



FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH COMFORT IN RACIAL & ETHNIC COMMUNITIES AMONG BISEXUAL PEOPLE OF COLOR

Mary R. Nedela, MS, LMFT

Doctoral Candidate, Virginia Tech

Visiting Lecturer, UNLV

mnedela@vt.edu



VIRGINIA TECHTM

National Council on Family Relations, 2018 Annual Conference

Background & Significance

- Bisexual individuals are a sexual minority, even within the LGBTQ+ community
 - *Sexual minority people of color are further marginalized in the community* (Akerlund and Cheung, 2000)
- Homophobia, heterosexism, discrimination can lead to poor mental health outcomes (Sutter & Perrin, 2016)
- Stress associated with minority status further compounded with racial/ethnic minority status (Ghabrial, 2017; Kim & Fredriksen-Goldsen, 2012)
- Identity influenced by group involvement (Fukuyama & Ferguson, 2000)
- LGB people of color less likely to be comfortable “coming out” to others (Moradi et al., 2010)
- More research on multiple minority stressors of bisexual people of color needed
 - *Therapists can understand how to best support this population*

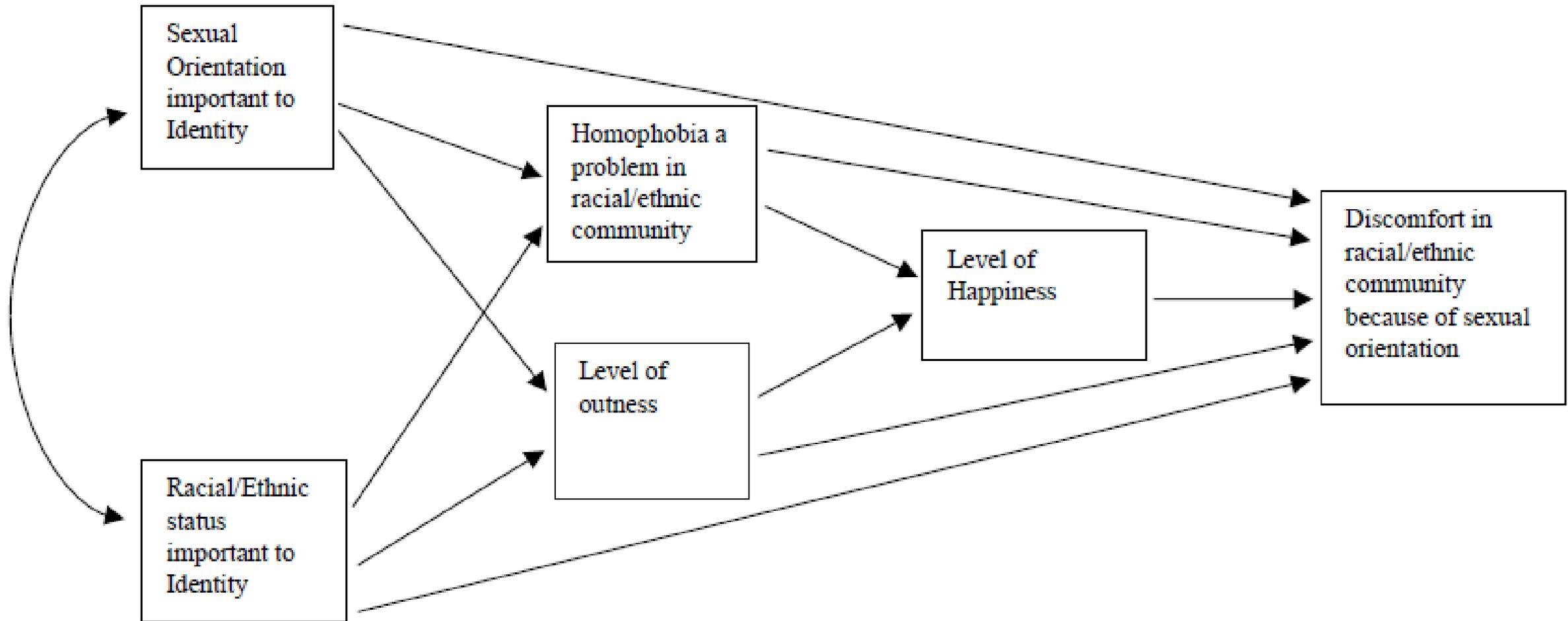


Figure 1. Hypothesized Model

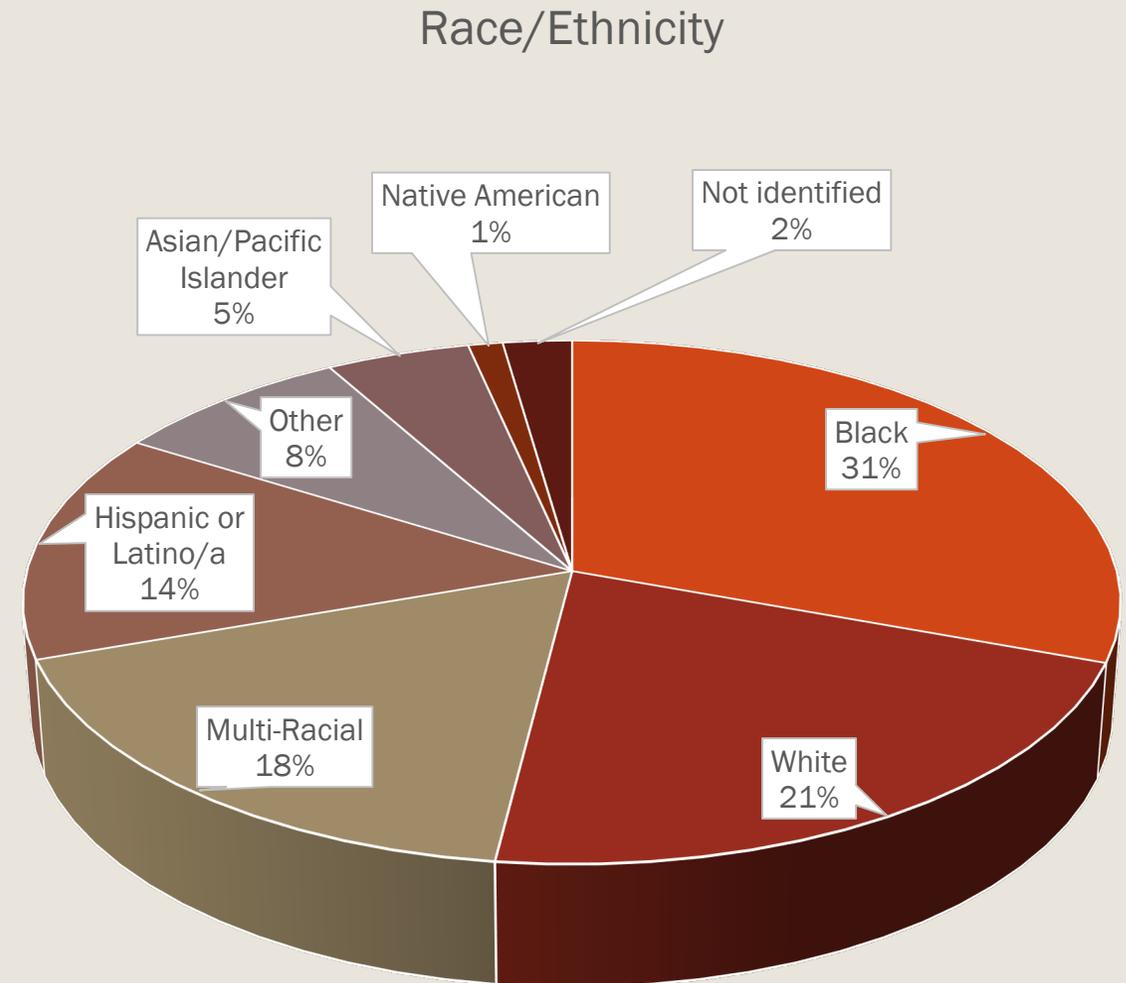
Variables

- Identity
 - *Race/Ethnicity Identity (M = 3.85, SD = 1.79)*
 - “Do you feel that your racial or ethnic status is an important part of your identity?”
 - *Sexual identity (M = 4.38, SD = 1.62)*
 - “Do you feel that your sexual orientation is an important part of your identity?”
 - *Responses for both of these questions ranged from “not important at all” (1) to “extremely important” (6)*
- Homophobia (M = 4.35, SD = 1.676)
 - *“Homophobia is a problem within my racial or ethnic community”*
 - *Responses ranged from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (6)*
- Outness (M = 2.95, SD = 1.213)
 - *Composite of responses to people who respondents are “out” to (family, friends, religious community, co-workers, people in neighborhood, people online)*
 - *Responses ranged from “None” (1) to “All” (5)*
- Happiness (M = 3.20, SD = 0.759)
 - *Composite scale of how often respondents felt: that they were just as good as other people, hopeful about the future, happy, enjoyed life*
 - *Responses ranged from “Never” (1) to “Most of the time” (4)*
- Comfort (M = 4.15, SD = 1.575)
 - *“How often have you felt uncomfortable in your racial or ethnic community because of your sexual identity?”*
 - *Responses ranged from “never” (1) to “always” (6)*
 - *Reverse coded so that lower scores indicated more discomfort*

Data & Methods

- Social Justice Sexuality Survey
- Current study: 527 Bisexual self-identified individuals
- Ages 14-79 ($M = 31.22$; $SD = 12.22$)
- Majority of sample was Female

- All variables approximately normally distributed
- No Outliers
- Missing data: 3.4%
 - *EM Algorithm*
- Relative Multivariate Kurtosis: 0.939
- Maximum Likelihood Estimation
- Lisrel 9.2 Student Version



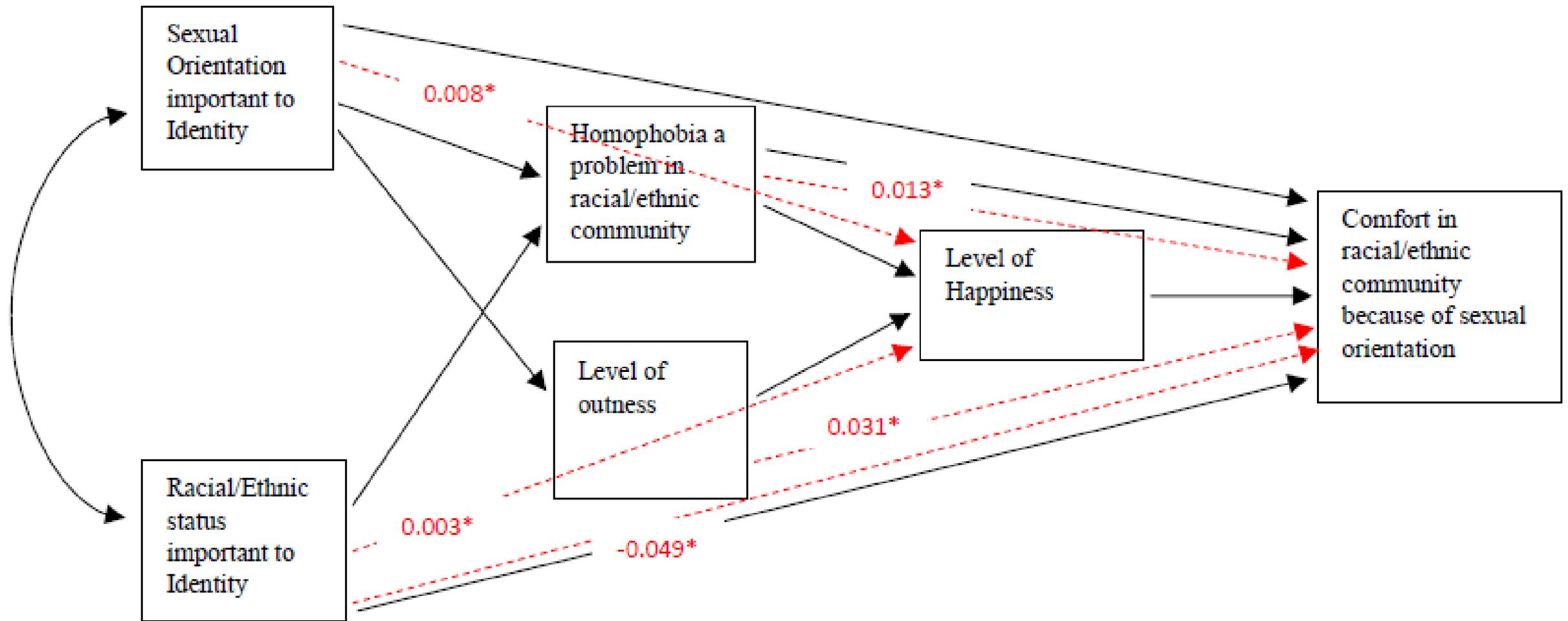


Figure 2. Final Model Indirect Effects

$\chi^2 (5) = 7.168, p = 0.2084, RMSEA = 0.0287, NNFI = 0.97, CFI = 0.99, IFI = 0.99, SRMR = 0.027$

Discussion

- Bisexual individuals who indicate their sexual orientation is important to them perceive higher levels of homophobia in their neighborhoods, are out to more people in their communities, and are less comfortable in their racial/ethnic communities due to their sexual orientation.
- Bisexual individuals who indicate their racial/ethnic status is important to their identities also perceive higher levels of homophobia in their neighborhoods, and are less comfortable in their racial/ethnic communities due to their sexual orientation.
- Bisexual individuals who perceive higher levels of homophobia in their neighborhoods are more likely to be happier, but are less comfortable in their racial/ethnic communities due to their sexual orientation.
- Bisexual individuals who are out to more people in their communities are more likely to be happier.
- Bisexual individuals who are happier are more likely to feel more comfortable in their racial/ethnic communities (less likely to experience discomfort in the communities due to their sexual orientation).
- Indirect effects indicate there are a variety of factors, including perceived homophobia, level of outness, and level of happiness, that impact comfort in racial/ethnic communities

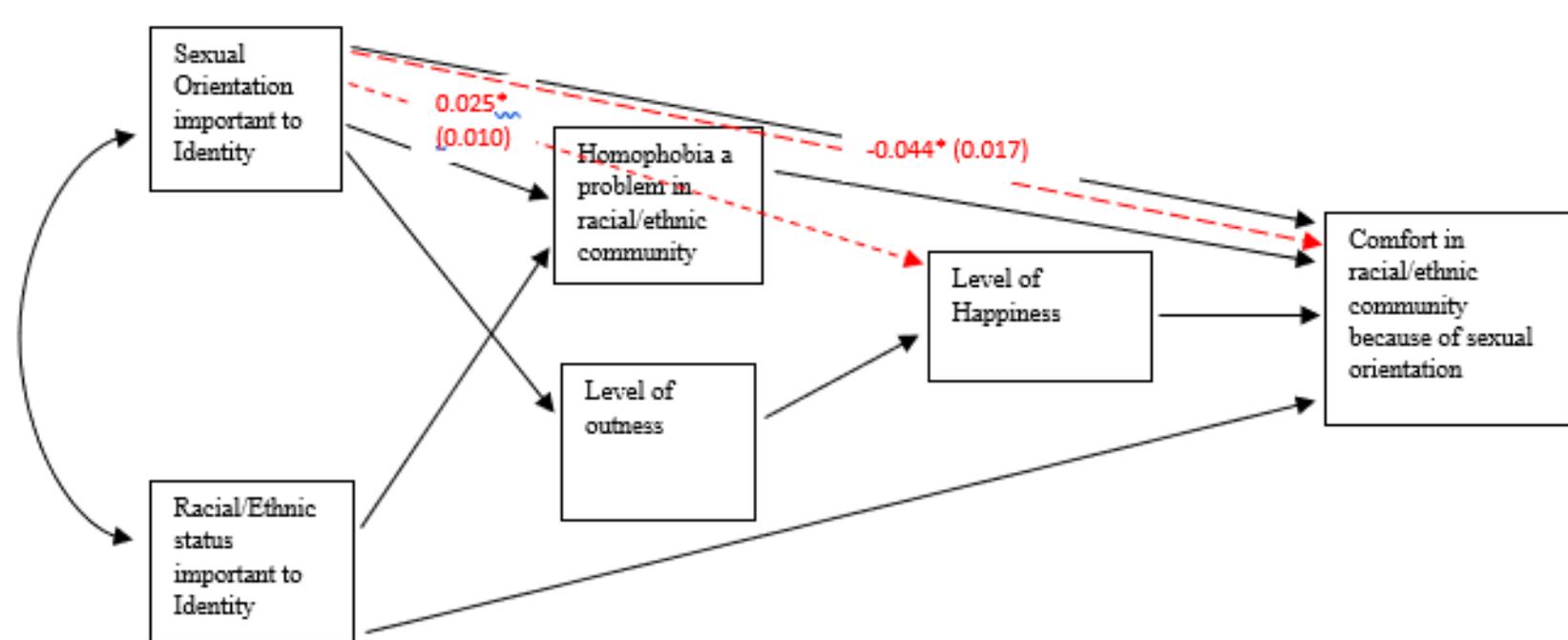


Figure 6. Indirect Effects for White Participants

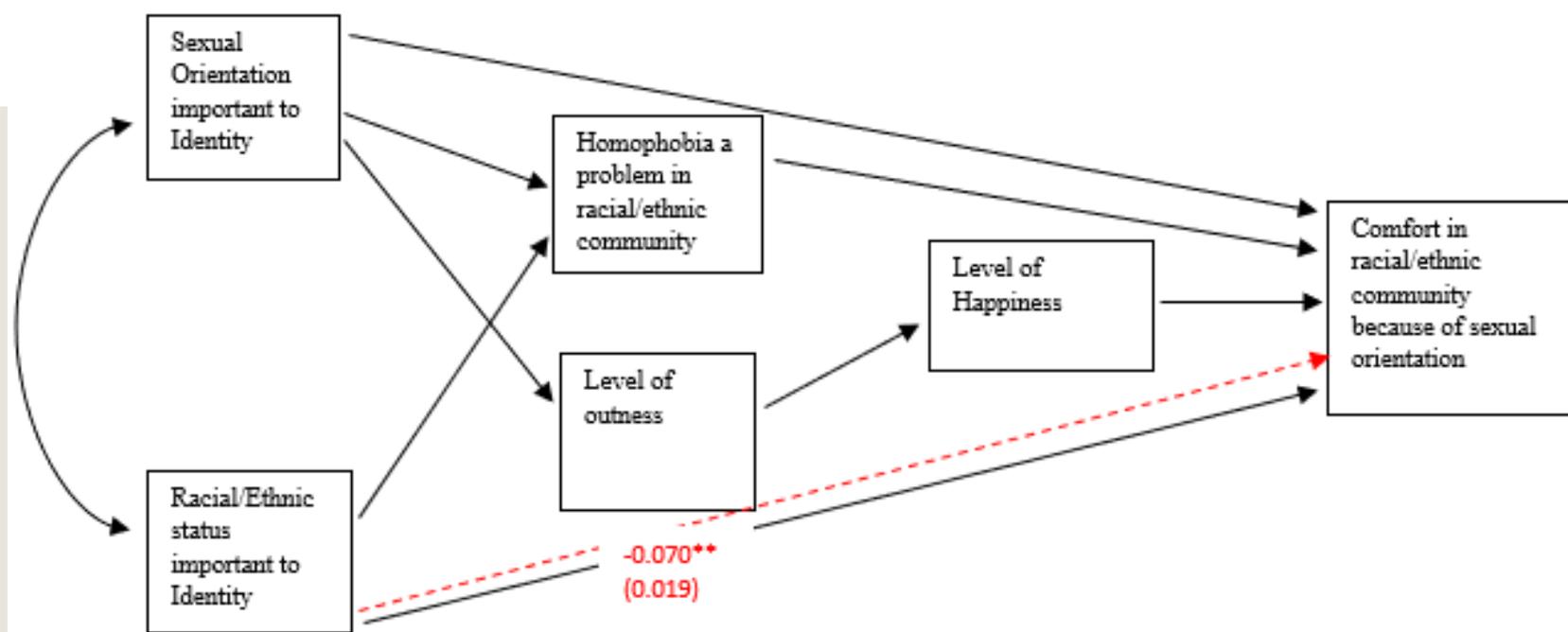


Figure 7. Indirect Effects for POC Participants

Discussion of Group Comparison

- Significant differences in the model are present for White bisexual individuals and bisexual People of Color
 - *Both SO and R/E identity salience is a stronger predictor of perceptions of homophobia in communities, as well as level of outness, and are more strongly correlated with each other, for bisexual POC*
 - *The effect of perceptions of homophobia on comfort in racial/ethnic communities is stronger among bisexual POC*
 - *Level of Outness is a stronger predictor of happiness among White bisexual individuals*
 - *Level of overall happiness is a stronger predictor of comfort in communities for bisexual POC*
 - *Interestingly, R/E identity salience is a significant predictor of comfort in communities for White bisexual individuals, but not for bisexual POC*
 - *Conversely, SO identity salience is a significant predictor of comfort in communities for bisexual POC but not for White bisexual individuals*
 - *Significant indirect effects for White bisexual individuals include SO identity salience on comfort in communities through all other variables; in addition to SO identity salience on happiness through perceptions of homophobia and level of outness*
 - *Only one significant indirect effect for bisexual POC: R/E identity salience on comfort in racial communities through perceptions of homophobia*

Implications for Clinicians

- There is a complex interplay of identity salience, disclosure, perceived homophobia, happiness, and comfort levels.
 - *Practitioners must be willing to work within this complexity while promoting psychosocial well-being.*
 - *Therapists especially need to adequately assess the influence various proximal and distal stressors have for bisexual clients*
- Therapists and practitioners alike should not make assumptions regarding disclosure.
- Assumptions should not be made that White bisexual individuals are automatically comfortable in regards to their racial/ethnic communities since they are not a racial minority.

Limitations & Future Directions

- Did not test direct effects from SO & RE on Happiness
 - *Could have an influence*
- Mediation tests could help determine specific paths through which indirect effects occur
- Multiple group analysis among each racial/ethnic group could not be conducted due to insufficient sample sizes for each group
 - *Race and ethnicity are very much different concepts, but measured as one in the same in the SJSS.*
- Test for gender differences

References

- Akerlund, M., & Cheung, M. (2000). teaching beyond the deficit model: Gay and lesbian issues among African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans. *Journal of Social Work Education, 36*, 279-292.
- Fukuyama, M. A., & Ferguson, A. D. (2000). *Lesbian, gay, and bisexual people of color: Understanding cultural complexity and managing multiple oppressions*. (pp. 81-105). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. doi:10.1037/10339-004
- Ghabrial, M. A. (2017). “Trying to figure out where we belong”: Narratives of racialized sexual minorities on community, identity, discrimination, and health. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy, 14*, 42-55. doi:10.1007/s13178-016-0229-x
- Kim, H., & Fredriksen-Goldsen, K. I. (2012). Hispanic lesbians and bisexual women at heightened risk for [corrected] health disparities. *American Journal of Public Health, 102*, e9-e15. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2011.300378
- Moradi, B., Wiseman, M. C., DeBlaere, C., Goodman, M. B., Sarkees, A., Brewster, M. E., & Huang, Y. (2010). LGB of color and white individuals’ perceptions of heterosexist stigma, internalized homophobia, and outness: Comparisons of levels and links. *The Counseling Psychologist, 38*, 397-424. doi:10.1177/0011000009335263
- Sutter, M., & Perrin, P. B. (2016). Discrimination, mental health, and suicidal ideation among LGBTQ people of color. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 63*, 98-105. doi:10.1037/cou0000126