were centered and used to compute interaction terms (Aiken & West, 1991). The each predictor was entered separately in Step 1 and the four interaction terms (i.e., Heterosexist Discrimination \times Internalized Heterosexism, Heterosexist Discrimination \times Acculturation) were entered as a set in Step 2. Significant moderation or interaction is indicated if adding the interaction term results in a significant change in R^2 , and the beta weight for the interaction term is significant. The PROCESS SPSS macro (Hayes, 2012) was used to decompose significant interaction (see Table 3).

Patterns underlying the significant interactions were explored using simple slope analysis recommended by Aiken and West (1991). In this procedure, criterion variables are regressed on the predictors, the moderator at a conditional value (e.g., high or low), and the interaction of the predictor and the moderator at a conditional value. High and low values of the moderator were defined as values one standard deviation above (i.e., high) and one standard deviation below (i.e., low) the mean. The predictors (heterosexist discrimination, racist events), the simultaneous moderators (internalized heterosexism, acculturation, enculturation, and outness) at a conditional value (e.g., high or low), and the interaction of the two were entered in the first step. The t test for the regression coefficient of the predictor variable (i.e., racist events) in this equation tests the direction and significance of the simple slope (i.e., whether the slope is significantly different from zero). Only

Table 3
Moderating Effects of Internalized Heterosexism, Acculturation, Enculturation, and Outness on the External Stressor to Psychological Distress Link

Step and variable	B	β	t	Total R^2	Adj. R^2	R^2 inc.	F inc.	df
Link between heterosexist discrimination and distress								
Step 1								
Heterosexist discrimination	.33	.39	5.05***	.30	.28	.30	11.71***	5,136
Internalized heterosexism (IH)	.19	.27	3.24**					
Acculturation (ACC)	-.15	-.16	-2.22*					
Enculturation (EN)	-.01	-.01	-.06					
Outness as LGBQ	-.02	-.05	-.58					
Step 2								
Heterosexist Discrimination \times IH	.10	.11	1.24	.32	.28	.02	1.09	4,132
Heterosexist Discrimination \times ACC	.19	.12	1.55					
Heterosexist Discrimination \times EN	.09	.04	.51					
Heterosexist Discrimination \times Outness	.07	.11	1.12					
Link between racist events and distress								
Step 1								
Racist events	.28	.42	5.77***	.33	.30	.33	13.32***	5,136,136
Internalized heterosexism (IH)	.23	.31	3.94***					
Acculturation (ACC)	-.11	-.12	-1.67					
Enculturation (EN)	.03	.02	.29					
Outness as LGBQ	.02	.05	.57					
Step 2								
Racist Events \times IH	.07	.10	1.19	.37	.33	.04	2.30	4,132
Racist Events \times ACC	.02	.01	.19					
Racist Events \times EN	.11	.05	.69					
Racist Events \times Outness	.10	.21	2.49*					

Note. LGBQ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer; Adj. = adjusted; disc. = discrimination; hetero. = heterosexual; inc. = inclusive.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

one significant interaction was found. For each of these interactions the significance of the interaction terms in the tests of the moderator effects indicated that the difference between the regression lines for participants with low versus high outness was significant (Aiken & West, 1991). As indicated in Figure 1, outness moderated the relationship between racist events and psychological distress for South Asian LGBQ people. The relationship between racist events and psychological distress was exacerbated in instances of higher outness such that respondents with high racist events and high outness reported the highest levels of psychological distress.

Discussion

The present study employed Minority Stress Theory (Meyer, 2003) and Feminist Multicultural Theory (Brown, 1994) to consider how minority stress and identity variables related to the psychological well-being of South Asian LGBQ individuals living in the United States. Specifically, the current study investigated the relations between heterosexist discrimination, racist events, internalized heterosexism, acculturation, enculturation, outness, and psychological distress among South Asian LGBQ individuals. In doing so, the present study examined both the additive and interactionist models of external (heterosexist discrimination and racist events) and internal (internalized heterosexism and outness) minority stress processes and other identity variables (acculturation/enculturation) with psychological distress. As Feminist Multicultural Theory posits, the additive model suggests that each internal or external minority stressor faced by a marginalized individual will unite to increase psychological distress; furthermore, the interactionist model suggests that one minority stressor (whether internal or external) might exacerbate the effect of other internal or external minority stressors (Meyer, 2003; Moradi & Subich, 2003; Szymanski & Gupta, 2009b; Szymanski et al., 2008).

Our findings appear to generally support both additive and interactionist models. In full support of Hypothesis 1 and consistent with existing research on Asian and Asian American LGBQ individuals, respondents in the present study reporting more racist events and heterosexist discrimination and higher levels of internalized heterosexism also reported higher levels of psychological distress (Chung & Szymanski, 2006; Szymanski & Gupta, 2009a). Research suggests that Asian American individuals often report multiple experiences of racism both from White, heterosexual American society and also within the White, LGBQ community. Furthermore, members of multiple minorities face the challenge of integrating identities that are devalued on numerous levels and experience multitudinous degrees of discrimination and oppression (Greene, 1994). These experiences of multiple marginalizations coupled with Asian/Asian American values of collectivism and community can often intensify psychological distress within this population (South Asian Public Health Association [SAPHA], 2002). It can also be postulated that South Asian individuals often report not being recognized as a members of the larger Asian American community and thus report unique experiences of social isolation which might further exacerbate psychological distress (Kibria, 1996; Kurien, 2003).

Experiences of heterosexist discrimination might also be unique within the South Asian community. Choudhury et al. (2009) indicated that South Asians have specific experiences of heterosexist

discrimination and internalized heterosexism given the particular cultural beliefs about homosexuality. For example, some South Asian sexual minorities are hesitant to use labels such as gay, lesbian, and bisexual as identifiers and might also be involved in heterosexual marriages and relationships in order to avoid discrimination and cultural alienation (Choudhury et al., 2009). Furthermore, South Asian culture often conceptualizes homosexuality as a Western disease, which could lead to conflict within South Asian LGBQ individuals as they navigate their various identities (SAPHA, 2002).

In full support of Hypothesis 2, the external stressor variables (heterosexist discrimination, racist events) and internalized heterosexism accounted for significant, unique variance in psychological distress. Beyond internalized heterosexism, the other three internal stress processes (acculturation, enculturation, outness) did not account for significant, unique variance in psychological distress. The fact that Hypothesis 2 was supported highlights that South Asian LGBQ individuals experience stressors similarly to other LGBQ groups, particularly LGBQ Asian American individuals and other groups of color (Szymanski et al., 2008; Szymanski & Sung, 2010). Although we made no hypotheses about acculturation and enculturation, the fact that these variables did not contribute unique variance to psychological distress may imply that the external stressors suppressed the unique effects of these variables. Regarding the role of level of outness, our findings parallel that of other studies in which this variable has been unrelated to distress (Talley & Bettencourt, 2011). These findings are consistent with minority stress theory (Meyer, 2003), which posits that the experience of more minority stressors contributes to increased psychological distress and the additive perspective of Feminist Multicultural Theory that suggests that minority stress will unite to increase overall psychological distress.

There are several possible reasons that some of the internal stress (acculturation, enculturation, outness) processes did not account for significant, unique variance in psychological distress. Power analysis indicated the sample size in the current study is not large enough to pick up on weak effects. As indicated in the literature review, prior literature on acculturation and enculturation with this population is scant; findings are mixed, at best, for linking acculturation/enculturation and psychological distress. In fact, studies have suggested that links between psychological well-being and acculturation/enculturation might be too complex to explain with simplistic models (Organista et al., 2003; Ratzlaff et al., 2000; Yoon et al., 2008). Additionally, prior research suggests other mediating factors might have more of an impact on psychological distress and well-being such as perceived social support and acceptance (Yoon et al., 2008). Another possible reason acculturation/enculturation did not account for significant variance in the model is that the sample in the current study is very acculturated and highly educated. The restricted range of the total scores for acculturation/enculturation may have led to them not accounting for significant variance in the model. Prior research on the intervening role of outness is also mixed. Outness has been found to be negatively correlated with psychological distress, suggesting it mitigates the effects of discrimination. Outness has also been found inconsequential in South Asian populations as long as heteronormative community expectations are upheld (Murray, 1992), yet other findings highlight that for collectivistic cultures, such as South Asians, outness may be seen as a form of public

resistance and may not mitigate the effects of discrimination (Chan, 1995).

In partial support of Hypothesis 3, one significant interaction was uncovered. Specifically, outness moderated the relationship between racist events and psychological distress. Given that the United States is dominated by both White and heterosexual values, it seems reasonable that the South Asian LGBQ individuals in this study reported the highest levels of psychological distress when faced with greater numbers of racist events and higher levels of outness. These participants likely came into contact with White/heterosexual culture more than their less-out counterparts, which may have exacerbated the level of psychological distress they experienced. Given that South Asian LGBQ individuals draw a clear distinction between their public and private identities (Chan, 1995), outness may not lead to more support and a sense of community as it often does with White LGBQ individuals. It could also be that outness as an LGBQ individual drew more attention to participants' other marginalized identity, their race. This finding is consistent with Minority Stress Theory and Feminist Multicultural Theory, which posit that internal and external stressors have the potential to unite and exacerbate psychological distress for marginalized individuals such as South Asian LGBQ individuals.

Again, several of the variables (acculturation, enculturation, internalized heterosexism) did not moderate the relationship between external stressors and psychological distress. As discussed before, the fact that Hypothesis 3 was not fully supported highlights that South Asian LGBQ individuals are unique and perhaps more exploratory studies are warranted to understand the experiences of oppression by this population. Similar to the explanation provided above for acculturation/enculturation, these variables may not have worked out due to power and sample size, sample characteristics, and/or findings in prior literature. In regards to internalized heterosexism, it could be that South Asian LGBQ individuals draw a clear distinction between their public and private identities as suggested by Chan (1995). Specifically, when exploring sexual identity for Chinese Americans, Chan (1995) drew a clear distinction typical of several collectivist cultures: the public self versus the private self. The public self "conforms to gendered and familial role expectations and seeks to avoid actions that would bring shame not only on oneself but also on one's family" (Chan, 1995, p. 95). In contrast, the private self can loosely be defined as containing the concepts of sexuality, sexual expression, and individual identity. It could be that South Asian LGBQ individuals do not experience internalized heterosexism the same way other LGBQ populations do because as it is culturally normative to keep one's sexual identity private and having a non-heterosexual identity is not problematic as long as it doesn't interfere with public image.

This study contributes to the literature regarding Asian American mental health in several important ways. First, the present study focused on the experiences of South Asian LGBQ individuals, a growing population whose experiences with intersecting marginalized identities have been largely ignored in the literature. Although the variables considered in the present study have been explored among people of color, there are few studies with Asian Americans, and none with South Asian Americans alone (Choudhury et al., 2009). Numerous studies have called for research that addresses outcomes for the specific subcultures within the Asian American population and noted the limitations of inappropriately

categorizing the heterogeneous group of Asian Americans (Chung & Szymanski, 2006; Szymanski & Gupta, 2009a). As previously noted, much of the literature including South Asian American LGBQ individuals groups them into the broader Asian American category whereas the present study has a more focused approach. Findings from the present study help to establish which if any internal and external minority stressors impact the psychological distress of South Asian LGBQ individuals. Second, although previous literature suggests acculturation and enculturation play an important role in the well-being (and may serve as protective factors against minority stress) of Asian Americans, the present study is the first known to employ models of Minority Stress Theory (Meyer, 2003) and Feminist Multicultural Theory (Brown, 1994) with South Asian LGBQ individuals (Moradi & Subich, 2003; Szymanski & Gupta, 2009b; Szymanski et al., 2008). These models have been used in similar ways to understand psychological distress in prior literature with other marginalized groups.

Finally, numerous lines of research consider the links between marginalization and psychological distress for one or two identities (such as race and sexual orientation) but fail to consider the experience of marginalized individuals holistically by including external and internal marginalization processes as well as potential protective factors. However, given the quantitative nature of the study it is difficult to determine how participants understand the unique mechanisms by which they experience greater distress (e.g., racism or heterosexism). Bowleg (2013) found that gay and bisexual Black men in her qualitative study could not articulate the effect of their gender without considering their racial identity as well. It is likely the same for participants in the current study who have multiple marginalized identities and do not consider these identities separately in the way analyses of the additive and interactionist models may suggest. To counteract this limitation, future researchers should consider developing and utilizing measures to concomitantly assess experiences of discrimination specific to South Asian LGBQ people.

This study is limited by a convenience sample, self-report measures, and cross-sectional design. Furthermore, given that participants were mainly recruited by online methods and with their membership in South Asian LGBQ electronic mailing lists or online groups, they may be biased in some way (e.g., being more comfortable with their sexual identity, having higher levels of outness, being more involved in the South Asian LGBQ community). Furthermore, participants in this study also reported having high levels of education and income and thus might not be representative of the larger target population. However, the sample in this study is consistent with other samples of LGBQ people that suggest that LGBQ individuals might have more educational achievement than their heterosexual peers (Black, Sanders, & Taylor, 2007; Rothblum, Balsam, & Mickey, 2004). However, because social class and educational achievement might be protective against psychological distress within LGBQ individuals, future research with a more diverse sample is warranted (Szymanski & Gupta, 2009a).

As indicated by the results of this study, in clinical work with South Asian LGBQ individuals, attention needs to be paid to issues of acculturation, experiences of discrimination and outness. Clinicians must include a thorough assessment of these aforementioned constructs as they have a unique outcome on experiences of psychological distress. Higher levels of outness have been corre-

lated negatively with psychological distress; however, this study found that outness, when coupled with racist discrimination, led to higher levels of psychological distress. Thus, it is important for the clinician to not make assumptions regarding distress based on the individual's reported level of outness or alignment with sexual identity.

Lastly, although the present study explored South Asians as a homogenous group, it is important to keep in mind that South Asians are a diverse population with many languages, cultures, religions, and social practices. Furthermore, this study also examined the experiences of South Asians LGBQ individuals without controlling for gender. It is likely that South Asian LGBQ men and women differ in their experiences of marginalization and discrimination. In fact, multiple studies have suggested that gender is an important factor to be mindful of with South Asian populations. For example, South Asian American lesbians who do not conform to cultural gendered norms or sex roles may be exposed to additional discrimination/rejection because of not conforming to dominant American culture (White, heterosexual) or South Asian culture (Inman, 2006). Similarly, some cultures might be more accepting of a lesbian woman than a gay man and therefore women might endorse less discrimination. Lewis, Kholodkov, and Derlega (2012) explain that the minority stress experienced by lesbian and bisexual women has often been considered together with gay and bisexual men; however, evidence suggests there are enough differences that they should be considered separately. Accounting for other sociodemographic characteristics such as social class, level of education, and location (i.e., urban vs. rural) may be just as important as controlling for gender. Any of these characteristics might serve a protective role or exacerbate the experience of marginalization and discrimination. Thus, future research needs to examine the effects of multiple identity characteristics, including gender, as well as the unique interactions of various South Asian subgroups on psychological well-being.

The results from this study support employing Minority Stress Theory (Meyer, 2003) and Feminist Multicultural Theory (Brown, 1994) to understand the experiences of South Asian LGBQ individuals. Although many of the minority stressors experienced by other LGBQ individuals seem to hold true for South Asians, there are potential differences that warrant further research. Specifically, the intersection of race/ethnicity and sexual orientation identities seem to have unique implications for the South Asians. For example, where outness can serve a protective or supportive function for some LGBQ individuals, it seemed to exacerbate psychological distress for this sample of South Asian LGBQ individuals who may keep their private and public selves more distinct (Chan, 1995). Given the primarily exploratory nature of the present study, future research is encouraged to continue understanding the unique experiences and needs of the South Asian LGBQ individuals.

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