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Understanding Theology and Homosexuality in African American Communities

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Understanding Theology and Homosexuality in African American Communities

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ISSN 2195-3104 ISSN 2195-3112 (electronic)
ISBN 978-1-4614-9001-2 ISBN 978-1-4614-9002-9 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-1-4614-9002-9
Springer New York Heidelberg Dordrecht London

Library of Congress Control Number: 2013947833

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Preface

The African American church is widely recognized as a critical and influential institution within U.S. African American communities (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990). Indeed,"religion has played a role in Black America that is considerably more holistic and effectual than its more segmented role in most white communities" (Wilmore 1989, xv). It has been estimated that 70 % of African Americans are members of a church (Billingsley and Caldwell 1991), 80 % of all African Americans belong to a faith tradition (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1999), and 97 % of all African Americans claim some form of religious affiliation (Dawson et al. 1994).[1] The African American church has been referred to as "the spiritual ark" that has both supported and empowered its adherents socially, psychologically, and physically through eras of trauma and hardship (Ward 2005, 494).

Despite this frequent portrayal of the church as the bedrock of the African American community, it has been the target of significant criticisms due to its condemnation and ostracism of self-identified gay men and lesbian women (Faraje-Jones 1993; Griffin 2006; Monroe 2001; Sneed 2010). Some scholars have pointedly asserted that "scripture is often the cornerstone of homophobia in the black community" (Douglas 1999, 90), that the African American church has played a major role in the genesis and perpetuation of "theologically-driven" homophobia (Ward 2005, 494), and that the "denigration and symbolic assault on homosexuals" by many African American churches has become a "theological ritual" (Lemelle and Battle 2004, 47). In making such charges against the Black church, it is important to note that this intolerance does not characterize all Black churches, all Black clergy, or all Black congregants. Indeed, there exists significant diversity among Black churches in terms of their size, their style of worship, their interpretation of scripture, and the demographic characteristics of their congregants and their members (Douglas 2003, 33). Nevertheless, many Black denominations have explicitly condemned homosexuality and marginalized gay and lesbian congregants (Fullilove and Fullilove 1999; Sanders 1998), including the African Methodist Episcopal; African Methodist-Episcopal Zion; Christian Methodist Episcopal; National Baptist Church, USA, Inc.; National Baptist Church of America; National Progressive Baptist Church; and the Church of God in Christ (Griffin 2006). Indeed, one African American minister announced that he would march with the Ku Klux Klan to protest laws that would give lesbians and gays equal rights (Smith 1994, 128).

The few empirical investigations that have examined the basis for the apparent exclusionary and hostile attitudes toward homosexuals and homosexuality have consistently found an association with church attendance. Herek and Capitanio (1995) found from their telephone interviews with a probability sample of 391 Black heterosexual adults that respondents who attended religious services frequently were more likely to display negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Negy and Eisenman (2005) concluded from their study of 70 African American and 140 White university students that African Americans displayed greater homophobia and homonegativity compared with their White counterparts and that this increased level of homophobia and homonegativity was associated with greater frequency of church attendance. Lemelle and Battle (2004), using data from the 1993 National Black Politics Study, examined the relationship between attitudes toward homosexual men and respondent age, church attendance, educational level, household income, and urban residency. They found that the more frequently respondents attended church, the less favorable were their attitudes toward homosexual men (Battle and Lemelle 2002, 136; Lemelle and Battle 2004, 45). The authors further suggested that African American church attendance may "serve as a major medium of 'moral' indoctrination condemning homosexuality" (Lemelle and Battle, 2004, 42). In yet another study that utilized data from four major series of surveys, researchers reported that African Americans were more likely than Whites to believe that same-sex relations are always wrong and that gays deserve AIDS as "God's punishment" for their immoral sexual behavior (Lewis 2003, 63, 75).

It has been suggested that the homophobia of the African American church has led to the stigmatization of non-heterosexual African American men. That stigma is evident on the three dimensions: the bodily, the moral, and the tribal (Goffman 1986, 1–16). Horace Griffin, a well-known Professor of pastoral theology, commented on the damaging consequences of this dynamic:

> The present message of homosexuality as immoral creates an inescapable feeling of unworthiness and low self-esteem in African American lesbians and gay men. The continued antihomosexual attitude creates a climate of denial that can develop into rage and hostility by those who experience psychic pain … heterosexual family members have estranged and disowned responsible and caring lesbian and gay family members simply because they consider them perverse and sinful individuals… (Griffin 2001, 119–120).

These observations necessarily raise significant issues: Is there a legitimate theological basis for the "theologically driven" homophobia? This question demands an examination as to whether same-sex sexual relations were considered to be unacceptable/deviant at the time specified scriptural passages were composed. Has male–male sex become conflated with homosexual identity in the African American church or are they distinct? What is the process through which homosexuality has become so stigmatized in the African American church? Is the apparently prevailing church-based hostility toward homosexuals and homosexuality subject to transformation and, if so, by what mechanism(s)? And, importantly, how can mental health providers assist their non-heterosexual African American clients, as well as families and communities, to heal wounds and bridge differences?

These issues are examined in the chapters that follow, using deviance theory as a framework. Deviance theory allows us to understand better the process through which societies characterize and label particular subgroups and individuals and how those labeled subgroups and individuals then label themselves and others. It is argued here throughout these chapters that African Americans have to varying degrees been consistently labeled by the larger American society—through action, law, and writing—as deviant and deficient. This characterization is particularly notable in depictions of African American sexuality and gender role. In turn, many African Americans, particularly through their churches, strived to overcome these derogatory stereotypes and depictions. These efforts by African Americans to reimage and redefine African Americans have frequently, however, led to the denigration and isolation of same-sex oriented individuals. Many African American churches, in particular, have adopted and promoted this view of same-sex oriented persons as deviant, using scripture as the basis for their admonitions and denunciations.

Deviance theory suggests that deviance is not an inherent quality and persons are not per se deviant. Rather, deviance "is created by society" (Becker 1963, 8); it is a quality that is conferred upon individuals by others and persons come to be defined as deviant by others (Kitsuse 1962, 248). As such,

> deviance may be conceived as a process by which the members of a group, community, or society (1) interpret behavior as deviant, (2) define persons who so behave as a certain kind of deviant, and (3) accord the treatment considered appropriate to such deviants (Kitsuse 1962, 248).

Accordingly,

> the critical variable in the study of deviance is the social *audience* rather than the individual *person*, since it is the audience which eventually decides whether or not any given action or actions will become a visible case of deviation (Erikson 1962, 308; italics in original).

Deviance theory as a framework to examine homosexual behavior and homosexuality suggests that (1) specified behaviors are "sex appropriate" and others are "sex-inappropriate," (2) behaviors are unambiguously prescribed, (3) deviations from those prescribed behaviors are interpreted as immoral, and (4) individuals defined and identified by others as homosexual are to be accorded the treatment considered appropriate for those who engage in "sex-inappropriate" behaviors (Kitsuse 1962, 249–250). The establishment of a recognizable threshold between what is to be considered permissible and impermissible behaviors permits the construction of a class of stigmatized individuals—deviants—and the demarcation in society between what is "pure" and what is not (McIntosh 1986, 182). Further, one's identity as a homosexual—a deviant—arises not from the performance of the designated sex-inappropriate behaviors themselves ("primary deviance" according to labeling theory, an offshoot of deviance theory), but rather from the reactions of others' to those behaviors, the resulting response of the individual to others' reactions, and the individual's internalization of the categorization ("secondary deviance") (Epstein 1987, 16).[2]

A Marxian approach to deviance theory further elucidates the process by which deviant status is imputed to specific groups or individuals. Those who are characterized as deviant are most frequently members of groups that are in some way problematic for those who hold relatively greater power (Fitch 2002, 469; Spitzer 1975, 639; cf. Ericson 1975, 28), reflecting "the priorities of the control system [that] are part of a broader social conflict" (Spitzer 1975, 639). Deviant status is imputed to these groups by those holding greater power as a means of addressing the perceived problem. This control is institutionalized through family, church, associations, schools, and the state. According to Marxian theory of deviance, a critical evaluation of deviant categories demands an examination of the source of such categorization, what it reflects about the priorities and structure of a particular society, and how it relates to class conflict within that society (Spitzer 1975, 639–641). The exercise of power by the powerful serves not only to control the less powerful, but also to define "the relations, the contexts, and the conditions of possibility that create the powerful and less powerful" (Fitch 2002, 469). The once almost universal characterization across all domains of human enterprise of Blacks and Black sexuality as deviant serves as a potent illustration of this dynamic.

The attempt of one writer, who self-identified as "a Negro Faggot," to explain the basis for the homophobia within African American communities, unknowingly lends credence to the idea that deviance is a creation of the observer and serves to create and/or preserve power, Riggs (1991, 390–391) observed,

> What lies at the heart, I believe, of Black America's pervasive cultural homophobia is the desperate need for a convenient Other within the community, yet not truly of the community—an Other on which blame for the chronic identity crises afflicting the Black male psyche can be readily displaced; an indispensible Other that functions as the lowest common denominator of the abject, the baseline of transgression beyond which a Black Man is no longer a man, no longer Black; …Blacks are inferior because they are not white; Black gays are unnatural because they are not straight. Majority representations of both affirm the view that Blackness and Gayness constitute a fundamental rupture in the order of things, that our very existence is an affront to nature and humanity.

There exists overlap between an inquiry premised on deviance theory and a poststructuralist approach. Like deviance theory, poststructuralism challenges the assumption that individuals are creators of themselves and their social worlds. Instead, individuals constitute but one part of a complex network of social relations whose social identities result from the ways in which knowledge within those networks is organized (Namaste 1994, 221). The convergence of these two approaches can be seen in Foucault's observation that despite the longstanding existence of homosexual practices, the classification of "homosexual" did not exist prior to the characterization of such practices by psychiatry as perverse (Foucault 1980, 101) and the concomitant transformation of those engaging in deviance into deviants:

> As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology…. Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species (Foucault 1980, 43).

And, just as deviance theory suggests that deviance cannot be explicated without a reference to normality and vice versa, poststructuralism similarly argues that meaning is established through reference to difference, what Derrida has referred to as "supplementarity."

> which is *nothing*, neither a presence nor an absence, is neither a substance nor an essence of man [sic]. It is precisely the play or presence and absence, the opening of this play that no metaphysical or ontological concept can comprehend (Derrida 1976, 244; italics in original).

The opening chapter traces African American history and explores the characterization of African Americans as deviant, particularly with respect to issues related to sexuality. The continuing portrayal of African Americans as deviant, it is asserted here, has sensitized African Americans as a group to charges of deviance, particularly as these charges relate to sexual mores. This sensitization, it is argued, has predisposed many in the African American communities to view differentness—in this case homosexuality—as unacceptable at best and, worse, as sinful and abnormal. Chapter Two explores the themes of revelation and liberation in African American history, focusing on the transformation of the God of Whites to a Black God, the liberation of Blacks from slavery and beyond, and the principles underlying liberation theology are explored in this chapter. These themes are also examined in the context of African American culture. Chapter Three focuses on seven scriptural passages traditionally relied upon within African American churches (and others) to characterize same-sex relations as sinful and/or to exclude homosexuals from church participation. These passages, often referred to as "texts of terror" by those critical of their segmented and noncontextual use for this purpose, are examined as they may have been understood at the time of their writing and as they are currently understood within African American exclusionary churches. The final two chapters address the role of the mental health provider working with non-heterosexual African American clients (Chap. 4) and families and communities that may be struggling to understand their loved ones and their neighbors (Chap. 5).

Finally, this text is in no way intended to essentialize either the experiences of African Americans generally, non-heterosexual African Americans, or African American churches and their clergy. It is recognized that the experiences of individual, families, and communities within the African American population may vary significantly and, even when somewhat similar in nature, may be interpreted and understood by individuals and communities in highly divergent ways. However, the issues that serve as the focus of this are sufficiently common to necessitate their examination and impact.

Acknowledgments

This text would not have been possible without the honest and trusting sharing of the individuals who sought counseling from me. Although they must remain nameless, their contributions to my growth and understanding are unquantifiable. It has been and continues to be an honor and a privilege to accompany them on their journey toward self-awareness and wholeness.

Special thanks go to John Spencer, Ph.D. of John Carroll University for his numerous readings of the various drafts of this manuscript as it progressed toward completion, his insights into the Biblical passages examined herein, and his provision of important references. Fr. Thomas Schubeck and Rev. Valentino Lassiter, also of John Carroll University, provided helpful feedback on my initial thoughts for this text. Zane Jennings, LISW-S, is to be thanked for his review of Chapters Four and Five. Fr. Schubeck and Dr. Zeki Saritoprak are also to be thanked for providing feedback as members of my thesis committee. Dr. Sheila McGinn and Kathy Merhar provided significant assistance with formatting.

My publisher is also to be acknowledged and thanked for granting permission to incorporate portions of two chapters from previous texts. The discussions of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study and gender role in Chapter One previously appeared in Loue S. (2006). *Assessing race, ethnicity, and gender in health*. New York: Springer Science+Business Media, Inc. The discussion of identity development that is part of Chapter Four previously appeared in Loue S. (2009). Minority non-heterosexual women and the formulation of identity, in S. Loue (Ed.). *Sexualities and identities of minority women* (19–36). New York: Springer Science+Business Media LLC.

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Chapter 1
African Americans: History and Experience as the "Other"

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to attempt a comprehensive rendition of African American history. Instead, this section provides an outline of key events and themes that dominate African American history in the U.S. These events, which include enslavement, disenfranchisement, and misuse in human experimentation, reflect the themes of oppression and struggle, the consistent denial of the humanity of African Americans, and the ongoing depiction of African Americans as deficient and deviant. It is argued here that, notwithstanding the gains made by African Americans in securing increased civil rights, the long litany of oppressive, and denigrating historical events has left an indelible mark on African American communities, which is manifested and reflected in understandings of and attitudes toward sexuality and gender role. This overview provides a foundation for the later discussion focused on gender identity formation and, specifically, masculine identity formation and definition within African American experience. Cultural achievements and the related themes of creativity and regeneration are addressed in the later section on Black culture.

The Atlantic Slave Trade and the Creation of the "Other"

It is uncontroverted that the history of African Americans in the United States began with their history as Africans of diverse cultures, languages, and economies (Painter 2007, pp. 14–16). The first recorded arrival of Africans to the New World occurred in 1619, with the landing in Jamestown, Virginia of approximately 20 Ndongans from the territory now known as Angola (Painter 2007, p. 24). This marked the initiation of the *Maafa*, a Kiswahili word meaning "disaster," used in reference to the Black Holocaust of the slave trade, enslavement, and colonization (Painter 2007, p. 24).

The Atlantic slave trade persisted until the mid-nineteenth century, despite the 1807–1808 promulgation by the United States and Great Britain of laws prohibiting further slave trade. The slave trade significantly altered the nature of slavery as

S. Loue, *Understanding Theology and Homosexuality in African American Communities*, SpringerBriefs in Social Work,
DOI: 10.1007/978-1-4614-9002-9_1, © The Author(s) 2014

it had existed in Africa. Previously, although slaves were taken by African tribes or kingdoms from those who had been vanquished in wars, slavery was not linked to either the genetics of "race" or heredity. The Atlantic slave trade transformed slavery into a commercial enterprise; enslavement was premised on skin color and the status of slave was passed on through generations (Painter 2007, p. 31).

The physical brutality of the capture, journey, and ultimate enslavement of individuals from Africa has been well-documented (see generally Blassingame 1977; Davis 2006; Painter 2007; Ward 2008). The psychological sequelae have received far less studied attention. Individuals and entire families likely suffered psychological trauma not only as the result of the brutality directed against them, but also as the result of having witnessed violence directed toward others; their separation from and sale of family members, never to be seen again; and the demand by their owners that they appear ever-cheerful, obedient, and submissive, regardless of how they were treated. Indeed, there has been discussion by some scholars that these traumatic experiences may have led to adverse psychological sequelae among the slaves' offspring as well (Eyerman 2001; Gump 2010; Leary 2005; Sotero 2006; Stamm, Stamm IV, Hudnall and Higson-Smith 2004), including low self-esteem, sensitivity to disrespect, and a proclivity to shamefulness (Leary 2005).[3] The poem of African American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1906) entitled "We Wear the Mask" reflects the expectation that slaves display submissiveness:

> We wear the mask that grins and lies,
> It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,–
> This debt we pay to human guile;
> With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
> And mouth with myriad subtleties….
> (In Gates and McKay 1997, p. 896).

From their first introduction to the colonies and to the new United States, the forced migrants were depicted as deviant, operating outside of the bounds of a civil society. As one scholar noted,

> [t]he article on the Negro in the 1797 issue of the Encyclopedia Britannica presented a list of alleged racial Negro characteristics which included treachery, cruelty, impudence, intemperance, and a penchant for stealing, lying, debauchery, and profanity. Negroes are said to be strangers to every sentiment of compassion and … an example of the corruption of man when left to himself (Drake 1958, p. 16; quoted in Stuckey 1994, p. 123).

The presumed inferiority of the Africans was premised solely on the color of their skin; their "deficiency" was used as a justification for their exploitation as slaves (Greene 2000, p. 241). Those who enslaved them were wealthier and significantly more powerful and could, as a result, use their power to define the sexuality of their slaves (Whitehead 1997, p. 421). The sexual exploitation of female slaves was rationalized through their depiction as sexually aggressive and promiscuous, while violence toward male slaves was justified as a necessary means to control their unbridled sexual appetites (Greene 2000, p. 241). Black men were paradoxically viewed as feminine—"creatures of feelings and emotions, qualities that were

regarded as peculiar to women and children" (Evans 2008, p. 34). In this context, Black men lacked not only economic power and other external trappings of success, but also lacked the ability to protect their female partners and children (Whitehead 1997, p. 425). Indeed, "blackness is less a color than a metaphor for political circumstance prescribed by struggles against economic exploitation and cultural domination…" (Powell 2002, p. 10).

Little effort was made to Christianize the slaves during the colonial period (Lincoln 1989, p. 12). The prospect of evangelizing the slaves raised fears among slaveholders, particularly in the South, that the slaves' economic productivity would be reduced due to the time spent in worship and that the slaves' religious assembly might serve as the breeding ground for rebellion.[4] Concerns were also raised as to whether the slaves would have to be released from slavery once they became Christian (Lincoln 1989, p. 13). This latter fear was soon overcome through the assertion by some religious authorities who found justification for the enslavement of Blacks in the Bible and opined that their enslavement in a Christian country would dispel their "sinful habits of Africa" (Whitehead 1997, p. 423. See also Evans 2008, pp. 18–19).[5] The other objections were overcome through the efforts of the England-based Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, which sent missionaries out to Christianize the slaves, assuring their owners that the benefits to the slaves would be merely spiritual in nature (Lincoln 1989, p. 13). These assertions served to raise additional concerns among Whites that they might then have to share Heaven with their Christianized Black slaves.[6]

In Defense: Religion and Rebellion

Ultimately, religion and rebellion came to serve as defenses against the dehumanization of slavery. Black Christianity arose from crisis (Marable 1989, p. 327). The God of Christianity was seen through the story of Exodus as a God of liberation, who would bring freedom and avenge torment. In Philadelphia, Richard Allen founded in 1794 what would later become the Mother Bethel Methodist Church (Public Broadcasting Station PBS 2002). The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was founded only 6 years later in New York City.

Rebellion was effectuated through escape attempts, revolt, and voice. Gabriel Prosser in 1800 gathered more than 1,000 armed slaves in Virginia in the first-ever large-scale slave revolt. His plans failed, and he and 34 others were executed (PBS 2002). Other rebellions followed, including the 1822 revolt led by the freedman Denmark Vesey and the 1831 rebellion led by Nat Turner, a literate slave preacher who believed that God had designated him to liberate the slaves through the killing of Whites (Painter 2007; PBS 2002). Narratives of former slaves such as Frederick Douglass' autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself*, and freedwoman Sojourner Truth's 1851 speech "Ain't I a Woman" in Akron, Ohio made visible the continued oppression of Blacks despite the Congressional ban against the importation of slaves.

This ban against the importation of new slaves contrasted sharply with the government support afforded to existing slaveholders. The 1850 Fugitive Slave Act mandated government support for the capture of escaped slaves. The 1857 Supreme Court decision in the *Dred Scott* case made clear that African Americans were not citizens and that the federal government lacked the authority to restrict slavery in any federal territory, a decision that essentially rendered a slave always a slave (PBS 2002). The publication in 1852 of Harriet Beecher Stowe's anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was instrumental in turning public opinion against slavery and the legislation that permitted its continued existence.

The medical profession, too, offered no solace to African Americans, despite the Hippocratic Oath that required physicians to attend to the welfare of their patients. On the contrary, statements made by members of the medical profession concretized the perception of African Americans as deficient and deviant. The proslavery physician John H. van Evrie claimed in his work entitled, *Negroes and Negro "Slavery": The First and Inferior Race; The Latter Its Normal Condition*, that dark skin resulted in an inability to express the full range of emotions, while the overall structure of the black spine obviated the ability to assume a directly perpendicular posture (Tucker 1994). Dr. Samuel Cartwright, charged with the responsibility by the Medical Association of Louisiana of investigating and reporting on "the diseases and physical peculiarities of the Negro race," recommended as a cure for drapetomania, "the disease of the mind that caused slaves to run away to freedom" (Tucker 1994, p. 14), that blacks be treated like children as long as they remained submissive, but have "the devil [whipped] out of them" if they dared to "raise their heads to a level with their master" (Cartwright 1851, p. 892). Clearly, the medical establishment perpetuated the characterization of Blacks as both deviant and inferior. This peculiarization of African Americans by health care professionals has continued to modern times, as evidenced by the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, discussed further below.

Post-Emancipation Oppression

The Civil War, or the War Between the States as it was and continues to be known in the Southern states, began in April 1861 following the secession of 11 Southern states and soon after Abraham Lincoln's November 1860 election to the presidency. Lincoln's election was shortly followed by various legislative and executive actions that recognized the slaves' right to be free: the First Confiscation Act passed by the Union in August 1861, permitting for the first time the nonreturn of fugitive slaves behind enemy lines to their owners; the July 1862 Second Confiscation Act, which declared that fugitive slaves and their family were free; and Lincoln's January 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, which freed enslaved Blacks in Confederate-owned territory. The Civil War ended in April 1865, following the defeat of the Confederacy; Lincoln was assassinated that same month. Later that year, the states ratified the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, making slavery illegal in the entire United States and emancipating

all individuals who had been enslaved. The Civil Rights Act of 1866 conferred citizenship on African Americans and granted them rights equal to those of Whites (PBS, 2002). These years, 1865 through 1866, became known as the period of Presidential Reconstruction (Painter 2007, p. 141). The subsequent years from 1867 through 1877 would come to be known as the period of Congressional or Radical Reconstruction (Painter 2007, p. 141).

Despite their emancipation, African American men continued to face violence and discrimination. The Ku Klux Klan was founded in 1866 in Tennessee; its members, as well as others, were responsible for innumerable beatings and lynchings of Blacks. Between 1866 and 1876 in Louisiana alone, there were 694 beatings and murders of freedpersons recorded (PBS 2002). Annually from the early 1890s through the early twentieth century, an average of more than 139 people were lynched throughout the South, the majority of whom were Black and were killed in retaliation for talking back and insubordination (Litwack 2007, p. 12). The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People estimated in 1919 that by the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the frequency of lynching had increased to the rate of 1 every 54 min (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People 1919). Lynching became institutionalized as a public ritual of torture and brutality (Litwack 2007, pp. 9–11), "the ultimate symbol of racial oppression in the United States" (Painter 2007, p. 181), and a mechanism for the emasculation of Black men (Patton 2012).

Any gains of the now freed slaves were soon reduced. Andrew Johnson, who became President following Lincoln's assassination, reinstated to Confederate landowners the ownership of their lands. This resulted in the inability of most freed Blacks to acquire their own properties and relegated them to working as sharecroppers in order to support themselves and their families (Painter 2007, pp. 144–145). Despite their freedom, they remained beholden to the White landowners.

Freedpersons established numerous churches during the Reconstruction Period, most of which were of various Protestant denominations. Predominant among these was the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Established by Daniel Payne as an educational ministry, the church developed a study program for its ministers and outreached to freedpersons in the belief that a strong church provided a buttress against oppression.

African Americans made some political gains, such as the election of Black men to the legislatures of South Carolina and Louisiana. Although Black men gained the right to vote, often before their Northern counterparts, they would by the 1890s lose this right in many Southern states, following legislatures' refashioning of state constitutions in an effort to disenfranchise Blacks and the institution of poll taxes to discourage poorer individuals from voting (Painter, 2007, 149, p. 178).

The continuing oppression and violence led to the migration in 1879 of thousands of African Americans from Southern states to the West. Shortly thereafter, in 1881, Tennessee passed the first of the "Jim Crow" laws, segregating the railroads. During the subsequent 15 years, all Southern states would pass similar laws, implementing segregation policies not only on railroads, but on all forms of public transport. By 1910, Southern states would have segregated even their prisons. The 1896 U.S. Supreme Court decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson* institutionalized segregation

with its holding that separate, i.e., segregated, public facilities for Blacks and Whites were legal. That holding remained in effect until 1954, when it was overturned by the Supreme Court in its decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Litwack (2007, pp. 11–12), summarized the plight of freed African Americans during this period:

> Some 30 years after emancipation, between 1890 and 1920, in response to perceptions of a New Negro born in freedom, undisciplined by slavery, and unschooled in proper racial etiquette, and in response to growing doubts that this new generation could be trusted to stay in its place without legal and extralegal force, the white South denied blacks a political voice, imposed rigid patterns of racial segregation (Jim Crow), sustained an economic system—sharecropping and tenantry—that left little room for ambition or hope, refused blacks equal educational resources, and disseminated racial caricatures and pseudoscientific theories that reinforced and comforted whites in their racist beliefs and practices. The criminal justice system (the law, the courts, the legal profession) operated with ruthless efficiency in upholding the absolute power of whites to command the subordination and labor of blacks.

It was clear that, despite emancipation, the legal system perpetuated a dual-tier system that viewed and treated African Americans as the deficient Other.

The early and mid-twentieth century was characterized by increased political activism. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was established in 1909. The Great Migration of African Americans from Southern states to northern industrial cities during the period from 1910 through 1919 prompted the establishment of the National Urban League in 1911, founded for the purpose of helping the migrating African Americans in search of housing and employment (PBS 2002).[7] The Universal Negro Improvement Association, founded by Marcus Garvey in Jamaica in 1914, moved to the United States later that same year. The organization had as its primary purpose the development of economic and political independence and the establishment of a new homeland for Blacks in Africa. Following the killing of four African Americans and eight Whites in East St. Louis in 1917, the NAACP organized a march in New York City to protest the discrimination and violence that continued to be perpetrated against African Americans. At least 100 people were killed during the 1919 race riots ("Red Summer"), incited by Whites who resented the migration of African Americans to Northern cities and their employment in urban industry. Four years later, in 1923, White mobs destroyed the African American town of Rosewood, Florida; survivors received no compensation for their losses until 1994 (PBS 2002).

The Tuskegee Syphilis Study and Government-Constructed Black Sexual Deviance

The Tuskegee Syphilis Study, as it has come to be known, is perhaps one of the most infamous and extreme examples of post-Civil War government-supported, government-promoted injustice, and discrimination suffered by African Americans. Although African Americans had been used as subjects in medical experiments prior to the initiation of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study (e.g., Sims

1886), this particular study is notable for its larger scale, its blatant disregard for truth, and the withholding of effective treatment from those who could have benefited from it. The conceptualization, conduct, and continuation of the study for four decades stands as an illustration of the ongoing characterization of Blacks and Black sexuality as deviant, hypersexual, and immoral.[8]

The United States Public Health Service (USPHS) designed the study, initiated in 1929, to examine the prevalence of syphilis among Blacks and possible mechanisms for treatment. The town of Tuskegee, located in Macon County, Alabama, had been found to have the highest rate of syphilis among the six counties that had been included in the study (Gill 1932; Jones 1981). Initial projections had suggested that the provision of treatment to all infected individuals would be possible. However, funding became inadequate for the continuation of the project and the implementation of the treatment due to the economic depression that commenced in 1929 and which devastated the initially committed resources (Thomas and Quinn 1991).

In 1929, the USPHS refocused the original study to follow the natural history of untreated, latent syphilis in Black males between the ages of 25 and 60 who were infected with syphilis. The study protocol required a physical examination, X-rays, and a spinal tap. The original design did not include treatment for those men enrolled in the study, although there was consensus within the medical community that treatment for syphilis was imperative, notwithstanding the toxic effects of such treatment (Brandt 1985). Men were recruited to the study through their White landowner-employers on whom they depended for their wages, and their churches, institutions that they trusted.

Those men who were recruited for the study were told that they were ill with "bad blood," a nonspecific euphemism that referred to syphilis, anemia, and a variety of other disorders, and that they would be provided with appropriate treatment and care. The mercurial ointment and neoarsphenamine provided to them as treatment were ineffective and were intended to be such. The researchers portrayed the spinal tap, which was administered for research purposes only, as a form of "special treatment" in order to encourage the men's participation. The investigators added a control group of healthy, uninfected men to the study as controls in 1933, following USPHS approval to continue with the study (Brandt 1985).

The Tuskegee study continued for 40 years, despite numerous events that one would have thought would bring about its termination. First, the USPHS had begun to administer penicillin to some syphilitic patients in various treatment clinics (Mahoney, Arnold, Sterner, Harris and Zwally 1944). By at least 1945, it was clear in the professional literature that syphilis infections would respond to penicillin, including those cases that had been resistant to treatment with bismuth subsalicylate and mapharsen, a then-standard treatment (Noojin, Callaway and Flower 1945). The men of Tuskegee were not provided with this treatment; in some instances, members of the research team actively prevented the men in the study from obtaining treatment (Thomas and Quinn 1991). A series of articles published in professional journals indicated that the infected men were suffering to a much greater degree than the controls, with increased morbidity and a reduction in life expectancy (Deibert and Bruyere 1946; Heller and Bruyere 1946; Pesare, Bauer,

and Gleeson 1950; Vonderlehr, Clark, Wenger and Heller 1936). Despite these very public findings and periodic reports to Congress, no objections to the study were voiced for decades. The study was not halted until 1972; its demise was only brought about by an exposé in the *Washington Star* and subsequent Congressional hearings (National Public Radio 2002). Those who defended the study asserted, as late as 1974, that an inadequate basis existed to justify treatment with penicillin or with other regimens during the course of the study and that it was the "*shibboleth* of informed consent" derived from court cases in California and Kansas that had provoked the controversy that surrounded the study (Kampmeier 1974, 1352).

The initiation and continuation of the Tuskegee study perpetuated the myth of African American deviant sexuality. This attitude was reflected in the justification for the study provided by Dr. Taliaferro Clark, then Chief of the Venereal Disease Division of the United States Public Health Service:

> This state of affairs [the high prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases] is due to the paucity of doctors, the rather low intelligence of the Negro population in this section, depressed economic conditions, and the very common promiscuous sexual relations of this population group which not only contribute to the spread of syphilis but also contribute to the prevailing indifference with regard to treatment (Quoted in Brandt 1985, p. 335. Emphasis added).

Today, the Tuskegee study stands as a metaphor for the devaluation of African Americans (Reverby 2010) and has led to African Americans' suspicion of the medical profession in general (Jones 1992, p. 38; Klonoff and Landrine 1989; Thomas and Quinn 1991) and the conviction among some that the sudden appearance of HIV/AIDS and its disproportionate impact on African Americans is attributable to a government conspiracy against Blacks (Corbie-Smith, Thomas, Williams, and Moody-Ayers 1999, p. 541; cf. Bates 1990, p. 76).

Struggle for Civil Rights

The devaluation, denigration, and stereotyping of African American males were evident during this same era in the legal arena, as well as the medical. In 1931, nine African American youths were accused of raping two white women. The "Scottsboro Boys" were convicted in Scottsboro, Alabama. The case underscored the lack of civil rights for African Americans and the perpetuation of the myth of Black male hypersexuality and deviance; it also provided impetus to a growing civil rights movement. That movement gained significant momentum following the refusal of Rosa Parks to give up her seat on a Montgomery, Alabama bus in 1955. Her action triggered a 1-year boycott of the city's bus system by African Americans. The Supreme Court ruled the following year that the segregation of Montgomery, Alabama buses was unconstitutional. Despite the growing legal recognition of African Americans' civil rights, public opposition to integration ultimately led to the use of federal troops to uphold these rights. In 1957, federal troops were utilized for the first time since the Reconstruction Era to escort African American children to school in Little Rock, Arkansas.

African Americans continued to struggle for recognition of their civil rights: a 1960 sit-in at a Woolworth counter in Greensboro, North Carolina designed to force the integration of its lunch counter triggered similar protests throughout the South; Malcolm X in 1962 advocated African American separatism and Black Pride; and Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote about civil rights as he sat in a Birmingham, Alabama jail (PBS 2002). The violence against African Americans continued: four young African Americans were killed in the 1963 bombing of a Baptist church in Birmingham, Alabama; three civil rights workers associated with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) were murdered in response to their efforts to organize an African American voter registration drive in Mississippi; police in Montgomery, Alabama clubbed and teargassed peaceful protesters during their 1965 march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama; riots broke out in the Watts area of Los Angeles following the arrest of an African American man for reckless driving in 1965, resulting in 34 deaths and approximately 1,000 injured; and Martin Luther King, Jr. murdered in Memphis, Tennessee in 1968, prompting a week of rioting across the country. Through all of this, the Tuskegee Syphilis Study continued unabated, with the knowledge and approval of government physicians, the medical profession at large, and Congressional representatives.

Later political gains were countered by significant losses. The Equal Employment Opportunity Act was passed in 1972, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race and various other characteristics, establishing a foundation for affirmative action. However, the Supreme Court in its 1978 decision in *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* ruled against universities' use of quotas in making admission determinations, striking a blow against affirmative action. Almost 20 years later, a California court would uphold the constitutionality of Proposition 209, prohibiting state affirmative action programs.

African Americans' relatively recent gains of political visibility and influence—Thurgood Marshall's appointment to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1967, the 1983 election of Harold Washington as the first Black mayor of Chicago, Colin Powell's 1989 appointment as the first African American Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the U.S. military, the appointment of Clarence Thomas to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1991, Dr. Jocelyn Elders' confirmation as the first African American woman to serve as the U.S. Surgeon General in 1993, Barack Obama's election to the presidency in 2008—are diminished by the continuing economic marginalization, relative lack of access to stable housing and educational opportunities, and the disproportionate incarceration of many African Americans. Just as African Americans' illiteracy, poor health, and unemployment during slavery and the Reconstruction Era were attributed to their presumed inferiority (Savitt 1985, p. 351), the relative absence of economic and educational achievement of many African Americans in comparison with their White counterparts has been "scientifically" explained as the result of genetic differences in intelligence across the races and African Americans' reduced intelligence (Herrnstein and Murray 1994, pp. 269–316). As one writer observed, the assertions that African Americans are less intelligent than Whites and that this reduced level of intelligence is responsible for poverty is but yet another instance of scientific racism (Graves 2001, p. 8).

Assessing the Psychological Damage

Not surprisingly, the oppression, discrimination, and dehumanization of African American men and women and their frequent portrayal as sexually deviant has shaped understandings and manifestations of gender and sexuality both within and outside of African American communities. This is particularly evident with respect to conceptualizations of masculine identity.

Gender—what constitutes masculinity and femininity—is socially constructed (Kimmel 2003, p. 213; Stoller 1968, pp. 8–9). Gender has been defined as

> a multidimensional category of personhood encompassing a distinct pattern of social and cultural differences. Gender categories often draw on perceptions of anatomical and physiological differences between bodies, but those perceptions are always mediated by cultural categories and meanings…Gender categories are not only "models of" difference…but also "models for" difference. They convey gender-specific social expectations for behavior and temperament, sexuality, kinship and interpersonal roles, occupation, religious roles and other social patterns. Gender categories are "total social phenomena"…; a wide range of institutions and beliefs find simultaneous expression through them, a characteristic that distinguishes gender from other social statuses (Roscoe 1994: p. 341).

In contrast, gender role is everything that a person does to represent to others the degree to which he or she is male, female, or androgynous. This includes, for example, how one dresses, how one communicates both verbally and nonverbally, the roles one plays in the family and community, one's sexual feelings and to whom the individual directs those feelings, and how one experiences one's own body, as it is defined as masculine or feminine within the relevant society (Nanda 1994, pp. 395–396). One's private experience of gender role is one's gender identity; the development of that identity is a function of the dominant cultural norms, the individual's particular circumstances, and cultural influences (Harris, Torres, and Allender 1994, p. 705). Essentially, then, gender identity represents the internal experience of masculinity or femininity (Ashmore 1990, p. 512; Spence 1985, p. 61), while gender role represents its external expression (Nanda 1994, pp. 395–396).

U.S. society, however, has conflated gender and sexuality, resulting in a normative conceptualization of masculinity as both heterosexist and homophobic (Ward 2005, p. 496). It has been asserted that this prevailing view of masculinity demands hypermasculinized behavior in order to avoid being seen as a "fag" or "queer" (Kimmel and Mahler 2003, pp. 1445–1446). "An attribute that stigmatizes one type of possessor can confirm the usualness of another …" (Goffman 1963, p. 3). Accordingly, the pathologization and demonization of the homosexual thus becomes necessary in order to establish and maintain one's own position within society's hierarchy (Ward 2005, p. 496).

Various scholars have asserted that a history of slavery and continuing racism have left their psychological mark on the development of masculine identity among African American males (Cazenave 1984, p. 654; Majors and Billson 1992, p. 109; Segal 1990, p. 34). It has been suggested that African American men may experience gender role conflict as the result of the competition that exists between

the two constructions of masculinity—masculinity as defined by dominant society based on a European tradition, and masculinity as constructed from an African tradition and a history of oppression and racism (Wade 1996, p. 21). Indeed, empirical research findings suggest that racial discrimination against African Americans is ubiquitous. In one national study, only 8.8 % of non-Hispanic Blacks reported never having experienced a daily discriminatory event (Kessler, Miskelson and Williams 1999). In a community study, 70 % of African American respondents indicated that they had experienced at least one discriminatory event during their lives (Forman, Williams and Jackson 1997). Other research has found that African American males in school must often exert effort to disconfirm pre-existing beliefs that they are "dangerous, deviant, dumb, and deprived" (Taylor 1991), while in the context of employment, they are often stereotyped as lazy (Gibbs and Hines 1989; Wilson 1987).

Harris has argued that traditionally White masculine ideals of serving as the protector and breadwinner of the family, excelling in education and sports, and working as executives and leaders are unattainable by a large number of African American males due to racism and economic inequities (Harris 1995, pp. 279–280). He maintains that, as a result, many African American men have redefined masculinity to emphasize toughness, thrill seeking, promiscuity, and violence. Similarly, Oliver (1988, 1989) has asserted that the mainstream U.S. conceptualization of masculinity as the accumulation of wealth, status, and power is unattainable by many African American males, and accordingly, has been transformed to encompass toughness and being a player of women as salient qualities associated with masculinity. Others suggest that many African American males cannot experience their full potential as men due to limited education, economic disadvantage, and discrimination (Blake and Darling 1994, pp. 412–414).

Research with African American men in the U.S. lends some credence to these theories. Whitehead found in a study with both low- and high-income earning African American men that the construct of masculine respectability encompasses qualities such as being a good family provider, being legally married, acquiring a respectable level of material possessions, and having a higher education and economic independence. In contrast, the construct of masculine reputation includes sexual prowess, toughness, authority-defying behavior, fathering multiple children, and outwitting both men and women (Whitehead 1997, pp. 417–419; Whitehead, Peterson and Kaljee 1994). Whitehead asserted based on these findings that while higher income males can achieve the qualities associated with respectability, those with lesser economic capacity are foreclosed from doing so. Consequently, Whitehead argues, lower income males express reputational attributes in order to maintain a strong sense of masculinity (Whitehead 2000), leading to a "fragmented sense of the gender self" (Whitehead 1997, p. 419).

It has been asserted that masculinity is a "homosocial enactment" in that men seek the validation of their manhood from other men (Kimmel 2003, p. 214). Homophobia, then, is not a dislike or fear of gay men per se. Rather, Kimmel asserts, it is

> the fear that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men. We are afraid to let other men see that fear.

> Fear makes us ashamed, because the recognition of fear in ourselves is proof to ourselves that we are not as manly as we pretend …. (Kimmel 2003, p. 214).

The construction of femaleness, femininity, and the role of women in the Black church and community lends further credence to this thesis. For example, the role of preacher in the Black church has traditionally bestowed its holder with increased prestige, respect, and mobility, essentially serving as a vehicle of liberation from the individual's denigration and disempowerment by and exclusion from the dominant White society (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, p. 278). The role of preacher permitted its male holder to fulfill his expected economic and political roles. Douglas and Hopson (2001, pp. 98–99) explained,

> [I]t is a place where black women and men gain affirmation, status, and certain privileges—all of which are denied them in wider society because of their racial identity. For instance, the janitor in a white office building can be the respected head of the deacon board at church. The domestic worker can be the Sunday school superintendent. The black church essentially creates its own independent hierarchies and networks of power, which become avenues for people to garner ecclesiastical privilege and, thus, to vicariously realize the social and political privileges denied them.

Manhood in the Black church, then, was manifested through leadership, self-assertion, independence, and vocation (Becker 1997, p. 180). As a consequence, the formal acceptance of a more publicly powerful role for Black women in the church, such as through ordination, has been perceived as potentially emasculating men's fragile masculine identity and invading one of the few provinces in which men could reclaim, assert, and be acknowledged for that identity. Although some Black churches now permit the ordination of women, many continue to disallow it (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, pp. 285–308).

Antagonism toward gays, then, may be rooted not in dislike or fear of homosexuality per se but rather in individuals' own insecurities with their masculinity and masculine identity. If indeed God is black, if God and Jesus Christ are one and the same, and if Jesus Christ is indeed the "physical manifestation of God's activity on behalf of the oppressed" (Sneed 2010, p. 36; cf. Calhoun-Brown 1999), then Christ is the embodiment of God. The question necessarily follows, then, that if God is present in each individual and is embodied, is "gayness" embodied in each individual? If, indeed, this fear of embodying gayness exists, it is likely at an unconscious level for most or many individuals. Nevertheless, an inability to acknowledge the question and the anxiety that it provokes with respect to individuals' maleness and masculinity may well be associated with negative attitudes toward homosexuals and homosexuality.

Other factors related to African American experience and history may also be implicated in the development and perpetuation of negative attitudes toward homosexuality and homosexuals. Maslow (1970, pp. 15–31) hypothesized that individuals must first satisfy basic needs, such as hunger and safety, before they are able to attend to emotional and cognitive needs, such as the need to love others, knowledge, understanding, and self-actualization. If, indeed, life continues to be a struggle for survival in the face of continuing oppression by external forces, whether at

the individual or institutional level, the reluctance to examine exclusionary attitudes and practices toward gay men becomes understandable.

Additionally, both the fulfillment of one's attachment needs such as the need to be loved (Maslow 1970, pp. 20–21) and one's identity may be tied to fellowship in a group and group identity. If the group identity, and hence the identity of individual members of that group, is premised on the shared acceptance of specified core principles, abandonment of one or more of those principles is potentially threatening to both individual and group identity (Tempelman 1999, pp. 17–18). The contemplated relinquishment of a closely held belief—that homosexuality is wrong and is not to be accepted—may trigger fears of losing all or most of what one holds dear—community networks and attachments, family relations, and God's favor, to name but a few. The reinforcement of that belief on a regular basis by respected clergy who claim to speak the word of the Lord and by one's family members and associates may provide additional incentive to avoid any concentrated effort to examine either the validity of the judgment or its theological or psychological underpinnings.

Summary

Since their involuntary transport to North America, African Americans have often been portrayed as inferior and deviant. This widely held belief provided justification to their oppressors for their enslavement and the widespread injustice even following their liberation. Their depiction as deviant, particularly with respect to sexual mores and behavior, has been evident across domains, including even medical science and religion. The long history of enslavement and oppression has wreaked economic and psychological damage on individuals and on African Americans as a group. These effects may be associated with the rigid construction of masculinity that is notable within some segments of African American society, including some African American churches, many of which have relied on interpretations of scripture as support for their views. Acknowledgement and acceptance of homosexual as men with prestige, power, and stature equal to that of heterosexual men challenges a rigid construction of masculine identity that may already be fragile due to historical and personal experiences of devaluation, denigration, and oppression.

Chapter 2
Revelation and Liberation

Despite African Americans' long history of oppression, African American communities reflect significant strengths, derived in part from religion and religious beliefs. This chapter provides a brief review of the development of African American theology; the importance of religion in the development of African American culture; the theological derivation of themes of liberation, revelation, and power; and the ways in which these themes have become integrated into various aspects of African American culture. A discussion of male and female gender role, particularly understandings of what it means to be a man, is interwoven with the discussion of African American culture. The discussion provides an understanding of how African American religion and culture have both reflected and perpetuated antagonism and hostility toward homosexuality and homosexuals.

Revealed Word and African American Theology

Revelation has been defined as "the theological category used to describe what is known about God and how that knowledge occurs" (Stroup 1990, p. 1083). Scalise (1999, p. 95) has identified three ways of such knowing: (1) as the result of an individual's personal experiences that are shaped by his or her culture, such as seeing visions or experiencing the presence of God during his or her prayer; (2) as the result of a communally experienced event that is interpreted communally as an experience of God, such as the experience of God by the Hebrews during Exodus; and (3) through the recognition of a specified tradition, e.g., the Bible. The boundaries between these three mechanisms are fluid. For example, an event may be both an individual and a group event, such as when an individual studies scripture in a group. How the individual interprets and experiences the event is key to understanding the nature of the revelation.

S. Loue, *Understanding Theology and Homosexuality in African American Communities*, SpringerBriefs in Social Work,
DOI: 10.1007/978-1-4614-9002-9_2, © The Author(s) 2014

Bennett (1989, pp. 129–130) aptly described the significance of revelation as a source of Black/African American theology:

> The Bible, as revealed word … tries to communicate something about the purposeful ordering of society as a sign of God's intentions for his creation. The literature of the old and new Israel is religious literature because it witnesses to God as the one not only creating but also maintaining and forcefully working out freedom for the oppressed in a community for the alien or alienated. Consequently the God-and-man relationship of peoplehood must be worked out in social and political institutions of nationhood. The quest for justice among men becomes the religious quest. Yet it is not only by the mighty acts of God himself, as at the exodus and conquest and in Jesus's [*sic*] life and resurrection, but also by human response to these divine motions that the model for society is forged.

Bennett posits the all-important question: "Why did the slave ancestors accept the religion of their oppressors?" (Bennett 1989, p. 131). In response, he suggests that "the Black forefathers were brought into slavery to find the God of justice and freedom" (Bennett 1989, p. 131). Rather than accepting the gospel as but a means of survival or as but a veneer to be superimposed upon religious beliefs derived from their African roots, Bennett asserts, consistent with the thesis of Charles Long and Lawrence Jones, that the message of Christianity echoed messages already familiar to and consistent with the message of the slaves' religious heritage. That message was/is that God is the creator (Bennett 1989, p. 132) and, as the actor in human events, He will "bring about his purposes for mankind" (Bennett 1989, p. 133). As such, Jesus is seen as a revolutionary who liberated the oppressed and questioned and opposed the established religious norms of his day (Bennett 1989, p. 137). Not surprisingly, then, liberation theology has been embraced as a vehicle by which to escape oppression and injustice.

Liberation Theology and the Struggle Against Oppression

Liberation theology emerged as a theological movement in the late 1950 s and early 1960 s in Christian churches in Latin America, most notably the Roman Catholic Church (Goizueta 2005, p. 703). The development of this movement has been attributed to three significant shifts that were occurring at that time: (1) the interpretation of Third World poverty through the lens of dependency theory, that is, that the poverty that existed in less economically developed countries was a direct result of their dependence on more economically developed nations; (2) the rapprochement that occurred between the world and the church as a result of the Second Vatican Council and the second General Conference of the conference of Latin American bishops in 1968; and (3) the growth and growing influence of Latin America's "base ecclesial communities."

Liberation theologians utilized these events as the basis for the formulation of a Christian theological vision that was rooted in the everyday experiences of Latin American Christians, including poverty and the struggle for justice. This approach received official support through the Second Vatican

Council's Constitution on the Church in the Modern World and the later General Conference of the conference of Latin American bishops. The bishops concluded that the poverty in which many were living was contrary to the will of God. This was interpreted as an endorsement of the developed grassroots movement involving the application of the gospel by poor Christians to civic and political activity (Goizueta 2005, p. 703).

Gustavo Gutiérrez a Peruvian priest and one of the foremost liberation theologians, identified three dimensions of liberation: (1) liberation from all forms of social, political, and economic oppression; (2) rejection by the poor of their suffering as a mandate of God, the development of an understanding of their poverty as rooted in social, historical, and human causes, and acceptance of their responsibility to act as agents of change; and (3) liberation from sin and death, as a gift from Jesus Christ (Goizueta 2005, p. 705), to enable mankind to live in communion with him and to facilitate human fellowship (Gutiérrez 1988, p. 25). The first two forms of liberation require human action; the third can only be brought about by Jesus Christ.

The development of black liberation theology and its theme of freedom mirror these three dimensions.[9] Black liberation theology traces its beginnings to a survival tradition among slaves and a history of racial oppression (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, p. 176, 201). One scholar noted,

> What may be called the liberation tradition in black religion also begins with the determination to survive, but because it is exterior rather than primarily interior (and for that reason its carriers find more space in which to maneuver) it goes beyond strategies of sheer survival to strategies of elevation—from "make do" to "must do more." Both strategies are basic to Afro-American life and culture. They are intertwined in complex ways throughout the history of the diaspora. Both are responses to reality in a dominating white world …. (Wilmore 1983, p. 227).

Later events further propelled the development of black liberation theology. On July 31, 1966, the National Committee of Negro Churchmen released a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times*, titled "Black Power." The statement was an attempt by Northern Black clergy to mediate the growing divide between Martin Luther King Jr.'s philosophy of nonviolence and calls by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee for black resistance to white oppression (Sneed 2010, p. 28). The "Black Manifesto," released in 1967 following a Detroit conference that focused on the role of churches and synagogues in the alleviation of problems suffered by the urban poor, demanded monetary reparations to address the economic and educational inequities that had resulted from the slave trade (Sneed 2010, pp. 28–29). The theologian and academic James Cone made clear the connection between Black Power and Christianity:

> It is my thesis … that Black Power, even in its most radical expression, is not an antithesis to Christianity, nor is it a heretical idea to be tolerated with painful forbearance. It is, rather, Christ's central message to twentieth-century America. And unless the empirical denominational church makes a determined effort to capture the man Jesus through a total identification with the suffering poor as expressed in Black Power, that church will become exactly what Christ is not (Cone 1969, p. 2).

Joseph Washington's later call for a theology in the Black church added further momentum:

> I believe, the religion of the Negro lacks the following: a sense of the historic Church, authentic roots in the Christian tradition, a meaningful theological frame of reference, a search for renewal, an ecumenical spirit, and a commitment to an inclusive Church" (Washington 1984, p. vii).[10]

Black experience of oppression by whites and the subsequent struggle for self-determination, power, and autonomy thus became the foundation for black liberation theology; black liberation theology served as the religious corollary of Black power. According to Kacela (2005, p. 201), "Black liberation theology is a discipline committed to justice issues for the people of God, particularly African Americans." He has argued that this perspective is largely rooted in justifiable anger at the injustices that have been inflicted on Blacks, a position that stands in sharp contrast to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s espousal of love.[11] As Alves (1977, p. 134) has noted, whatever the world is, it is a construction of humans that can be changed; this is the underlying premise of liberation theology. Black theology and liberation are inextricably intertwined in their focus on human transformation:

> Black theology is a theology of liberation. It seeks to plumb the black condition in the light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, so that the black community can see that the gospel is commensurate with the achievement of black humanity. Black theology is a theology of "blackness." It is the affirmation of black humanity that emancipates black people from white racism, this providing authentic freedom for both white and black people. It affirms the humanity of white people in that it says no to the encroachment of white oppression (National Committee of Black Churchmen 1969, in Wilmore and Cone 1979, p. 101).

That the God of Black liberation theology is black has its roots in the survival tradition (Washington 1984, p. xvi). It has been noted that "the color of God could only assume importance in a society in which color played a major part in the determination of human capacity, human privilege and human value" (Lincoln 1974, p. 148). Indeed, it is doubtful that black individuals could identify with and feel protected by a white God in such a context (Lincoln 1974, p. 149). Bishop Henry McNeil Turner of the African Methodist Episcopal Church asserted:

> We have as much right biblically and otherwise to believe that God is a Negro, as you buckra or white people have to believe that God is a fine looking, symmetrical and ornamented white man…. Every race of people since time began who have attempted to describe their God by words, or by paintings, or by carvings, or by any other form or figure, have conveyed the idea that the God who made them and shaped their destinies was symbolized in themselves, and why should not the Negro believe that he resembles God as much as other people? (quoted in Wilmore 1983, p. 125).[12]

Accordingly, Jesus as Black had—and continues to have—both political and theological implications. Indeed,

> [i]t was [Blacks'] way of saying that his cross and resurrection represented God's solidarity with the oppressed in their struggle for liberation. The oppressed do not have to accept their present misery as the final definition of their humanity. The poor no longer have to remain in poverty. They are now free to fight for their freedom, because God is fighting with them (Cone 1989, p. 189).

Black Culture: Reflections of Liberation, Revelation, and Power

Themes of liberation and revelation are evident in African American culture, reflected in the various components that comprise Black popular culture: (1) an emergence from West and Central African cultures, the transatlantic slave trade, and colonialism; (2) a sufficiently large population to voice and evidence common values, beliefs, and goals; (3) a collective life experience of racial and cultural discrimination, segregation, and identification that has given rise to a sense of solidarity and community; (4) a "black aesthetic" reflecting a post-slavery, post-colonial Black identity; and (5) a desire to bear witness to cultural difference (Powell 2002, pp. 14–15). These motifs are echoed in varying degrees in African American literature produced during the early twentieth century, such as James Weldon Johnson's 1912 novel, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, which follows the protagonist from his mixed racial beginnings in the segregated South to his ultimate decision to pass as White (Powell 2002, p. 30).

Unlike Johnson, many African American artists were critical of the racism that prevailed in the U.S. These included the writer William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, who denounced then-President Roosevelt's dishonorable discharge of an entire battalion of African American soldiers in Texas; the sculptor Scott Hathaway, whose plaster busts honored the educator Booker T. Washington; the poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar; and the sculptor Meta Vaux Warnick Fuller, who created in 1907 a 14-part tableau depicting "the Negro's progress" and in 1914 a statue of a woman of African ancestry entitled "The Awakening of Ethiopia" (Powell 2002, pp. 34–36).

The Negro Renaissance of the 1920 s and 1930 s, also known as the "Negro Literary Renaissance," the "New Negro Arts Movement," and "Manhattan's Black Renaissance" permitted African American artists access to mainstream venues and media that had previously been closed to them (Powell 2002, p. 50). Harlem became an important cultural center for many African American painters, writers, and photographers. Paris, too, attracted many African Americans, some of whom had become acquainted with the city through their service in the military during World War I. Paris—and France in general—appeared to offer greater freedom than was possible in the still-segregated U.S. (Powell 2002, p. 56).

The concept of the "New Negro," embodying themes of urbanity, progress, growth, and rebirth took hold and were reflected in the works of Paul Robeson, Langston Hughes, Duke Ellington, and Ethel Waters (Powell 2002, p. 41). The appearance of the African American dancer Josephine Baker on a Paris stage in 1925 was said to have defined the "New Negro" in Paris (Powell 2002, p. 59). Artists of the Harlem Renaissance, seeking to "rewrite racist stereotypes," portrayed Blacks as descendants of Egyptian civilization (Goeser 2007, pp. 173–174), although the Blacks who had been brought to the colonies/United States had their origin in West Africa, not in Egypt (Lincoln 1989, p. 7). These linkages between an Egyptian heritage and the modern African American are evident in

numerous artistic works of the period, including the 1928 illustration by Aaron Douglas of silhouetted African American figures against modern buildings; in Charles Dawson's 1927 illustration of an African American female dressed in an Egyptian-style headdress and breastplate; and in James L. Wells' juxtaposition in a 1931 linocut of a Black youth and an Egyptian pyramid (Goeser 2007, pp. 175–180).

Even works by female African American artists of the Harlem Renaissance promoted an image of the modern African American woman as light-skinned, sensuous, and Europeanized (Goeser 2007, p. 190). While these images may have helped to counter the existing derogatory portrayals of African American women as mammies and all female children as pickaninnies[13] (Goeser 2007, pp. 5–6), it can also be argued that such representations of African American women led to the further concretization of stereotypes focused on Black sexualities, a preference for "light skin" color, and the entrenchment of male and female gender roles within African American communities.

During the period of time known as the Harlem Renaissance, African American artists and authors increasingly focused their attention on themes of religion and religious devotion. African American illustrators and writers challenged through their work "white religious preconceptions" and the "dominant color paradigm" in which black had come to symbolize evil and white to represent holiness (Goeser 2007, p. 207). Aaron Douglas, for example, portrayed Adam as an African American man in his 1927 "Creation." Langston Hughes referred in his poem "Christ in Alabama" to the victims of Southern lynching as "Nigger Christ(s)/On the cross of the South" (Goeser 2007, p. 207).

This incorporation of Black figures into Western artistic religious conventions was premised in part on the style of biblical exegesis known as Ethiopianism (Goeser 2007, p. 215). This approach to Biblical interpretation was initiated in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by African theologians who took Psalm 68:31—"Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God"—as a sign that individuals of African descent would experience a renaissance through their relationship with God (Moses 1978, p. 157). Rather than viewing black skin as the result of Ham's curse for staring at his father's nakedness (Genesis 9:20–27), Ethiopianists viewed black skin as a gift and a mark of the prophetic abilities of individuals of African descent (Goeser 2007, p. 215). The one-act play, *The First One*, authored by Zora Neale Hurston, reflected Ethiopianism in its reinterpretation of Noah's curse against Ham (Hurston 1927, pp. 55–57). This perspective is also evident in the poem by the African American poet Countee Cullen entitled "Colors," in which she portrays Simon as a loyal follower of Christ, unlike Simon's White counterparts:

> Yea, he who helped Christ up Golotha's track,
> That Simon who did *not* deny, was black (Cullen 1927, p. 11).

Du Bois recognized in his writings the importance of Christianity to the African American community. He emphasized the association between Christ's simple life and that of working-class African Americans, "describing the infant Christ

as 'lying in a manger, down among lowly black folk'" (Du Bois 1926, title page; Goeser 2007, p. 211).

Other writers extended their work beyond the parameters of Ethiopianism, transforming religious figures traditionally portrayed as White into figures that were Black, e.g., Adam, shepherds, the angel Gabriel, the prodigal son, Jesus, and the Madonna (Goeser 2007, pp. 221–223). The transformation of a White God into one of color soon became wed to politics when Marcus Garvey of the Universal Negro Improvement Association urged marchers in its August 1924 convention to recognize Jesus as "the Black Man of Sorrows" and the Virgin Mary as a Black woman (Garvey 1924, pp. 747–648).[14] Numerous African American artists and writers, including the artist E. Campbell Simms and the writers Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen, drew parallels between Christ's crucifixion on the cross and the lynching of Black men in the South for crimes that they did not commit. In response to the clear miscarriage of justice in the trial of the Scottsboro, Alabama boys accused of raping two White women, Langston Hughes (1931, p. 1) authored the poem *Christ in Alabama*:

> Christ is a Nigger,
> Beaten and black—
> O, bare your back.
> Mary is His Mother—
> Mammy of the South,
> Silence your mouth.
> God's His Father—
> White Master above,
> Grant us your love.
> Most holy bastard
> Of the bleeding mouth:
> Nigger Christ
> On the cross of the South.

This era also saw a growing debate among Harlem Renaissance artists and others surrounding the appropriate style of church worship. While some adopted the more conservative styles of the White Protestant churches, others, such as Langston Hughes, heralded ecstatic worship as a form to be celebrated (Goeser 2007, p. 212). Even today, the "average Black congregation "is a singing church—a fact well documented by the legions who have risen to fame and fortune in the world of secular music but who began their careers with the choirs of the local black churches" (Spillers 1971, p. 25, quoted in Marable 1989, p. 331).

Many of the artists attended church because it provided opportunities that were not otherwise available to African Americans at the time. The writer James Weldon Johnson explained:

> Going to church is an outlet for the Negro's religious emotions; but not the least reason why he is willing to support so many churches is that they furnish so many agreeable activities and so much real enjoyment. He is willing to support them because he has not yet, and will not have until there is far greater economic and intellectual development and social organization, any other agencies that can fill their place (Johnson 1930, 1991, pp. 165–166).

The 1927 compilation of poems, essays, and illustrations by Charles S. Johnson in *Ebony and Topaz* addressed issues of mixed race identity, homosexuality, bisexuality, and transvestism (Goeser 2007, pp. 249–264), themes that were rarely addressed. With the advent of the Depression, African American artists and writers increasingly emphasized issues such as economic hardship, unemployment, and industry in African American art and literature. The rape charges brought against the African American men in Scottsboro, Alabama gave rise to themes of cultural and social uprising, both in the U.S. and France (Powell 2002, p. 78).

The period from 1940 through 1963 has been portrayed as one involving multiple transformations of African American culture. Protest and pessimism became evident in the writings of Chester Himes, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, and Richard Wright (Powell 2002, p. 89).

According to some scholars, there has been a resurgence of Black cultural nationalism in the United States during the past two decades (Ransby and Matthews 1993, p. 58). This resurgence, attributed to a growing sense of frustration within African American communities, is evidenced in the cultural movement of Afrocentrism, increasing interest in Malcolm X, and the emergence and proliferation of hip-hop/rap culture. Each of these trends both adopts an oppositional stance toward conventional authority and embodies a male-centered vision of empowerment and liberation, resulting in the marginalization and denigration of those not perceived as sufficiently masculine, i.e., women and homosexuals (Ransby and Matthews, 1993, p. 57).

Afrocentrism has been defined as “a methodology for scholarship and political practice which puts people of African descent at the centre, rather than in the margins …” (Ransby and Matthews 1993, p. 58). It is often presented as a return to the African roots of the American African American communities, a history that is often simplistically portrayed as classless, conflict-free, and lacking in diversity. These African roots, according to Afrocentrism, harken back to a place and time in the world when the roles of men and women were “complementary”: men ruled and women obeyed (Ransby and Matthews 1993, p. 59). Asante, who championed Afrocentrism, condemned homosexuality and exhorted African American men “to redeem [their] Black manhood through Afrocentric action” (Asante 1980, p. 21).

The struggle for Black liberation is often attributed almost entirely to Malcolm X and various groups such as the Black Panther Party; the contributions of not only women, but also men who identified as homosexual, such as Bayard Rustin, are frequently ignored (Alexander 2004, p. 79; Ransby and Matthews 1993, p. 62). This portrayal of African Americans’ struggles for equality creates the erroneous impression that Malcolm X was a sexist, albeit a protective patriarch as well (Ransby and Matthews 1993, p. 63).

Hip-hop, also known as rap, originated in the Bronx in New York during the mid-1970 s (Neal 1999). Often associated with a youth-oriented African American culture, the genre appears to be the product of a transformation from the physical gang terrorization of Bronx neighborhoods to gangs’ war of words in which graffiti was used for self-promotion and to mark gang territory (Hager 1984, p. 29). The use of words progressed to become hip-hop, “a form of rhymed storytelling

accompanied by highly rhythmic, electronically based music" (Rose 1994, p. 2). Hip-hop as a culture is said to embody four distinct features: breaking, or break dancing; tagging or bombing, referring to the marking of walls of buildings and subways with graffiti; DJ-ing, meaning "collaging" music by using two turntables; and MC-ing, or rapping (Hager 1984). Although there are a few female rappers and a few admittedly gay rappers, hip-hop is dominated by "masculine" men, "real" men who have a penis; act in a manner that is perceived to be masculine, that is, not like a "faggot" (McLeod 1999, p. 142); and often glorify and/or are involved in criminal activities (Hager 1984, pp. 80–87). Hip-hop is blatantly homophobic (Byers 1997, p. 108; Ginsky 2000; Hardy 1997, p. 109; Shoals 2011). The lyrics to Lil' Wayne's "Go DJ" from the album *Ready to Die* provide one example:

> You snakes, stop hidin in the grass,
> Sooner or later I'll cut it knock the blades in yo ass,
> You homo niggas getting AIDS in the ass,
> While the homie here tryna get paid in advance"
> While the homie here tryna get paid in advance"

Byron Hurt, director of the documentary "Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes" that explores hip-hop's stereotypes about masculinity, explained the root of hip-hop's homophobia in an interview:

> We're in a box. And in order to be in that box, you have to be strong, you have to be tough, you have to have a lot of girls, you gotta have money, you have to be a player or a pimp, know you gotta be in control, you have to dominate other men, other people, and if you are not any of those things, then you know people will call you soft, or weak, or a pussy, or a chump, or a faggot, and nobody wants to be any of those things. So everybody stays in the box (Hurt, quoted in Choy 2012).

Summary

Religion and church participation have played a major role in the survival of African Americans, their communities, and their culture. Religion and the church have afforded African Americans an opportunity to recast their image from that of deficiency and deviance to one of power and strength. Liberation theology, in particular, has served as a basis for the visualization and effectuation of independence, justice, and human transformation. Themes of liberation, revelation, and power are reflected in African American art, literature, and music. The contributions made by self-identified homosexuals (and women) to liberation efforts have frequently been downplayed or ignored. More recently, conceptualizations of masculinity within some segments of African American society have evolved to emphasize violence, the denigration of women, and the portrayal of homosexuals as weak and deviant.

Chapter 3
Same-Sex Relations in Scripture and the African American Church

The denunciation of and hostility toward homosexuals and homosexuality that is seen in some elements of African American culture and society is also evident in some African American churches. Some clergy who have adopted this stance have relied on seven scriptural passages as a basis for their condemnation of same-sex sexual behavior and, in some cases, their exclusion of individuals from their worship community. These passages are explored through the lens of deviance theory to examine: (1) who comprised the audience that was the target of specified scriptural passages and how that audience viewed acts of male–male sex, (2) whether the teachings of modern-day African American churches with respect to male–male sexual acts and men who engage in such acts are congruent with the audience perspective that prevailed at the time that relevant scriptural passages were written, and (3) what factors may explain the divergence between current day church teachings and the understandings that prevailed at the time of the passages' writing, if such divergence exists.

Understandings of the original language in which the relevant scriptural passages were composed—the Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek—are drawn from a variety of traditions. This will enable the reader of this text to understand that both diverse interpretations of these passages exist and that these varying interpretations often differ widely in their understandings. This appreciation of the varied interpretations may be both relevant and critical in the context of therapeutic work with clients, families, and communities. Through this process it becomes clear that, although a "clear, straightforward reading of the biblical text seems to indicate that homosexuality and homosexual acts are forbidden for Jew and Christian alike … if one is honest to Scripture, tradition, reason, and modern scholarship, the matter is not so simple" (Woggon 1981, 157).

Genesis 1:26–29

The opening passage of Genesis with its references to male, female, and procreation has frequently been cited as "proof" that God intended sexual relations to occur only between men and women. However, the multiple and varying

S. Loue, *Understanding Theology and Homosexuality in African American Communities*, SpringerBriefs in Social Work,
DOI: 10.1007/978-1-4614-9002-9_3, © The Author(s) 2014

interpretations of the passage by well-qualified scholars suggest that there is ample room for significant disagreement with respect to the writer's intent and the meaning that the writer's contemporaries may have derived from the passage. The relevant portion of the passage reads:

> [26]Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." [27]So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. [28]God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Gen. 1:26–29; NRSV).

The Context of the Passage

This portion of Genesis has often been referred to as the Primeval History that is "the origins of the universe and God's plan to relate to it, and especially to humans…" (Arnold 2009, 7). It has been understood to be a compilation of myth and legend (Arnold 2009, 2). While the characterization of a narrative as a myth is often seen as pejorative, the use of the term here refers to a specific narrative form that is designed to provide an explanation of events in the real world (Coats 1983, 10). As a myth, Genesis 1:26–29 provides an explanation of the origin of "everything the Israelites believed important for understanding their salvation history," including the cosmic origin of the world (Arnold 2009, 7). Genesis 1:26–29 was likely written during the post-Exilic period, between 538 and 450 (Blenkinsopp 1996; Gunkel 1997, 131; Sparks 2007, 645; von Rad 1972, 25) by the writer who has been called the Priestly, or P, writer.[15]

Various commentators have noted similarities between this creation story and the Babylonian creation myth of *Enūma Elish* (Arnold 2009, 33–54; Gunkel 1984; Lambert 1965; Lim 2005; Miller 1972; Smyth 2009; Speiser 1962; Waltke 1975a, b). This Babylonian myth tells the story of how Marduk became the king of the gods. Marduk first defeated Tiamat, the primeval sea depicted as a dragon, by dividing her into two parts; this separation of Tiamat resulted in the separation of the heavens from the earth and created the space for heavenly bodies and humans. Ea had developed the idea of humanity, but the actual formation of man did not occur until Ea's son Marduk formed humanity from the blood of Qingu, the demonic god defeated by Marduk in battle (Sparks 2007, 630). Not only are Genesis 1: 1–2:4a, including Genesis 1:26–29, and the myth of *Enūma Elish* similar in content, but they also reflect similarities in the order of creation (Waltke 1975b).

Scholars have attempted to understand the reasons that may account for these similarities in structure and content. Sparks (2007, 628) suggested that these likenesses may be due to (a) a direct connection, whereby Genesis 1 depends on the story of *Enūma Elish*; (b) a mediated connection, which suggests that the P writer knew about the *Enūma Elish* from another source; (c) a common source, which would mean

that both the Genesis 1 creation story and *Enūma Elish* utilized a common source; (d) a common tradition, such that both Genesis 1 and *Enūma Elish* share a common tradition but are not themselves connected; or (e) a phenomenological explanation, whereby both Gen. 1 and *Enūma Elish* have come about due to similar but unrelated events or circumstances. An alternative schema, consisting of five possibilities, has been proposed by Lim (2005, 74–75): (a) divergence, suggesting that there was no borrowing between the Israelites and neighboring cultures; (b) distance, whereby there was no borrowing of theology, but only of vocabulary and structure, with similarities being traceable to a common tradition; (c) dialogue, that is, adaptive modification by the Israelites of aspects of neighboring cultural traditions; (d) developmental, whereby the uniqueness of the Israelites was overtaken and subsumed in the culture of the Canaanites; and (e) disjunction, whereby the Israelites interacted with the neighboring cultures, but each culture retained its separate identity.

Regardless of the underlying reasons, these similarities strongly suggest that the creation story in Genesis 1:26–29 was not composed for the specific purpose of establishing either a blueprint for or parameters for human sexual relations. Indeed, it is more likely in view of the extant scholarship noted above that this scriptural passage may reflect an attempt by the Israelites to either differentiate themselves from their neighboring cultures or to adopt some features of or ideas from those cultures.

Understanding the Passage

Eilberg-Schwartz (1991) reviewed the multiple interpretations of this passage and, accepting the potential validity of each, explored the various implications of each perspective for mankind's sexuality. These interpretations can be summarized as follows:

- God has no bodily form and therefore God has no sex; the creation of man in God's image refers only to the sharing of spiritual or higher level functions (Eilberg-Schwartz 1991, 13). Sarna (1970, 15–16) similarly notes,

  > the idea of man "in the image of God" must inevitably include within the scope of its meaning all those faculties and gifts of character that distinguish man from beast and that are needed for the fulfillment of his task on earth, namely, intellect, free will, self-awareness, consciousness of the existence of others, conscience, responsibility, and self-control.

- Man is like animals with respect to embodiment. However, only man is created as male and female; unlike animals, man has sexuality (Sarna 1989, 13; Trible 1978, 15).
- God has a form which is visible only under some conditions, as evidenced in Exodus 24: 9–11, 33:17, 33:23, Ezekiel 1:26–28; 1 Kings 22:19, Amos 9:1, Isa 6:1, and Daniel 7:9. Accordingly, man "in the image of God" refers to both a physical and qualitative resemblance of man to God (Eilberg-Schwartz 1991, 15–16).

Any one of these scenarios, as Eilberg-Schwartz observes, is fraught with difficulties for humankind's sexuality. God is monotheistic, that is, partner-less. If humans

are created in the image of God and God is sexless and body-less, but humans are to procreate, then it is only the body and not embodiment that is validated (Eilberg-Schwartz 1970, 17). If humans are created in the image of God physically and God has a body, then questions are raised as to the sex of God's genitals and how male and female bodies can both resemble God. One must also ask of what use God's genitalia might be, regardless of whether they are male or female genitalia, as God is monotheistic and, at least according to official sources, does not have a consort. This is also problematic because if man or woman is created in God's image, and God's genitalia are useless, one might then conclude that the creation in God's image renders human reproductive organs useless (Eilberg-Schwartz 1970, 18–19). Eilberg-Schwartz (1970, 19, n. 60) suggests that the concept of an androgynous God most closely approximates a resolution to the issue of God's sex or lack thereof because it permits the possibility that both male and female bodies were made in God's image and also "reconciles the division of the sexes with the image of God." However, even as an androgynous deity, God still does not procreate or have sexual experiences, so that a critical distinction between God and humans remains.

Greenberg (2004) also suggests that the first human was likely androgynous.[16] Carden (2006, 26–27) has reached a similar conclusion for androgyny, albeit via a different path of analysis. He reasoned that because the Kabbalistic Tree of Life is androgynous but still embraces sexuality, it naturally flows from this that "the androgyne is the model for each and every human, that male and female represent a fluid continuum in each individual that must be brought into harmony" (Carden 2006, 27). He notes, as well, that Rabbinic Judaism recognized that some individuals were born neither male nor female. While not referring specifically to androgyny, Sarna (1989, 13) recounts the wisdom of the sages of the Jewish text, the Mishnah. They observed that mankind was created as a single unit in order to promote social harmony. Because mankind was so created, it follows that the destruction of a single life is as if the entire world is destroyed; conversely, the preservation of a single life is as if the world is saved.

Various commentators have voiced disagreement with this interpretation depicting God as androgynous. Based on her analysis of the specific words used in the original text, Trible concluded that (1) humankind exists as male and female and cannot be androgynous; " (2) Adam," meaning humankind generally, represents a "unity that is subsequently split apart by sexual division"; (3) "male and female" are treated equally, rather than one having superiority and the other being subordinate; (4) because the phrase fails to allocate specific tasks to either male or female, significant freedom is available in interpreting "male" and "female"; and (5) sexual differentiation characterizes humankind, but is not a feature of God because God is neither male nor female and is not a combination of the two (Trible 1978, 18–21).

Von Rad (1972, 60), like Trible, rejects the notion that the first man might have been androgynous. Concurrent with the creation of male and female, mankind is given the blessing of procreation. Von Rad (1972, 60–61) removes the ability to procreate from God's image; procreation can no longer be associated with the

gods and fertility rites. Like Trible and von Rad, Davidson (1988, 6–7) disputes the possibility that man was originally androgynous; Davidson argues instead that the passage establishes man and woman together as comprising mankind and lays the foundation for the explicit teaching in Gen. 2 that "the full meaning of human existence is not in male or female in isolation, but in their mutual communion" (Davidson 1988, 8).[17] The creation of man in God's image, he maintains, means not only that man's physical and mental aspects were created in God's image, but also that man is to have "dominion over the earth as God's representative" (Davidson 1988, 8–9).

Bird has also asserted that the writer of this portion of the Old Testament would have rejected any notion that God might possess sexuality; man is like other creatures with respect to sexual differentiation, but is unlike God, who does not possess sexuality (Bird 1981, 148). Humanity, not God, is bisexual in nature (Bird 1981, 150). Accordingly, the distinction between male and female does not pertain to the image of God, but rather provides a transition to the subsequent discussion relating to the blessing of fertility.

Yet another interpretation of the passage is possible based on our knowledge of the collective unconscious. Jung postulated that males possess feminine qualities (anima) and females possess masculine attributes (animus) (Hart 2008, 98). These "inner" figures derive, in part, from archetypes of masculine and feminine and, in part, from the individual's own experiences, beginning with one's experiences with mother and father (Hart 2008, 98–99). Archetypes derive from a collective unconscious and, as such, they are collective, universal, impersonal, inherited, identical motifs (Jung 1969, 42–43). These archetypes are not directly observable, but rather are manifested in dreams, delusions, myths, symbols, and stories. Further, man's (meaning men and women) ultimate goal as he matures is the discovery of Self, or what has otherwise been called individuation (Ulanov 2008, 323–324).

If we conceive the figure of "Adam" as androgynous, "Adam" then represents the integration of the masculine and feminine qualities and, as such, represents the Self, not only in the individual sense, but also in the sense of humankind. Man (referring to mankind) is created in the image of God, thereby representing the constellation of all potentiality. Whether the animus or anima is to prevail ultimately depends on the extent to which "Adam" is able and willing to recognize and reconcile himself to these parts of the Self. Accordingly, male and female are created equal; neither is superior to the other, but each must recognize and accept the nature of the other.

Although some commentators have endorsed the observation that each human comprises masculine and feminine qualities and have utilized this observation to interpret some scriptural passages (e.g., Kille 2001; Miller, D. L., 1995; Woggon 1981, 160–161), caution must be exercised in interpreting the passage in this manner. Although archetypes are inherited and collective, the forms that they assume vary across time, location, and culture (cf. Pietikainen 1998). Consequently, we cannot be assured that the forms that we understand to be archetypes now were actually archetypes at that time.

Conclusions

A return to our original three questions—the composition of the original audience, the congruence between the teachings of African American churches with respect to the passages and the perspective of the original audience, and the reasons for possible divergence—leads us to conclude as follows. First, this passage represents an attempt to explain the creation of the universe; this myth may have been developed independently, or it may have been borrowed in part from surrounding cultures. The audience of the time consisted of Israelites who had been in exile who, as a result of the fall of Jerusalem, the end of the monarchy, and the destruction of the temple (God's home), were forced to reconceive their theology. Second, sexuality is not the focus of the passage. Third, the portions of the passage traditionally relied upon to champion opposite-sex sexual activities as the only God-endorsed form of sexual behavior and to condemn same-sex sexual activity are actually subject to widely divergent interpretations. A critical analysis of the various interpretations and the context in which the passage was originally composed and delivered suggests that the passage neither condemns same-sex sexual activity nor explicitly endorses opposite-sex sexual behavior other than those which may lead to procreation. Accordingly, deviance theory would suggest that same-sex sexual activity may not have been perceived as deviant by the original audience. Reliance on this passage as a basis for the condemnation of homosexuality, as some churches do, suggests a need for rigidly defined categories of being and behavior. Further, the current reliance on this passage by some churches to distinguish between those who sin and those who do not, between those who are to be afforded full recognition and those who are to be tolerated at best, suggests that these distinctions may well have been constructed to establish, reinforce, and maintain power by those who are viewed by the larger society as relatively lacking in power and as deviant themselves.

Genesis 19:1–5

The story of Lot and the angels in Sodom has frequently provided the basis for those alleging that scripture unambiguously condemns homosexuality and has, consequently, become known as a "clobber passage," "clobber text" (Goss 1993, 90–91; Hanks 2006, 701; West 1999, 32–33) or "text of terror" (Bardella 2001, 122; cf. Trible 1984, 75). As written, the story is as follows:

> The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed down with his face to the ground. [2]He said, "Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you can rise early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the square."[3]But he urged them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. [4]But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house; [5]and they called to Lot,

> "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we may know them."[6]Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, [7]and said, "I beg you my brothers, do not act so wickedly. [8]Look, I have two daughters who have not known a man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof." [9]But they replied, "Stand back!" And they said, "This fellow came here as an alien, and he would play the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them." Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near the door to break it down (Gen. 19:1–9; NRSV).

The story has been interpreted to have various meanings: (1) the men's desire "to know" the visitors reflects a desire to know them sexually, that is, to engage in male–male sex (De Young 1991); (2) Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual perversion and immorality (cf. Alter 1990, 157); (3) the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah evidences the immorality of male–male sex, i.e., homosexuality (Feinberg 1985, 17–19; Fields 1992, 28); (4) Lot is horrified that visitors may be raped and the homosexual nature of sex is so wrong that Lot is willing to offer his daughters (Ukleja 1983, 262); (5) Lot is horrified that the visitors will be raped because he has an obligation to protect them and, for this reason, he offers up his daughters in their place (Boyarin 1995, 349; Toensing 2005, 62–63); and (6) Lot is obligated to protect his guests from harm and from shame and offers his valuable, virgin daughters as hostages in exchange for the safety of the men, with the understanding that the daughters are to be returned to him unharmed (Morschauser 2003, 478). An understanding of what the passage may have signified to its then-audience requires an examination of the context in which it was written.

The Context

Relatively little is known about the lives of the individuals during the period in which this portion of Genesis was written; this includes their understandings of sexuality and sexual behavior. It is known, however, that Sodom was a Canaanite city (Althaus-Reid 2003, 84) that has been identified with the remains of a large Early Bronze Age (3300–2000 BCE) city located southeast of the Dead Sea in Jordan (Arnold 2009, 184). The passage was likely composed by the J writer (Gunkel 1997, 205; Speiser 1962, 137). The date of that authorship remains somewhat controversial, with some scholars placing the writing during the eighth or ninth centuries BCE or earlier (Arnold 2009, 15; Gunkel 1997, xvii), and others suggesting that it was authored during the reign of King David, between 1005 and 965 BCE (Coote and Ord 1989). Still other writers have indicated that it may have been composed during the exilic or post-exilic periods of Israel's history (Van Seters 1992), which would place it around or after 586 BCE.

Homosexual behavior was a component of Canaanite life (Althaus-Reid 2003, 84). Whether the residents of Sodom had ambivalent sexual desires remains unclear (Althaus-Reid 2003, 85). Because the text of this passage is saturated with violence—men against the visitors, Lot against his daughters, God against almost everyone—it has been asserted that Sodom was known for its inhospitable climate and violence (Althaus-Reid 2003, 91).

Understanding the Passage

It has been suggested that the interpretation of the story as a prohibition against homosexual acts in Jewish circles did not occur until the end of the first century C.E., with the writings of Philo. This view may have been a response to "the widespread homosexual behavior in the ancient Greco-Roman world that was such an offense to Jew and Christian alike" due to its violation of the patriarchal structure of society (Woggon 1981, 158–159). Writers of the Christian Right and conservative biblical scholars have frequently premised their interpretation on the assumption that the sexual orientation of the men of Sodom was homosexual and may have implicitly linked homosexual desire with violence (Toensing 2005, 62). However, the range of ages of the men of Sodom and Gomorrah and the betrothal of Lot's daughters to men of Sodom suggest that the men are engaged in heterosexual relationships and that the communities do not represent the "sterile sex of homosexuality" as some conservative writers have claimed (Toensing 2005, 67).

It has been asserted that the issue is not whether homosexual sex was involved, but rather the meaning of the sexual acts in context; it is the violation of Lot's hospitality that constitutes the abuse. The actual issue is the humiliation of the stranger through sex; "the Sodomites were first and foremost inhospitable; they thought it good sport to humiliate foreign guests" (Temple 2004, 58). It may have also been an attempt to exercise their power over Lot, a resident alien, and to shame him by abusing his guests (Toensing 2005, 68; Tonson 2001, 99). The men's rejection of Lot's offer of his daughters was likely not a preference for sexual relations with men, but instead a desire to avoid shaming the Sodomite men to whom his daughters were betrothed and to challenge Lot's power (Toensing 2005, 73). Accordingly, it has been argued, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because of evils enacted toward outsiders, the unwillingness to share resources, and acts of cruelty toward the poor, all done in order to maintain their wealth and privilege. The Sodomites do not act out of a same-sex desire against Lot's visitors, but rather they perpetrate the violence as a warning to others to stay away.

Nevertheless, critical significance is attached to an act of anal penetration. Because sex was about power, sexual penetration signified an assertion of superiority, rather than love or pleasure; it was, in essence, an instrument of degradation of the persons who were penetrated. The rape of the angels was an attempt to feminize them; Lot's offer of his daughters has been interpreted as his attempt to protect the masculine privilege of his guests (Carden 2006, 38). The individual who is penetrated is robbed of his prerogatives as a man making him unfit for further life, while the perpetrator becomes a danger to the social order (Temple 2004, 60). The act of violence has broad implications not only for the individual, but also for the community as a whole: the penetrated male is defective; his penetrability threatens the impenetrability of the wider social body against enemies (Long 2006, 7).

An alternative interpretation has been offered by Althaus-Reid from the perspective of queer theology. She has argued that the lack of hospitality was not the fault of the men of Sodom, but was instead attributable to God's own angels, who

were policing the sexuality of the town, reflecting God's own evil and violence. The destruction of Sodom represents the destruction of heterogeneity (Althaus-Reid 2003, 91–92).

A similar story to that of Sodom is told in Judges 19. In that story, a Levite is traveling with his concubine and a servant. He is taken under a roof in Gibeah by an Ephraimite man. The men of town demand that the traveler be brought to them; they intend to rape him. The owner of the house offers his own daughter but the Levite offers up his concubine. The men rape and abuse the concubine throughout the night; in the morning, she is found dead with her hands on the doorstep, in a futile attempt to reenter the house for protection and shelter.

Commentators have interpreted this story in Judges as reflective of the tradition of aggression toward strangers (Boyarin 1995, 352) and a violation of the sacred obligation to be hospitable toward strangers (Woggon 1981, 158). One commentator noted,

> The Biblical story demonstrates the seriousness with which these early Eastern people took the important customs of Oriental hospitality. It appears that, if necessary, they would even allow their own daughters to undergo abuse in order to protect guests. The sexual aspect of the story is simply the vehicle in which the subject of demanded hospitality is conveyed (Bailey 1955, 5).

At least one writer has interpreted the story in Judges to represent a call to arms, analogizing the assault on the concubine to an assault on the Levite's own person or his honor, and the humiliation of the Levite in the person of his concubine (Long 2006, 6). The traditional antigay interpretation of Genesis 19 most frequently omits any reference to the similar story in Judges, suggesting that homoeroticism may be erroneously equated with rape and violence (Carden 2006, 38), thereby providing the basis for a divine condemnation of same-sex relationships (Bardella 2001, 123).

Conclusion

The original audience, which consisted of ancient Israelites, would have understood this passage to refer to the lack of hospitality shown to and the violence demonstrated against the guests. The focus of Genesis 19:1–5 was not on male–male intercourse as has been suggested, but rather the failure of the residents to extend hospitality and the direction of violence toward Lot's guests. Accordingly, there exists significant disparity between the understanding of the original audience to this passage and the reliance on the passage by some African American churches to condemn homosexuality. Although without additional empirical research one cannot be certain of the factors that gave and continue to give rise to the lack of congruence between the original understandings and the current use of the passage to condemn male–male sex, several possibilities exist. First, the penetration of one man by another may violate strict gender role boundaries that some individuals may need in order to make sense of and to order their world, including

their relationships. Those who violate such boundaries are then characterized as deviant and, as a result of this imputed status, lack relative power and recognition. Second, the idea of penetration of a male by another may tap into unconscious fears that penetration of a male renders that male defective in some way and/or signifies his emasculation. Individuals—and indeed groups—who are unsure of their own roles and/or perceive life to be unpredictable or uncontrollable may hold on to this seemingly clear boundary that distinguishes men from women and good from evil.

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

Both Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:13 have been read as a prohibition against all same-sex sexual relations. It is declared in Lev. 18:22, "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination" (NRSV) and, in Lev. 20:13 (NRSV), "If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them." However, as with the passages in Genesis, their application to all forms of same-sex behavior is unclear and the underlying motivation for these injunctions even less so (Ellens 1997, 38).

The Context of the Proscription

As with the passage in Genesis, relatively little is known with respect to the lives of the people who lived at the time of its writing. Although it was once thought that the passage was composed by the P writer during the early exilic period, recent scholarship indicates that the passage was authored later, toward the end of the Hebrews' exile (538 BCE) or shortly thereafter (Coogan 2007, 142HB). Others have suggested that the passage relates to the Hebrews' religious life while wandering in Sinai after their Exodus, but prior to their arrival in the Promised Land (Levine 1989, xxv; Long 2006, 3). The specific motives underlying the laws remain uncertain (Bigger 1979, 203). What is known is that the Canaanites had been the previous inhabitants of the land that had been promised by God to the Israelites (Noth 1965, 134). The Israelites viewed the Canaanites as licentious and promiscuous; male–male intercourse was known to occur among the Canaanites (Levine 1989, 123). Their expulsion from the land in favor of Israel was likely seen as a punishment from God for their sexual behavior. Accordingly, it may have been believed that Israel was being called to maintain a level of purity that was not required of others as a means of avoiding a fate similar to that of the Canaanites (Noth 1965, 134), as an attempt to ward off abominations that might threaten the stability and order of the nation (Long 2006, 3–4). This level of purity may also have been demanded as an attempt to mirror their understanding of divine purity

(Long 2006, 3–4), or as a means by which they could distinguish and/or protect themselves from the surrounding nations (Douglas 1966, 60; Eilberg-Schwartz 1994, 93).

Interpreting the Passage

First, although some writers have interpreted the original language of the Bible to mean that all male–male sexual acts are prohibited (Biale 1992; Eilberg-Schwartz 1990; Milgrom 2000, 1567), the statements refer specifically to sexual intercourse; they do not address other forms of same-sex sexual behavior or same-sex desire (Boyarin 1995, 336–339; Cohen 2010, 5; Greenspahn 2002, 242). Second, we do not know the underlying motivation for the prohibition against same-sex intercourse. However, the statements themselves are set within the context of "a long list of commands by God against behavior that leads to ritual uncleanness under the cultic code of Israel" (Ellens 1997, 38).

Under Biblical law, seminal ejaculate was considered to be of such a quality as to render a man impure (Cohen 2010, 10); the situations in which ejaculation did not render a party impure was of primary concern if the sacred and profane domains in the world were to remain apart (Cohen 2010, 7). This separation of the sacred from the profane was deemed critical to the survival of Israel, especially during the post-exilic period; indeed, their separation signified a division between the domains of life and death (Cohen 2010, 13). Accordingly, it has been suggested that the prohibition was established as a strategy to delineate the sacred from the profane, to avoid the misuse of seminal fluid that would result in defilement and render Israel vulnerable (Cohen 2010, 12–13). This interpretation is consistent with the understanding that the prohibition applied only to the nation of Israel and only to those who wished to reside in the Holy Land; it was irrelevant to those in other geographical locations (Milgrom 2004, 196–197; Milgrom 2000, 1750). However, there is disagreement, too, as to whether the impurity associated with seminal ejaculate during male–male intercourse was attributable to the nature of semen per se (cf. Cohen 2010, 10), the mixing of the semen with excrement (cf. Bigger 1979, 195, 202–203; Olyan 1994, 202–203), or the nonprocreative nature of the act (Biale 1992, 29; Eilberg-Schwartz 1990, 183; Milgrom 2004, 1197; Milgrom 2000, 1567). As one writer noted,

> From this ancient perspective [relating to nonprocreative intercourse], even the most loving, caring male same-sexual activity, if they resulted in the emission and "death" of the living sperm, would be viewed, alongside male masturbation, as a violation of nature and of life" (Sheppard 1985, 21).

Some commentators have suggested that the prohibition against same-sex intercourse was developed in order to preserve the boundaries between categories of "male" and "female" rather than between the sacred and profane. It has been argued that the act of male–male intercourse violated these boundaries because "[r]eceptivity is bounded on the basis of biological sex; it is constructed as appropriate exclusively to

females; it is gendered as feminine" (Olyan 1994, 188); the sexually receptive man would be assuming the role that would normally be relegated to the woman (Boyarin 1995, 341, 348; Olyan 1994, 188; Thurston 1990, 7–23).[18] Douglas (1970, 54–72) suggested that beings were classified into their appropriate classes; male–male intercourse was prohibited because the receptive male was not conforming to his class (male).

There is disagreement, too, about whether it is the active partner, the receptive partner, or both who is to be castigated for his/their participation in same-sex intercourse. Walsh (2001, 208) interpreted the original language to refer specifically to anal intercourse between two men, one of whom is a free adult Israelite and assumes the passive role in the encounter. According to Walsh, the social values that existed at the time that the passage was written dictated that the male play the insertive role as a reflection of his maleness. Consequently, the assumption of a receptive role by a male was thought to bring shame not only on him, but on the penetrator as well.

Olyan, however, believed that the admonition of Leviticus 18:22 addressed only the insertive partner. In support of this thesis, he noted that the penetrator was seen as an active agent acting on his receptive partner; the receptive partner was perceived as passive and consequently guiltless (Olyan 1994, 189). Only later, in Leviticus 20:13, is the receptive partner also held culpable for the sexual intercourse. Unlike Walsh, Olyan believed that the proscription against male–male intercourse applied to all men and all such acts, regardless of the men's status as freedmen or slaves (Olyan 1994, 195–196). To do otherwise, he argued, would be contrary to the words of Leviticus 24:22, which proclaimed that there was one law that applied to all, regardless of whether they were native-born or resident alien.

Yet another interpretation suggests that the prohibition applied only to those acts of same-sex intercourse that were correlated with a similar heterosexual act that was also enumerated. As an example, a male–male liason between grandfather and grandson is prohibited because it parallels the prohibition against grandfather–granddaughter intercourse. Accordingly, same-sex intercourse between unrelated males is neither prohibited nor penalized (Milgrom 2004, 196–197; Milgrom 2000, 1569).

Conclusion

The prohibitions enumerated in Leviticus were directed specifically to the Israelites who intended to settle in the Promised Land. As such, they were inapplicable and irrelevant to others. Male-male sexual relations per se would not have been seen as deviant by the original audience of this passage. Rather, the Canaanites were seen by the Israelites as both licentious and promiscuous; whether this characterization was tied specifically to same-sex sexual activity is unknown. It is likely that intercourse between males in this audience was prohibited due to the then-association of male–male intercourse with Canaanite society,

the belief that God had punished the Canaanites through the forfeiture of their land in favor of the Israelites, and that behavior similar to that of the Canaanites would lead to similar drastic consequences. If this understanding is correct, none of these original motivations for these edicts are applicable to populations existing today. Accordingly, the condemnation of homosexuality, lesbianism, and same-sex sexual relations by some African American churches based on these passages is misplaced.

Romans 1:18–27

The meaning and current relevance of Paul's words in Romans 1:24–27 of the New Testament continue to be the subject of great controversy in theological writings. This passage, read in the larger context of Romans 1:18–27, proclaims:

> [18]For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth. [19]For what can be known about God is plain to them. [20]Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse; [21]for though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. [22]Claiming to be wise, they became fools; [23]and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or for birds or four-footed animals or reptiles. [24]Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, [25]because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. [26]For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, [27]and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error (NRSV).

This passage has been variously interpreted as referring to pederasty only (Scroggs 1983), an attack on goddess cults (Townsley 2011), "nonprocreative, heterosexual acts" (Banister 2009; Townsley 2011; Ward 1997), violations of societal hierarchies (Brooten 1996; Winkler 1990; cf. Martin 1995), homosexual acts engaged in by heterosexuals (Boswell 1980), and any participation by males or females in same-sex sexual acts (Hays 1986; Smith 1996). Today, some denominations and congregations have relied upon Paul's words to condemn homosexuality and lesbianism and/or homosexuals and lesbians—some distinguishing between sexual orientation and sexual behavior—and to exclude those deemed to be offensive from their midst and their communal worship. However, the brief analysis of this passage that follows demonstrates well that (1) Paul did not have same-sex sexual behavior as his primary concern, but rather the disrespect of God and the lack of self-control (2) Paul's words were rooted in the patriarchal context in which he lived, and (3) Paul's understanding of what was "natural" and "unnatural" was likely premised on historically and chronologically situated constructions of dominance and submission which may no longer be relevant today.

Understanding Paul and His Context

An understanding of Paul's words necessitates an understanding of Paul and the context in which he delivered those words. Despite the frequent characterization of Paul as a Christian (see, e.g., Balch 1998, 434), Paul was Jewish (Betz 1992, 1987; Eisenbaum 2009, 6) and was representative of the Jews who authored the New Testament (Eisenbaum 2009, 6). Prior to embracing the teachings of Jesus, Paul tried to preserve Jewish traditions and regarded Jesus' teachings as apostasy (Betz 1992, 187).

However, while en route to Damascus, Paul experienced a vision of Christ. Following this experience, Paul claimed that he had been commissioned by Christ to proclaim his gospel among the Gentiles. At this time, Judaism and Christianity were not yet separate religions and conversion was unnecessary; God was still perceived as the God that had revealed himself to the people of Israel (Betz 1992, 187). His writings are called Christian because Christians have chosen to canonize them and to view them as authoritative (Eisenbaum 2009, 7).

Research suggests that Paul's views of men, women, and sexuality derived from various sources: the perspectives of Hellenistic Judaism, the stereotypes that prevailed during his time and in the locales in which he lived and circulated, and the understandings of the human body prevalent in Greco-Roman medicine and biology (Balch 1998, 440; Davies 1995, 320 n. 10; Eisenbaum 2009, 153–154; Furnish 1994, 30; Schoedel 2000, 52–64). Hellenistic Judaism, in which Paul was educated (Betz 1992, 187) has been depicted as antipleasure and pro-procreation (Ward 1997, 264). This stance was likely adopted by the Jews, at least in part, as a strategy to set themselves apart from Gentiles (Ward 1997, 264), who were believed to possess unrestrained sexual passion and whose sexually immoral behavior was often associated with idolatry (Eisenbaum 2009, 153–154). It has been asserted that, just as the Hellenistic Jews utilized these pronouncements to distinguish themselves from the larger Gentile population, Paul may have also used these same admonishments to define those who did and did not follow Jesus and to facilitate the development of a sense of group identity (Eisenbaum 2009, 101).

Greco-Roman biology and medicine informed the ethics of Hellenistic Jews such as Philo, as well as Paul, Barnabas, and Clement (Balch 1998, 434–435; Schoedel 2000, 52–64). Sexual desire was analogized to eating; the pleasure or use of sex was limited in Greco-Roman thought to satisfaction, much as eating was linked to a full stomach (Frederickson 2000, 207). The debate between medical experts of the time centered on attempts to understand whether insatiable passion constituted a disease because it was insatiable and, if so, whether that disease resided in the body or in the mind of the individual (Schoedel 2000, 52–64). Paul, then, likely understood unbridled passion to be a disease. The issue remaining was whether it was a disease of the mind or the body which, as discussed below in examining the meaning of Paul's words, seems to have been resolved in favor of the mind.

The world in which Paul lived was profoundly patriarchal (Furnish 1994, 31). Women were thought to be characterized by passion, in contrast to men, in whom

reason and self-control were thought to predominate (Hanks 2006, 585). What would have been viewed as unrestrained passion was likely evident within the communities to which Paul preached. Most of those that he targeted were Gentiles (Eisenbaum 2009, 61), some of whom may have attended Jewish temples and others who did not. These communities may well have been home to goddess cults, known for the participation of their priests in sacred sex (Townsley 2011, 707). The sexual rituals associated with these cults—men having sex with men, men engaging in self-castration to become eunuchs, women engaging in nonvaginal and nonprocreative sex—may have been seen as violations of "the patriarchal norms of masculinity, femininity, and sexuality in every public ways" (Townsley 2011, 707). One can hypothesize that this understanding of the nature of men and women may have led to a perception of men who participated in such sexual activities as somehow deviant in that they manifested unbridled passion and a lack of self-control, attributes characteristic of women. What Paul may have meant by his words is explored further below.

Understanding Paul's Words

Many commentators have asserted that, within the context of the larger passage relating to idolatry, the fundamental wrong of which Paul speaks is the failure to honor God and to turn, instead, to idolatry (Bartlett 1977, 139; Eisenbaum 2009, 72–73; Hays 1994, 8; Martin 1995, 332). Same-sex sexual behavior is a consequence of, rather than a cause of, God's dissatisfaction (Hays 1994, 8; Via 2003, 13). God merely ratified the human choice (Via 2003, 13). A minority of writers have argued that it is the homosexual acts that lead men to idolatry (e.g., Woggon 1981, 159).

Opinions regarding the meaning of Paul's words sharply diverge; the disagreement is often premised on differing interpretations of the original Greek terms signifying what has been translated as "natural" and "unnatural" and the larger historical and cultural context in which Paul uttered the words. What becomes clear from even a cursory analysis of the passage is that its relevance to all same-sex sexual behavior is uncertain and its original utterance as a condemnation of all same-sex sexual behavior is unlikely, and the majority of commentators have rejected an interpretation of Paul's words as an explicit condemnation of same-sex sexual activity.

Various scholars have asserted that the word "natural," interpreted through the structures of Hellenistic Judaism and Paul's probable perception of the Gentiles' sexual mores, likely referred to nonprocreative sexual intercourse, regardless of its specific form. Accordingly, it could refer to sex with a barren, pregnant or menstruating woman; pederasty; and/or sex between animals of different species. If Paul was referring to nonprocreative sexual behavior, it may also have included anal or oral sex with a woman (Banister 2009, 572 n. 4, 588–589; Ward 1997, 271–273) and anal sex between men (Davies 1995, 320).

Boswell premised his interpretation of "natural" on the distinction between sexual behavior and sexual orientation. Boswell (1980, 109) has asserted that the passage cannot refer to homosexuality because those living at the time of Paul could not have been familiar with the concept of sexual orientation. The concept of "homosexual" came about only in 1869, many centuries after Paul's utterances and their recording (Lings 2012). Indeed, current understandings of sexual orientation and the frequent incongruity between individuals' sexual behavior, their sexual self-identity, and the label attached to their sexual identity by others is a relatively recent development (Loue 2006, 54–85). Boswell and others have argued that Paul's words referred to same-sex sexual relations between those who were heterosexual (Boswell 1980, 109–110; Hays 1996, 388; McNeill 1993, 41–42; Nissinen 1998, 109), presumably because the current understanding of homosexual had not yet been formulated.

Other commentators have focused on the meaning of "unnatural" as an approach to understand better the meaning of "natural." Davies (1985, 319), for example, has suggested that what was unnatural was not the desire of one man for another, but the exchange of the male role for that of the female by the passive (receptive) male partner and the destruction of a means of procreation by the active (insertive) male partner. Martin (1995, 344–345) has similarly argued that, because sex in the historical context in which Paul lived was seen as hierarchical and the penetrator was believed to be the superior partner, unnaturalness necessarily referred to the willingness of a man to demean himself by assuming the lower position that was appropriate for women. According to Martin, aspects of same-sex intercourse were unnatural only because the sexual activity involved was non-procreative and disrupted the "natural" male–female hierarchy (Martin 1995, 346). Martin further suggested that Paul's views of necessary distinctions in hair length between men and women reflected his underlying assumption of the need for an absolute distinction between men and women (Martin 1995, 323; see also Szesnat 1995, 43). Ward (1997, 264), also concluded from his analysis of Paul's language and the context in which it was uttered that the "antipleasure, pro-procreation argument [of Hellenistic Jews] could and did result in an active/passive dichotomy between men and women engaged in penile-vaginal intercourse and the notion that there was a 'natural' difference between the sexes that applied generally to societal relationships."

Frederickson has offered yet another interpretation of Paul's words. Rather than focusing on the nature of the sexual act itself, or the sex of the participants in that act, Frederickson suggested that Paul's words reflected his evaluation of the psychological state of his listeners (Frederickson 2000, 207–215). Recalling that satisfaction of one's passion was deemed to be analogous to having a full stomach to satisfy hunger, Frederickson (2000, 207) argued that, "Unnatural use, from this perspective, has less to do with the gender of the persons having sex and more with the loss of self-control experienced by the user of another's body."

"Unnatural" has also been interpreted by some writers to refer to pederasty, i.e., sexual intercourse by an older adult male who assumed the insertive role with a younger boy, often at puberty and extending into his teens, who assumed the

receptive role in the sexual encounters (Miller 1997, 863; Scroggs 1983, 116). The relationship often involved a significant power differential between the older and younger participants and sometimes abuse. Scroggs has been the primary advocate of this perspective, asserting that the passage must be interpreted in light of what Paul knew at the time and that this was the only model of same-sex relations between men of which he could have been aware (Scroggs 1983, 42–43. See also Miller 1997, 863). Davies (1995, 320 n. 10) and Malick (1993b, 339) have argued that Paul could not have been referring to pederasty because the passage also refers to sexual relations between women, and pederasty among women was unknown. Smith has also contested Scroggs' thesis, albeit on a very different basis. Smith has argued that Scroggs was in error because the prevalence of pederasty was actually in decline during the three centuries preceding Paul (Kuhn 2006, 315; Smith 1996, 237) and, consequently, Paul was less likely to have been concerned with the practice of pederasty than he was with the practice of any sexual activity between men, regardless of its nature (Smith 1996, 232). Wright (1989, 299) has also disputed Scroggs' analysis, arguing that Paul's use of a general term in the original Greek cannot be interpreted to refer only to a more specific form of sexual relations, namely pederasty.

Divergent understandings of Paul's injunction against sexual relations between women have also been voiced. Brooten (1996, p 216) has argued that "active and passive constitute[d] foundational categories for Roman-period culture" and "a hierarchically organized two-gender system was the norm." Paul, Brooten maintains, condemned same-sex relations between women because women were thought to be passive in nature and this passivity was to be reflected in their sexual relations as well. Stowers (1994, 94–95) has advanced a somewhat analogous thesis: that Paul denounced same-sex behavior between women in an attempt to maintain women's inferior status by restricting sexual relations to male dominant penetration of female partners. In contrast to this portrayal of Paul's motives, Jewett (2000, 233) has suggested that Paul sought to hold women accountable to the same degree as men through the adoption of an egalitarian sexual ethic. Townsley has suggested that Paul wrote about sexual relations between women specifically because of its association with idolatry (Townsley 2011, 715–716) and the integral role played by sacred sex and gender variant priests in the worship services of many goddess religions (Townsley 2011, 724). Wright (1989, 295) has claimed that Paul issued "a generic condemnation of homosexuality" because he "did not believe that male and female were created for each with complementary sexualities grounded in the distinctive constitutions of their sexual organs."

Other commentators have argued that Paul was not referring to sexual relations between women at all, but instead used the term "unnatural" to refer to nonvaginal, nonprocreative *heterosexual* intercourse (Miller 1995, 11; Townsley 2011, 712). Indeed, Hanks (2000, 90) has maintained that the passage was never interpreted to refer to sex between women until it was so construed by Chrystostom ca. 400 C.E.[19]

In sharp contrast to those scholars who have advocated the broader and more nuanced reading of "natural" and "unnatural," a minority of writers have argued

that Paul's words proclaim unequivocally homosexuality's sinfulness (Jepsen 1995, 123; Malick 1993b, 340), its "distorting consequence of the fall of the human race in the Garden of Eden" (Malick 1993b, 340), and its "perversion of God's design for human sexual relations" (Malick 1993b, 340). "Nature," it has been argued, is synonymous with the "created order," that is, the order that was established through the creation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Hays 1986, 194).

A number of commentators have pointed to the need to evaluate Paul's words in the context of the entire letter to the Romans and to recognize Paul's rhetorical trap (Countryman 1988, 121; Hanks 2006b, 585. See also Edwards 1984, 98–99). After initially describing those behaviors that are the consequence of idolatry and that have incited God's wrath, Paul relieves his listeners of the luxury of engaging in self-righteous judgment, asking in Romans 2:1–3:

> Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things. [2]You say, "We know that God's judgment on those who do such things is in accordance with truth." [3]Do you imagine, whoever you are, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God? (NRSV).

Later, in Romans 14:14, Paul proclaims, "I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it is unclean." Hanks (2006b, 590) has surmised from the reading of Paul's rhetorical trap and this passage that

> Paul's laying of his rhetorical trap in 1.18–32 leads readers to assume he is simply echoing Leviticus, while the springing of the trap (2.1–16) and declaring of all things clean (14.14–20) make clear his conclusion that Jewish purity legislation was not literally binding on the Roman churches.

This language, it has been argued, negates a reading of Romans 1:24–27 as a proscription against same-sex sexual relations (Hanks 2006b, 590).

Conclusion

Paul likely was targeting Gentiles when he uttered these passages. Evaluated in the historical and social context in which Paul lived, it appears that he was primarily concerned with a disrespect of God and individuals' lack of control. Rather than condemning both male and female same-sex sexual activity, which scholarship suggests was widespread at the time and would not have been viewed as deviant by the original audience, Paul was concerned with adherence to strictly demarcated gender boundaries. This perspective probably derived from the teachings of Hellenistic Judaism under which Paul had been raised and the then-prevailing understandings of biology and medicine. Accordingly, current reliance on this passage to condemn either or both male and female same-sex behavior or orientation is misplaced and suggests a similar need to maintain well-defined gender roles and behaviors.

Corinthians 6:9–11 and 1 Timothy 1:8–11

These two passages—1 Corinthians 6:9–11 and 1 Timothy 1:8–11—are addressed together because of their use of similar language, which has been translated from the original Greek "arsenokoitai" to the English word "sodomite" (De Young 1992; Swigonski 2001; Wright 1987). The passage in Corinthians provides:

> [9]Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, [10]thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. [11]And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God (1 Cor 6:9–11; NRSV).

1 Timothy 1: 8–11 states,

> [8]Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it legitimately. [9]This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers, [10]fornicators, sodomites, slave traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching [11]that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me (NRSV).

The translation and meaning of the two terms "male prostitutes" and "sodomites" from the original Greek language are the focus of much conflict. These two terms have been variously interpreted as "male prostitutes" and "homosexual offenders" as in the New International Version (Fee 1987, 243); as "males who are penetrated sexually by males" and "males who sexually penetrate males" (Garland 2003, 2110); as "masturbators" and "male prostitutes" (Boswell 1980, 338–353, 363–364; Coogan 2007, 275 NT); as those men who are effeminate (Scroggs 1983, 106–109); and as those who exploit or abuse others sexually (Blair 1977; Scroggs 1983, 106–109). Fee (1987, 244) suggests that the translation of one of the terms to mean "male prostitutes" is most plausible based on word structure and use and placement within the text, with the proviso that "male prostitute" refers to a consenting homosexual youth. Osiek and Balch (197, 10-11) have argued that the terms refer to effeminacy and the transformation of the male body into one of a female nature through these acts.

Despite this frequent popular interpretation today of Paul's words, relatively few scholars have cogently argued that the inclusion of these terms signifies the condemnation of all same-sex behavior of a sexual nature (Conzelmann 1975, 106; Garland 2003, 214–215; Gagnon 2001, 330). Conzelmann (1975, 106) claims that this prohibition mirrors what he characterizes as the unequivocal Judaic prohibition against all forms of same-sex behavior. Malick has argued vociferously that the passage can only refer to a complete prohibition of all same-sex sexual activity because of its placement in the context of other forms of sexual immorality and the absence in the scriptures of the acceptance of any form of same-sex sexual activity. He further claims that the arguments of Boswell (1980) and Scroggs (1983), supporting the application of Paul's language to male prostitution

and pederasty (sex between older men and younger boys), respectively, rest on an erroneous interpretation of Paul's original language and the historical use of the original Greek term *arsenokoitai* to denote male prostitution (Malick 1993a, 482–487) and *malakoi* to denote pederasty (Malick 1993a, 487–490).

Hays (1996) has analyzed 1 Cor. 6:9–11 in conjunction with Romans 1:18–32, Timothy 1:10, and Acts 15:28–29 to reach a similar conclusion: that the passage refers to all homosexual acts. However, he maintains that homosexual acts, according to Paul, are no more reprehensible than any others behaviors indicative of unrighteousness and that, far from such acts incurring God's punishment, constitute punishment in and of themselves (Hays 1996, 388). Hays asserts, in addition, that the passage does not refer to homosexual orientation, as distinct from homosexual acts, because the concept of sexual orientation was unknown during the time of Paul. Paul's concern was not with orientation; Paul viewed the sexual acts in which individuals engaged as wholly voluntary and reflective of the pagan world. Consequently, the introduction of the concept of sexual orientation into the text retroactively to argue now that Paul must have been referring only to homosexual acts engaged in promiscuously by heterosexual persons constitutes an anachronism (Hays 1996, 388–389).

Via and Gagnon (2003, 13) is in agreement with Hays' view that Paul is referring to all same-sex intercourse with the use of the word *arsenokoitai*. Via, referring to Hays, notes that this term does not appear in Greek literature prior to Paul and there are relatively few uses of the term. The word itself is a compound word consisting of *arsēn*, meaning male, and *koitē,* meaning bed, and therefore could reasonably be interpreted as referring to men who go to bed with other men.

Conclusion

As with the passage from Romans that was discussed earlier in this chapter, the audience hearing Paul's words would not have viewed same-sex sexual activity as deviant. And, like the passage from Romans, the meaning of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 and 1 Timothy 1:8–11 is subject to varying interpretations, each of which has been vigorously disputed.

Even assuming that Paul was referring to all male same-sex sexual acts, the underlying reasons for this concern must necessarily be considered. Paul himself was the product of both Jewish teachings that decried the nonprocreative release of semen and a society that sought to enforce strict gender boundaries. A prohibition of same-sex activity would address both of these concerns, and simultaneously provide a means by which the faithful could distinguish themselves from the pagan.

In asking whether the churches' reliance on these passages to condemn or prohibit same-sex behavior is congruent with Paul's words, one must also ask whether the underlying societal context is similar. Examination of traditionally African American churches indicates that concerted effort and attention are often devoted to maintain a patriarchal, hierarchal structure within those churches,[20] despite the

apparent movement in a large segment of African American society to adopt a broader and more egalitarian perspective.[21] As but one example, the ministry and other leadership positions within African American Baptist churches continue to be dominated by men; women are viewed as subordinate to men with appropriately subordinate roles (Hamilton 2009, 69).

Summary

Despite the reliance of some African American churches on these seven passages to condemn homosexuality and/or homosexuals, each of the passages is subject to varying interpretations due to the historical contexts in which they were composed and our inability to understand the precise meanings of the words at the time that they were originally used. The audience to each of these passages would not, however, have viewed same-sex sexual activity as deviant. "[P]recisely because biblical and Talmudic cultures did not have … a category of the homosexual, they therefore allowed for much greater normative possibilities for the homoerotic" (Boyarin 1995, 354). Indeed, a reading of these passages through the lens of deviance theory suggests that the audience would have been more likely to view other elements in these passages as deviant. These include the lack of hospitality and violence toward strangers, gender role violation through the submission of one man to another's penetration, and the nonprocreative emission of semen.

Deviance theory provides a framework not only for the examination of audience response to the passages at the time of their composition, but also for the evaluation of some African American (and other) churches' use of these passages to disfavor or condemn homosexuality and/or homosexuals. Reliance on this theory suggests that a group that has historically lacked power and continues to lack relative power—African Americans in general—has constructed a category of sinfulness/deviance that permits the relatively powerless to assume and enhance their power within their communities to the disadvantage and detriment of others—men who have sex with men and women who have sex with women—within the same communities.

This is not, however, to ascribe malintent to all those who believe in the wrongfulness of homosexuality; the reasons underlying each individual's belief may be varied and, in many cases, unknown even to the holders of those beliefs. Nevertheless, as will be seen in Chap. 4, these beliefs may create conflict for individuals struggling to come to terms with their nonheterosexual identity. And, as will be seen in Chap. 5, family members and even clergy themselves may struggle to identify the origin of their own negative views, to reconcile their caring for the nonheterosexual individual with their religious beliefs and, in the case of clergy, to find a balance between their evolving understandings of homosexuality and justice and the more restrictive views of their congregants.

Chapter 4
Moving Forward with Individuals

Introduction

As with any client, the issues that may be a focus of counseling or intervention with an African American nonheterosexual client necessarily depend on how the client defines the presenting issue. Is the client experiencing conflict with respect to his or her sexual orientation or gender identity? Is he or she struggling to deal with felt rejection from family, friends, or members of his or her faith community? Is the client torn between what he or she has been taught by religion and religious figures is appropriate sexual behavior and his or her own sexual desires and behavior? Many times, individuals experiencing these conflicts have been told and may have even come to believe as a result that any sexual orientation or behavior other than that between a male and a female is abnormal, deviant, and/or sinful.

We have seen in Chap. 1 how masculinity and femininity have been conceptualized in some segments of African American communities as a consequence of widely shared experiences, how Blacks and Black sexuality have frequently been portrayed as deviant, and how religion provided a vehicle by which to fight oppression. Chapter 2 focused on the importance of religion in African American culture and the themes of liberation and revelation that have historically been reflected in African American art, music, and literature. Chapter 3 provided a review of the diverse understandings that have developed in an attempt to understand the scriptural passages that have traditionally been relied upon to condemn homosexual and lesbian relations. The mere fact that interpretations of these passages differ underscores the need to recognize and to consider the context in which the scriptural passages were originally composed and the context in which they are being read now. The meaning of these passages derives not only from the words themselves, but also from what the reader brings to the reading of the passage in terms of his or her own knowledge, emotions, and experience. The review of these scriptural passages concluded that same-sex sexual behaviors, in general, would likely not have been viewed as deviant by the audience's reading these passages at the time that they were written and that significant dissonance exists between the meanings

S. Loue, *Understanding Theology and Homosexuality in African American Communities*, SpringerBriefs in Social Work,
DOI: 10.1007/978-1-4614-9002-9_4, © The Author(s) 2014

of the original passages and their restrictive and condemnatory interpretations by some clergy.

Each of these domains is critical to the mental health provider who works with clients who may be experiencing conflict between their own religious beliefs and sexual orientation and/or behavior and/or conflicts with others due to the others' religious beliefs. Understanding the origin of common constructions of masculinity and femininity may help us understand the underpinnings of a client's conflict. We can refer to the themes of liberation and revelation in African American history to help the client discover how these themes may resonate in his or her life, and to recognize his/her own strengths that can be drawn on as he or she works through the presenting situation. A basic knowledge of relevant scriptural passages enables us to present diverse perspectives and meanings to clients and to others, and to dialogue with clergy more meaningfully.

It is also important, however, that mental health care providers have an awareness of how African American men and women arrive at an understanding of their own sexual identity. Accordingly, the first portion of the chapter focuses on the developmental tasks that must be accomplished for individuals to develop successfully from childhood through adulthood. This is followed by an explanation of the process through which men and women come to define who they are in terms of their identity and their sexuality. The emphasis is on the development of sexual and gender identity, although it is recognized that individuals may also undergo a process by which they come to self-identify as a "minority." Reference is made to racial and ethnic minority status to reflect the current usage of these terms; it is beyond the scope of this chapter to examine the validity of the concept of race or ethnicity. The chapter then proceeds to examine how knowledge of community strengths and experiences and relevant scriptural passages can be utilized to assist clients who are struggling to resolve conflicts related to their own or others' religious beliefs relating to their sexual orientation/behavior.

It must be stated at the outset that the literature relating specifically to sexual identity development among racial/ethnic minority men and women is relatively limited, underscoring the need for more research in this area. This chapter does not address causal theories relating to sexual desire, orientation, or behavior, such as genetic influences (Bailey 1995; Hamer et al. 1993; Hyde 2005), neuroendocrine theories (e.g., McFadden and Champlin 2000; Mustanski et al. 2002; van Anders and Hampson 2005), or family influences. Rather, the focus here is on how males and females who are members of a minority racial or ethnic group come to know who they are with respect to their sexual desires, behaviors, and identities.

Formulating Identity

Various theories have been advanced in an attempt to understand and explain the process by which an individual develops through various stages of his or her life, from early childhood development through adulthood and old age. One of the

most widely recognized theories is that of Erikson (1964, 1997), who posited that individuals develop through different stages; successful progression to each subsequent stage requires satisfactory completion of the developmental tasks associated with each preceding stage.

It is also believed that individuals also progress through various stages in their recognition and acknowledgement of their sexual identity. Progression through the various stages of sexual identity development may oftentimes be related to the age-associated developmental tasks delineated in Erikson's stage model. Accordingly, this chapter first sets forth a brief discussion of Erikson's stage model of development, followed by a summary of a stage model of sexual identity development. A stage model of minority identity development is also provided as background for the reader. Two additional theories of sexual identity development are also summarized: symbolic interactionism, and social construction.

These models or theories of development may be useful as a general reference for the mental health care provider. Variation of a client from these postulated stages should not, however, be interpreted as necessarily suggestive of problematic development. Rather these models and theories may point to areas of potential growth that the client may wish to address.

It should also be noted that, in general, models of identity development that have been formulated to date generally fail to consider the heterogeneity of the populations to which they refer. Many of the models of sexual identity development were derived exclusively or primarily on the basis of research conducted with white women and men. As a consequence, the extent to which they are applicable to nonwhite/ethnic minority populations is uncertain (cf. Speight et al. 1991). Similarly, the models of minority identity development have failed to consider the impact of an individual's nonheterosexual desires and/or behavior on her minority identity.

As seen in previous chapters, African American individuals who engage in same-sex relationships or who experience same-sex desires may confront numerous circumstances not encountered by their nonminority counterparts that may affect their ability and willingness to divulge their sexual minority status. These include discrimination and oppression because of their ethnicity/race, particularly if they are biracial; discrimination within their ethnic/racial community against nonheterosexual individuals; discrimination by sexual minority persons because of their race/ethnicity; and the absence of healthy role models (Akerlund and Cheung 2000; Espín 1987; Walters et al. 2006). As a result, nonheterosexual African American may receive significantly less social support than their nonminority counterparts due to experiences involving mistrust, rejection, and racism (Hall and Rose 1996; Mays et al. 1993). (Work with families and communities is addressed in Chap. 5.)

Further, Ohnishi and colleagues (2006) have noted that individuals' acceptance of their own sexual identity may or may not parallel their acceptance of their racial/ethnic/cultural identity. They may embrace both identities; deny or struggle to accept both identities, experiencing significant marginalization and a high level

of stress; or embrace either their racial/ethnic/cultural identity or their sexual identity while struggling to accept the other. The extent to which an individual accepts one or both identities may depend upon factors such as educational level, religious and spiritual beliefs and practices, age and stage of life, and the meanings attributed to each of the identities by persons who are significant to the individual and by the larger society (cf. Ibrahim 1999).

Stage Models of Identity Development

Erikson's Model of Identity Formation. The formulation of one's identity can be conceived of as an internal process, by which an individual develops a sense of herself in the context of her environment. Erikson, one of the foremost theorists with respect to identity development, hypothesized that psychosocial growth and development occurs in stages, each of which is associated with a psychosocial crisis (Erikson 1997). In this context, a "crisis" is conceived of as "a turning point for better or worse" (Erikson 1964, 139) to which the individual can respond either adaptively or maladaptively. The extent to which an individual is able to resolve successfully each such crisis depends upon his or her experiences during earlier stages of development. Accordingly, each stage marks the development of a different facet of the individual's identity in relation to the external social world; the component parts of the individual ultimately give rise to the whole individual (known as epigenetic theory). The successful resolution of the crisis at a particular stage of development results in the development of a basic psychological strength or virtue at that stage, as follows.

Stage 1 Infancy. During infancy, the extent to which the child's caregivers, such as parents, meets the child's physical and psychological needs and the manner in which it is accomplished will determine the extent to which the child develops trust or mistrust in the surrounding world and the people in it. Those children who develop a sense of trust will acquire the virtue of hope

Stage 2 Early childhood. Erikson characterized the psychosocial conflict during this stage as autonomy versus shame and doubt. The adaptive emergence from this stage produces the psychological strength of will. The response of the child's caregivers, such as parents, to the child's growing abilities and need to do things for him- or herself will determine whether the child will demonstrate self-sufficiency or self-doubt

Stage 3 Play age. The psychosocial crisis presented during this stage of development is that of initiative versus guilt. Children who are provided with the opportunity to initiate motor and intellectual skills will acquire the psychological strength or virtue of purpose. The ability to play, which is acquired during this stage, will become the basis in later years for a sense of humor. Those who are not provided with such supportive opportunities will develop a sense of guilt

Stage 4 School age. This period of development is marked by a conflict between industry and inferiority. An adaptive child learns to love to learn and to

play in a manner consistent with what Erikson has called the "ethos of production" (Erikson 1997, 75) and develops a sense of competence. Maladaptation is characterized by excessive competition or the development of a sense of inferiority

Stage 5 Adolescence. Adolescence reflects the conflict between identity and role confusion. During this stage of development the individual must selectively integrate experiences of childhood and the various images that the individual may have of him- or herself. Individuals must engage in a certain amount of role repudiation in order to accomplish this integration of self-develop; some roles may actually jeopardize the synthesis of the individual's identity and must therefore be discarded. Successful integration will yield the psychological strength or virtue of fidelity, which is related to both infantile trust and adult faith. In contrast, individuals who do not pass through this stage of development may engage in more global role repudiation, potentially leading to systematic defiance or the development of a negative identity consisting of socially unacceptable behaviors and traits

Stage 6 Young adulthood. During young adulthood, individuals must develop the capacity to become intimate with and care about others. The challenge is to be able to commit oneself in a relationship that may require compromise and sacrifice. The antithesis to this intimacy is isolation, which may be associated with a fear of losing one's identity in a relationship. Individuals who successfully resolve this conflict acquire the ability to love and exhibit healthy patterns of cooperation and competition in their relations with others

Stage 7 Adulthood. The seventh stage reflects the crisis of generativity versus self-absorption and stagnation. Generativity encompasses procreativity, productivity, and creativity, ushering in new beings (children) as well as new ideas and products. In contrast, those who stagnate remain focused on their own wants and desires, resulting in what Erikson has called "generative frustration" (Erikson 1997, 68). The virtue or strength that is derived from successful resolution of this conflict is "care," meaning a broader commitment to care for persons, products, and ideas. The virtue or strength of care may extend to the idea of universal care, such as care for the welfare of all children

Stage 8 Old age. Erikson hypothesized that the final stage of life is characterized by the conflict between integrity and despair (Erikson 1997). During this stage, the individuals will look back over their lives. The individual may view his or her life as having been satisfying and meaningful (integrity) or as deeply unsatisfying (despair). The former response implies an acceptance of death and a philosophical perspective, while the latter suggests a fear of death and "the feeling that time is now short, too short for the attempt to start another life and to try out alternate roads …" (Erikson 1951, 269). Those who are able to pass through this stage successfully will have developed wisdom

Stage 9 Gerotranscendence. Erik Erikson's original stage model of psychosocial development comprised only eight stages of development. However, a ninth stage was later added to this model to reflect the conflict that arises during the very latest years of life (Erikson 1997). This ninth stage of development, corresponding to the 80s and 90s in life, is often characterized by a pervasive sense of loss—of

one's physical senses, such as the ability to hear and to see; of friends and family members who have predeceased the elder; of recognition by others as a source of knowledge and wisdom.

Stage models have frequently been utilized to describe the developmental trajectory of both minority identity and sexual identity. Several of these are examined below. Common to all of these models is a period of time during which the individual experiences a sense of being different. Whether individuals are able to integrate their sexual orientation into their identity or address their sense of differentness through the adoption of unhealthy behaviors, such as drug use, may depend on the extent to which they receive support and understanding from others.

Stage Models of Sexual Identity Development. In developing his stage model of gay identity formation, Coleman (1982), like Erikson, hypothesized that in each of his five enumerated stages the individual would focus on the accomplishment of specified tasks. However, an individual could move on to the subsequent stage without necessarily completing the tasks designated in the previous stage; that is, an individual could attend to the tasks of several stages simultaneously. Coleman believed that, during each stage, the individual would develop an ever-increasing awareness of his or her same-sex attraction. These stages are as follows.

Stage 1 Pre-disclosure (coming out). During this first stage, the individual senses a "differentness" from other people. The individual may try to avoid dealing with the underlying issue and may develop low self-esteem. Successful resolution of this conflict would promote the individual into the second stage, whereas a failure to resolve it could lead to depression and self-harm. Reports by same-sex-oriented individuals suggest that this stage of an individual's sexual identity development often occurs during Erikson's "school age" stage

Stage 2 Disclosure to self and others. During this stage, the individual gains self-acceptance and discloses to others. The formation of a positive self-concept during this stage is necessary for progression to the next. The functions of this stage appear to be similar to those identified by Erikson as being critical to adolescence. The individual must selectively integrate experiences and images of him- or herself and discard those that jeopardize a synthesis of the person

Stage 3 Exploration. This stage may be characterized by experiences with sex and drugs, although the substance use may be a mechanism to cope with the stress that the individual experiences as he or she attempts to discover what it means to have a homosexual/lesbian identity. Coleman asserted that many other behaviors that would be seen as age-inappropriate are, in fact, understandable because individuals in this stage are attempting to resolve issues that heterosexuals would have confronted during their adolescence. This suggests that Coleman's conceptualization of this stage may occur chronologically during what Erikson would term the period of young adulthood

Stage 4 First relationship. Although the individual now wants a stronger connection with a partner, the first relationships may be doomed because of internalized homophobia, inadequately developed social skills, and a lack of empathy with others. It is not unusual for individuals in this stage to move back to the previous stage

Stage 5 Integration. The final stage reflects the individual's integration of the public self and the private self. It does not, however, signify that all of the work required during the previous stages has been completed; in fact, there may be numerous tasks still requiring attention. And, although this stage is highly stressful, the consolidation of the private and public selves allows for the possibility of more successful and stable relationships. This stage may mirror, in some respects, Erikson's stages of young adulthood and adulthood, during which the individual may develop more intimate relationships and increased productivity and creativity.

Other scholars have formulated alternative stage models to explain the development of a nonheterosexual identity, although some, like Coleman, have focused their work entirely or in large part on gay men (e.g. Isaacs and Mckendrick 1992; Plummer 1975; Siegel and Lowe 1994). Briefly, those who have addressed nonheterosexual identity development specifically among women include the following.

Ponse's (1978) model of development was derived from interviews with 75 lesbian women. This model consists of five stages: a subjective feeling of being different as a result of sexual and/or emotional desire for women; the interpretation of these feelings as "lesbian"; the assumption of a lesbian identity; a search for companionship with lesbian women; and participation in an emotional and/or sexual lesbian relationship. One of the strengths of this model is the emphasis on the individual's *interpretation* of her feelings as "lesbian," an element that is absent from many other models. This particular element is critical because different individuals may have similar experiences, but may interpret their experiences and associated emotions quite differently, selecting from among them those that they believe are relevant to their sexual identity. As an example, two different women may engage in sexual-romantic relationships with both men and women. One individual may conclude from these experiences and her associated feelings that she prefers the company of women is lesbian, while the other may conclude that she is equally attracted to both men and women and assume a bisexual identity.

The models of identity developed somewhat later by Sophie (1985/1986), Chapman and Brannock (1987), and McCarn and Fassinger (1996) also derive from interviews with lesbian women. Sophie's interviews with 14 lesbian women resulted in a four-stage model: an initial awareness of one's feelings, a period of testing and exploration, acceptance of one's identity, and finally, the integration of one's identity. The 197 interviews with lesbian women conducted by Chapman and Brannock (1987) produced a five-stage model that commences with the awareness of one's same-sex orientation and progresses through a recognition of the incongruity between one's orientation and expectations; periods of self-questioning and identification; and culminates in a choice of lifestyle. Similarly, McCarn and Fassinger (1996), whose interviews included 38 lesbians, identified a new awareness as the initial stage of development of a nonheterosexual identity. This first stage was followed by periods of exploration and a deepening of commitment, culminating in a synthesis of one's identity, analogous to the integration stage postulated by Sophie (1985/1986).

McClanahan's (1994) survey study with 154 self-identified lesbian women suggests that if sexual identity develops in stages, individuals may not experience all

stages or may move through various stages at quite different points in their lives. Almost in one-half of the study participants reported an early awareness of their sexual difference. Others, however, indicated that their desire for women had evolved slowly over time and that they had not felt different when they were younger. These findings may also challenge the primary essentialist assumption underlying stage models of sexual identity development, that is, that sexual orientation is a “real” thing, rather than a construct and that the developmental trajectory must necessarily culminate in same-sex identity synthesis (Stein 1999; Yarhouse and Jones 1997).

Stage Models of Development and Bisexuality. Most of the models of sexual identity development assume that the individual will at some point of time accept his identity as homosexual/gay or her identity as a lesbian and make that identity known to others; a failure to do so signifies an inability to achieve integration of the person. This ignores the experience of individuals who are bisexual in terms of their attraction, orientation, behavior, and/or self-identity.

Although bisexuality is often perceived as a willingness to have romantic/sexual relations with men and women, it may be more accurate to view bisexuality as a refusal to exclude either men or women from consideration as potential partners (Berenson 2002). As such, bisexuality stands as a rejection of the heterosexuality/homosexuality dichotomy and the conceptualization of bisexuality as either a refusal to choose between these two options or as a transitional phase of development (Bower et al. 2002). Further, an unwillingness to exclude either males or females from consideration as potential partners is not synonymous with nonmonogamy (Shuster 1987).

According to at least one scholar, the diversity of individuals’ experiences and trajectories of bisexual identity development mitigates against a generalization of this process (Shuster 1987). It has been asserted that, because bisexuals consider all people to be potential friends and lovers regardless of their biological sex, they define themselves “as much by their constellation of committed friendships as by their sexual relationships” (Shuster 1987, 63). Other scholars, however, have delineated stage models for the development of bisexuality that parallel those relating to lesbian identity.

As an example, Weinberg, Williams, and Pryor (1994) identified four stages of bisexual identity development based on a series of interviews that they conducted. According to their model, the developmental trajectory encompasses initial confusion, resulting from sexual feelings for individuals of both sexes; finding and applying a label (bisexual) that could explain their desires and behaviors; settling into the identity, a period occurring years after an individual’s first attractions to or sexual involvement with males and females; and continued uncertainty, often stemming from a lack of social validation and pressure to label themselves as either heterosexual or lesbian.

Among self-identified bisexual women, desire and behavior may vary significantly. Some may experience sexual and/or romantic feelings for and engage in sexual activities equally frequently with men and women. Others may tend to prefer either men or women with respect to sexual feelings, sexual behavior, and/or romantic feelings (Weinberg et al. 1994).

Stage Models of Minority Identity Development. Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1979) utilized the stage model to explain the developmental trajectory that an individual may undergo in developing an identity as a member of a minority group. The first stage, conformity, was hypothesized as a period during which the individual is self-depreciating, minority group-depreciating, discriminatory toward members of other minority groups, and appreciative of the dominant racial/ethnic group. Dissonance, the second stage, reflects a growing internal conflict, characterized by both self- and group-depreciation and self- and minority group-appreciation. The individual may continue to hold to dominant views of the minority hierarchy, while also feeling that experiences are shared. These first two stages, although not necessarily occurring during the same period of time as Erikson's early childhood and play stages, appear to involve similar issues in that they are characterized by inner conflict and struggles with feelings of shame and inferiority.

During the third stage, known as resistance and immersion, the individual develops an appreciation of him- or herself and his or her minority group, as well as a feeling of empathy for other minority experiences. He or she may also develop a culturocentric perspective, while simultaneously holding a deprecatory view of the dominant group.

The fourth stage, introspection, reflects increased questioning. During this stage, the individual seeks to understand the basis of self-appreciation and becomes increasingly concerned with the unequivocal appreciation of the minority group, the ethnocentric basis from which others are judged, and the depreciation of the dominant group. The fifth stage, termed synergistic articulation and awareness, finds the individual self-appreciating, appreciative of his/her own minority group and other minority groups, and selectively appreciating of the dominant racial/ethnic group. As in Erikson's stages of adolescence and young adulthood, the individual questions his/her own role and relationship to others. However, as will also be evident from the discussion of stage models relating to sexual identity development, this stage model fails to consider the heterogeneity of minority groups and the various intersecting realities that may impact on an individual's identity development. These include, but are not limited to, socioeconomic status, educational level, migration history, and religious and spiritual traditions.

Additional Theories of Sexual Identity Development

Symbolic Interactionism. Many, if not most, individuals, formulate their identity, at least in part, on the basis of their interactions and relationships with others. For instance, a male may function simultaneously as: a boy or man; a father; a son; an employee; someone who is sexually attracted to males or females or both or neither; a member of a specific cultural, religious, and/or racial or ethnic group; a friend; a neighbor; a volunteer, and so forth. Each of these interactions potentially leads to the imposition by others of labels and meanings on that individual, which he or she may then integrate into a self-definition. Although Erikson emphasized the internal

process of identity development, he recognized the interactional element, stating that "part of identity must be accounted for in that communality within which an individual finds himself" and there may be

> fragments that the individual had to submerge in himself as undesirable or irreconcilable or which his group has taught him to perceive as the mark of fatal "difference" in sex role or race in class or religion (Erikson 1975, 19–20).

As an example, an individual may frame his sexual identity in response to societal oppression; in this context, a homosexual or gay identity may also be a political identity. The existence of societal oppression based on sexual orientation may not, however, be consistent across all time periods and all locales; accordingly, a gay or lesbian identity may not constitute a political response in such a context. For example, researchers investigating the meaning of being a lesbian reported that 35 % of their respondents indicated that loving a woman or having sex with women was a part of their core personality (Eliason and Morgan 1998). However, 65 % believed that being a lesbian meant having a worldview that encompassed feminism or civil rights issues (Eliason and Morgan 1998), lending credence to the idea that one's identity is, at least in part, a function of one's interaction with others and one's larger environment.

The concept of symbolic interactionism bears a relation to that of labeling, whereby individuals who are perceived to be outside the norm, or whose behaviors are perceived to be outside the norm, are deemed to in some way be deviant (Scheff 1984). The attribution of deviance and a corresponding label to these individuals and/or their behavior may evoke a response that reinforces the notion of their deviance. In the case of same-sex-oriented individuals, this response may include internalized homophobia.

Social Constructionism. The social constructionist perspective asserts that homosexual behavior, that is, sexual relations between members of the same-sex, have occurred throughout history. However, the identities and lifestyles of the individuals who are attracted to members of their own sex have varied across historical eras, locations, and cultures. Accordingly, social constructionists understand the categories of "heterosexual," "homosexual," "lesbian," etc., to reflect society's current interpretation of the meaning of same-sex desires and behaviors (Epstein 1987, 13; Rust 1993, 50, 68). How men and women feel and behave sexually has been shaped, they claim, by cultural and societal messages that have constrained both their awareness of themselves and their choices (Baumeister and Twenge 2002, 166; Tolman and Diamond 2001, 34).

It should not be surprising, then, that some women who define themselves as not-heterosexual may not self-identify as lesbian, that some men who engage in same-sex sexual behavior do not self-identify as homosexual or gay, and that some individuals who have sexual relationships with both men and women do not consider themselves bisexual. As one writer explained,

> The word [lesbian] is variously understood and positioned within a multiplicity of paradigms: the moral, the mystical/religious, the juridical, the scientific, the medical, the political, and the social. "Lesbianism" can mean immoral behavior, a sin, a crime, a sexual

> perversion, a pathological state, a site of or metaphor for resistance, a form of deviance, or a social role/lifestyle. (Wilton 1995, 29).

The concept of homosexuality/lesbianism as a socially constructed category has met with vigorous opposition from various writers. The perspective has been interpreted by some to suggest that, if homosexuality is "constructed,"

> then conceivably a homosexual public school teacher might seduce a student and socially "construct/recruit" a homosexual out of an innocent heterosexual adolescent (Warner 2002, 289, quoting Hanks 1990, 3–4).

This pronouncement misconstrues the nature of the social constructionist perspective by confusing the meaning attributed to behavior with the behavior itself.

Identity, Attraction, and Behavior

Identity and Attraction

Our current understanding indicates that one's self-identity may not be congruent with one's sexual attractions, orientation, or relationships (Golden 1987, 19; Ross et al. 2003). For example, findings from psychophysiological research indicate that both women who self-identify as lesbians and those who self-identify as heterosexual show genital arousal in response to both same-sex and opposite-sex visual sexual stimuli (Chivers et al. 2004, 736).

Individuals' willingness to self-identify as other than heterosexual may be delayed depending upon their cultural context and the potential repercussions of such a disclosure (Savin-Williams 1996). A bisexual identity may also allow individuals to maintain a multidimensional image of themselves rather than a monocultural identity and to avoid the political connotations associated with the label of lesbian (Chan et al. 1995, 93).

Too, how a man or woman self-identifies may change over time. Diamond (1998, 2000, 2003a) found from her prospective study of sexual identity among same-sex attracted women that, although study participants' attraction to women remained consistent over time, their sexual identification was fluid over the course of their lives. An 8 year cohort study of 79 nonheterosexual women, 15 % of whom were members of racial/ethnic minority groups, found that over the 8-year period, 22.8 % of the women consistently self-identified as lesbian (stable lesbians), 31.7 % self-identified as both lesbian and nonlesbian at different points in time (fluid lesbians), and 45.6 % self-identified as bisexual or unlabeled (stable nonlesbians) (Diamond 2005). A bisexual identity may signify concurrent identities, historical identities, or sequential identities during the life course (Fox 1996, 155).

Several scholars, however, have disputed the notion of sexual fluidity among women. Hyde and Durik (2000) have argued that women's apparent fluidity is a

function of social and cultural factors. In a somewhat similar vein, others have asserted that many women are unaware of their true sexual identities as a result of cultural and societal oppression (Tolman and Diamond 2001; Ussher 1993).

Identity and Behavior

Behavior, as well as attraction, may not be congruent with self-identity (Ross et al. 2003). For example, some women may be celibate as a function of choice or due to their circumstances but continue to identify as lesbian or bisexual, despite the absence of sexual activity (Esterberg 1997, 77). Indeed, one scholar has argued that sexual orientation need not be continuously performed to be proved (Whitney 2002). One would not expect such continuous "evidence" in the context of heterosexuality.

Among adolescents and young adults, many who engage in same-sex sexual relationships may identify as heterosexual and of those who self-identify as gay or lesbian, many are heterosexually experienced (Savin-Williams 2005, 33–36). Individuals who have identified themselves as lesbian but have relationships with men may continue to think of themselves as lesbian (Diamond 2000, 248; Near 1990). Research similarly suggests that women who identify as heterosexual may also experience sexual desire for and have sexual relations with a woman (Diamond and Savin-Williams 2000, 301). Although it is commonly argued that any same-sex sexual activity is dispositive of a homosexual/lesbian orientation (Whitney 2002), it has been observed that,

> the notion that "one drop of homosexuality indicates latent homosexuality in a straight" theory sounds suspiciously like "one drop of black blood makes you black and you can't go to our schools" racist attitude (Hutchins and Kaahumanu 1991, 8).

Implications for Clinical Practice

It is important to recall in the clinical context that behavior is not identity and to refrain from casting judgment when a client's self-identity appears to be at odds with the therapist's conceptualization of what that identity "should" signify in terms of associated behaviors. Therapy will be most helpful to the client if the therapist is able to recognize the complexities inherent in the client's identity development; accompany the client where he/she is in the development process; respect the choices that the client has made in expressing who he/she is and the value that he or she has placed on those choices; and assist the client in making thoughtful choices about where, when, and to whom the client will reveal the various dimensions of her sexuality and identity.

The discussion that follows presupposes that the client is an adult with decision-making capacity. Implications for clinical practice with children are explored in the following chapter in the context of working with families.

Understanding Where the Client Is at

It is important to understand the issue to be addressed from the client's perspective. Issues commonly presented include:

- Individual conflict between religious/spiritual beliefs or values and the client's sexual desire, sexual orientation, and/or sexual behavior
- Conflict between the client's religious beliefs and those of his or her family, friends, and/or faith community that may have come to light because of the client's sexual orientation or behavior
- Client struggles with self-identity.

That the client's religious beliefs and those of people who are important to him or her may affect the therapeutic process is not surprising because

> [r]eligious beliefs help to form a client's attitudes about the self and its worth, about what that self should become and provide answers to questions such as: What forms of lifestyle are to be preferred? Which forms of human experience are pathological, which are merely normal, and which are genuinely and healthily transcendent? In brief, religious beliefs can influence every part of the personality (Koltko 1990, 139).

If the presenting issue involves religious beliefs or practices, the therapist may wish to consider utilizing a standard assessment and supplementing the questions with additional discussion in order to understand the client's perspective more completely. Although many of the available instruments have been developed specifically for research, they are also useful in the clinical context, again depending upon the issue presented by the client. Table 4.1 below summarizes several instruments that may be helpful in this process.

It will also be helpful in working with clients who are struggling to understand their own sexual identity or orientation to understand the client's sexual history. This includes the sex of the client's romantic and sexual partners; the nature, process of formation, and duration of those relationships; and the client's current thoughts and feeling about those relationships and partners. It will also be helpful to review with the client any attractions that he or she may have had to other individuals that did not develop into relationships. This information will aid in working with the client to further his or her understanding of past choices related to relationships, the underlying reasons for those choices and, ultimately, his or her sexual identity, and orientation.

Helping Your Client Move Forward: Identifying an Ethical Approach

It is critical that any mental health care provider, whether a psychiatrist, a social worker, a psychologist, or a pastoral counselor, examine his or her own biases and values regarding sexual orientation, the (non)acceptance of nonheterosexuality

Table 4.1 Assessment tools for various aspects of religiosity and religious practice

Instrument	Description	Use with client	Example of therapeutic use
Values: Long or short form (Schwartz 1992)	The long form assesses religious values in the context of competing values. Administration time: ~10 min	May help client identify value priorities, aid in determining how to proceed in light of conflicting values	Client who is feeling rejected identifies "sense of belonging" and "choosing own goals" as highest priorities. Their identification as most important values allows client to explore meaning and significance of each and utilize knowledge to move forward towards resolution
Brief RCOPE/Long Form RCOPE (Pargament 1999)	Addresses under what circumstances and how religious/spiritual practices and beliefs serve as coping mechanism. Administration time for long form ~30 min	Assist client in distinguishing his/her internal resources and strengths, identifying situations in which religion/spirituality is important, and understanding own attitudes and beliefs about God/Higher Power	Client is experiencing conflict between what his/her family says about homosexuality and his/her sexual orientation. Client reveals through completion of assessment that he/she believes that difficulties he/she faces in life are a punishment sent by God as retribution for sexual sins
Religious/Spiritual History (George 1999)	Focuses on religious/spiritual upbringing, life-changing events. Administration time~5 min	Allows client to identify patterns in his or her life and how upbringing may be associated with current situation; provides therapist with better understanding of client development	Client who believes that he/she has been rejected by God recognizes that he/she was able to rely on Higher Power during identified crisis
Organizational Religiousness (Idler 1999)	Assesses behavioral and attitudinal aspects of individual's involvement with a formal organization, e.g., church Administration time ~2 min	Permits client to reflect on extent to which he or she actually relies on particular organization for support; knowledge may be important in deciding upon course of action	Client feels rejected by current church pastor or congregation. Client realizes that he/she would not feel sense of loss at thought of leaving for another congregation

within the framework of his/her religious beliefs, and how those beliefs and values may impact his or her ability to provide support and guidance to the client as he or she seeks the optimal solution to the presenting dilemma. This self-examination must necessarily encompass a reference to the code of ethics of the provider's specific profession and the extent to which the provider's values and actions are congruent with that code of ethics.

As an example, consider a situation in which a self-identified African American gay male indicates that he wishes to reveal publicly his relationship with another man, but such a disclosure may result in his ouster from his church choir and the disapproval of his pastor and fellow congregants. He is torn by his desire to live openly with his partner, his realistic fear of losing his church attachments, and his belief that he is somehow committing a sin against God by being homosexual. He views the potential loss of his church community as deserved punishment for his sexual orientation.

Regardless of whether one is a psychologist, psychiatrist, or social worker, the client should be made aware that homosexuality itself is neither a mental illness nor a symptom of psychopathology (American Psychiatric Association 1998, American Psychological Association, n.d.); that same-sex sexual and romantic attractions, feelings, and behavior are normal (American Psychological Association, n.d.); and that the normalcy of same-sex feelings, attractions and behavior is recognized by all major professional associations of mental health providers (American Psychiatric Association 1998, American Psychological Association, n.d.).

The client may ultimately indicate that he would rather face the prospect of leaving his church than lose his relationship or continue to live in emotional conflict. Alternatively, the client may indicate a wish to "convert" to heterosexuality, finding that the loss of his church and his unshakable conviction in his sinfulness outweigh the satisfaction of his relationship. Yet, another scenario is one in which the client recognizes the conflict between the views of his church and his sexual orientation and behavior and chooses to continue his relationship and ignore the church doctrine; he wishes to focus in therapy on a completely unrelated issue.

In any of these scenarios, the mental health provider must evaluate whether he/she is the appropriate professional to continue to assist the client. If the client's chosen course of action conflicts with the provider's personal values, can the provider overcome his or her own biases to help the client move forward? If not, a referral elsewhere is warranted. As an example, a therapist who believes that same-sex orientation falls within the "normal" spectrum of sexuality would not be the appropriate therapist for an individual who wishes to change not only his or her sexual behavior, but also his or her sexual orientation. Likewise, a therapist who because of his or her religious beliefs is wedded to the idea that same-sex orientation and behavior is abnormal is not an appropriate therapist for an individual struggling to integrate his or her same-sex orientation into his or her life.

If the therapist and client decide to continue their work together, one or more of the following questions can be posed to the client if relevant to his presenting issue; the answers may help to clarify how the client sees his or her situation, the

range of possible resolutions, and those options that the client believes are most viable and realistic for his/her situation:

- Is there something in particular that triggered your wish to address this [the presenting] issue?
- What are all the possible resolutions that you can see to the situation you are describing? What are the pros and cons of each?
- Of all of the possibilities, which resolutions are most possible? What steps would you need to take to make one of them happen?
- Discuss with the client the strengths that are notable within African American culture and the themes of liberation and revelation. How do you think these themes apply to your situation? To your life?
- Discuss with the client the varying interpretations and application of the scriptural passages used to condemn homosexuality. What does this tell you? How might this apply to your situation?

In addition, the therapist must consider the following as he or she works with the client:

- Has the intervention that the therapist is using been shown to demonstrate efficacy?
- What are the potentially harmful effects of the chosen intervention?
- Does the chosen approach contribute further to the stigmatization of nonheterosexuals or is it affirming of all sexual orientations?
- Does the intervention demonstrate respect for the client's rights and dignity?
- Is the focus of the intervention on the client's discomfort or on the environment in which the discomfort occurs? Is this approach congruent with the client's wishes?
- Does the mental health provider have adequate training, skill, and experience to engage with the client or is it most appropriate to seek competent supervision from another mental health care provider with greater experience in working with clients with similar issues?
- Has the client been apprised of all of the risks and benefits of the approach to be taken and understanding these risks and benefits, provided consent to proceed?

Should the client wish to remain in his relationship and deal with the prospect of losing his church community, the therapist must be prepared to work with the client to develop a positive self-image and integration of his identity. If the client desires, he should also be provided with a listing of supportive resources and religious groups that are open to all.[22] If qualified to do so, the therapist may wish to engage the client in a "queer reading" of scripture, including those passages that have been referred to as "texts of empowerment," such as the Book of Ruth, 1 Samuel 18–20, 2 Samuel 1:26, Matthew 8:5–13, Luke 7:1–10, and Acts 8:26–40 (Swigonski 2001, 38–42; see also Horner 1978; Lings 2012; West 1997). (These texts are discussed in Chap. 5, which follows.) The stories contained in the Book of Exodus, with its theme of liberation, may also resonate with the client.[23] The therapist must recognize that the client will likely experience feelings of grief and

loss and may require support to cope with his decision. Importantly, it must be the client's decision to proceed with this course of action, not the therapist's.

In the event the client wishes to pursue reparative/conversion therapy to "convert" his or her sexual behavior and/or orientation to become heterosexual, the therapist must advise the client that there have been no scientifically rigorous studies to date that have established the efficacy of the intervention and that various professional associations of mental health providers have decried the intervention because it rests on the presumption that homosexuality is a developmental arrest, a severe form of psychopathology, or a combination of both (American Psychiatric Association 2000; American Psychological Association, n.d.), in essence, that homosexuality is deviant. It would also be important to explore with the client what he or she anticipates the beneficial effects of conversion therapy to be; whether the anticipated beneficial effects of conversion therapy can be achieved by other means; the potential adverse effects of such an intervention, such as poor self-esteem, depression, social withdrawal, sexual dysfunction, de-masculinization, and celibacy (Haldeman 2001); and whether the therapist is the appropriate provider to furnish this intervention.[24] Even if the therapist does not continue his or her work with the client at this point, the client should be provided with a listing of available relevant resources.

Finally, if the client wishes to remain in both his relationship and his church, it is critical that the mental health care provider not superimpose his or her own beliefs and values on the client's situation. Rather, the therapist must work to address the issue that the client has come to address.

Summary

Effective counseling with nonheterosexual clients requires an understanding of the process through which individuals come to identify as gay or lesbian and the issues involved when individuals have intersecting identities, e.g., race and sexual orientation. Individuals develop a sense of their identity at different rates; the trajectory of their identity development may be influenced by various external factors and by their religious beliefs and values.

Clients may experience conflict between their own religious values and their sexual orientation and/or between their faith communities and their sexual orientation or behavior. In such situations, a client may be experiencing an identity crisis, depression, internalized homophobia, and/or a crisis of faith. It is important that the therapist stress in all such cases that all major associations of mental health care providers view same-sex desires, attraction, and behavior as normal, an understanding that may conflict with the beliefs and teachings of the client's religious community or upbringing. Therapy or counseling should focus on the issues presented by the client; the therapist should not superimpose his or her values or beliefs on the client's situation. In situations in which the therapist and client continue to work together, the client must be apprised of the risks and benefits associated with a recommended

approach and provide informed, voluntary consent before proceeding. Therapists who do not have sufficient expertise to address the issues presented by the client should seek out appropriate clinical supervision. A referral to another therapist should be provided to the client if the therapist is unable to overcome his or her own biases in order to address the client's issues as the client sees them.

Chapter 5
Working with Families and Communities

A mental health provider may also be called upon to work with families and/or communities that are struggling with any of a range of issues related to religious beliefs and sexual orientation. Consider the following examples, each of which portrays actual situations encountered by this author.

- A mother discovers that her teen-aged son as gay. She is a member of a traditional African American church. Based on the teachings of that church, she believes that her son is possessed by an evil force and will be relegated to hell. She sends him numerous text messages each day, often quoting the "texts of terror" that her pastor has provided to her for this purpose. The son seeks out a mental health care provider and asks that the provider intervene with his mother to help her understand.
- An older African American woman consults a mental health care provider because she has just learned that her adult son is gay. She loves him, but is struggling to reconcile her religious beliefs with her love for him. She is particularly conflicted because of the biblical passages that she understands to prohibit same-sex relations. She not only wonders if he needs to be cured of his sinfulness or disorder, but she is also becoming depressed due to her internal conflict.
- An African American woman who openly self-identifies as lesbian is mortified and humiliated in church when, during a Sunday sermon, the pastor looks directly at her and condemns individuals with a same-sex orientation as having sinned against the Lord. When she tries to approach him following the church service, he declares in a voice loud enough for others to hear that he does not have time for people like her. She wonders if there is a way that the mental health care provider she consults can meet with her pastor to explain that same-sex orientation is normal and not to be condemned.

Each of these situations will be considered with respect to the issues that are raised for the mental health care provider. In each such situation, it is critical that the mental health provider remain attuned to the various dimensions and implications of the client's specific situation in order to understand the client's conflict. As

S. Loue, *Understanding Theology and Homosexuality in African American Communities*, SpringerBriefs in Social Work,
DOI: 10.1007/978-1-4614-9002-9_5, © The Author(s) 2014

an example, it may have been quite easy for an individual to denigrate and reject homosexuals in the abstract; it is not the same situation when that rejected homosexual is the individual's son. The individual may have been quite willing to accept his or her minister's simplistic interpretation of a specific scriptural passage to support the exclusion of gays and lesbians from the congregation. That may no longer be the case when the person to be excluded is a son or daughter. Accordingly, it will be important to explore with the client both the context of his or her conflict and the context in which the relevant passages were originally composed. It will also be helpful for the mental health care provider working with family members and clergy to have an understanding of the stages through which an individual's faith may develop and change over time. James Fowler built on Erikson's theory of development (Fowler 2001, 167) to formulate his six-stage model of faith development (Fowler 1986), detailed below. (One might speculate that communities may pass through these same stages of development in their understandings of faith and God, but Fowler applied his formulation solely to individuals.)

Stage 1. Intuitive-Projective Faith. During this stage, the child can be easily influenced by the examples and stories of adults. This stage provides the foundation for long-lasting images and feelings. It is during this stage that the child first becomes aware of the issues of death, sex, and taboos. The child will progress to the next stage of faith development following the development of operational thinking and a need to understand the difference between what is real and what is not.

Stage 2. Mythic-Literal Faith refers to that stage of development, most frequently occurring during school age, in which the child takes on for him- or herself the stories, beliefs, and observances that he or she has seen within his or her community. The child's increased ability to engage in operational thinking leads to a diminution of the child's imaginative construction of the world. Children evidence a growing ability to utilize story, narrative, myth, and drama in their efforts to understand experience. They are also more likely to interpret rules, stories, and symbols quite literally. Children will progress to stage 3 only if they are able to see the contradictions in and between stories, such as Genesis versus evolutionary theory, and are willing to reflect on the meanings of these stories and resulting conflicts.

Stage 3. Synthetic-Convention Faith. During this stage, the individual's experience extends to the larger world, beyond the boundary of the family. This stage is characterized by conformity, including an awareness of others' expectations and judgments. Although the individual may have and express an ideology, he or she has not yet systematically reflected on or examined the elements of that ideology. The individual interprets differences in individuals' outlook as differences in the "kind" of individual. The locus of authority rests in traditional authority figures. There exists the danger during this stage that the individual will internalize the judgments and expectations of others to such a degree that he or she becomes unable to form an autonomous judgment. Movement to stage 4 is frequently precipitated by a physical or emotional departure from one's home that leads to an examination of self, background, and values.

It is possible that the mental health provider will encounter some family members and clergy who have been unable to move beyond stages 3 or 4 of faith

development. They may never have experienced an event that has caused them to reexamine their beliefs and values or they may have so completely and for so long integrated the expectations and judgments of others that they are no longer aware that they have done so. As a result, they may remain wed to a literal interpretation of what they read and, based on the teachings and opinions of others, uncritically accept some scriptural passages and interpretations, e.g., homosexuality is sinful, while being dismissive and rejecting of others, e.g., passages relating to slavery. They may fail or refuse to recognize the contradictions that exist between stories and may reject information, such as concept sof evolution or genetics, that conflict with their literal understanding of biblical events.

Stage 4. Individuative-Reflective Faith generally occurs during adolescence or early adulthood. However, many individuals will not reach this stage of faith development until well into their fourth decade of life. During this stage, the individual claims an identity that does not rest on the roles or meanings assigned by others. It is during this stage that individuals are able to differentiate their own identity and their own world view from that of others. In the context of religion and homosexuality, this suggests that individuals must achieve this level of faith development before they will be able to reject religious teachings characterizing homosexuality as deviant and evaluate for themselves the meaning of homosexuality and of the scriptural passages that have served as the premise for this characterization

Stage 5. Conjunctive Faith involves an attempt by individuals to unify and integrate apparent contradictions. The individual is willing to experience greater depth in his or her experience in spirituality and religious revelation and is committed to justice without regard to tribe, class, religion, or nation. In essence, the individual reworks and reclaims his or her past. This stage is generally not achieved until an individual is in his or her fifties. A healthy passage through this stage allows an individual to recognize that meaning is relative and partial. Individuals who do not pass through this stage successfully are likely to become complacent, passive, or cynical.

Stage 6. According to Fowler (1986), relatively few people attain the level of development that he calls Stage 6. Termed “universalizers,” these individuals “have generated faith compositions in which their felt sense of an ultimate environment is inclusive of all being.” Universalizers engage in fellowship with individuals at any stage of faith and from any faith tradition. They are often seen as “vessels of the universal” and may be revered after their deaths.

Distinguishing Between Misdirected Love and Child Abuse

In the first situation noted above, in which a mother sends her son numerous text messages condemning homosexuality that are replete with biblical quotes, it is important that the mental health care provider understand what the child’s response to these messages is and what he wishes to accomplish through your intervention with his mother. Is this merely an annoyance, and he wants the text messaging to

stop? Is it so distressing that he is self-mutilating, contemplating running away or committing suicide? Obtaining and understanding the answers to these questions will require the development of trust with the teen and an understanding from his perspective of the dynamics involved in the relationship with his mother. What has their relationship been like in the past? Is this new behavior on the part of his mother? Is it similar to past behavior, but with a new focus? Is she aware of the level of her son's distress? How is she likely to react to your involvement? Will it be seen as an intrusion into something that is none of your concern? Will she feel that she has the right to raise her child any way she pleases? How can your involvement be best orchestrated to reduce the likelihood of a negative response from the mother? The answers to these questions will impact how you decide to proceed.

In this situation, the mental health provider must also consider the legal context in which he or she will proceed by referring to the various provisions of state law that may be relevant to the specific situation. Consider the following issues.

- Does state law permit you to provide mental health care to the teenager without parental consent and, if so, for how many sessions or over what period of time? Is the situation different if the child is deemed to be in crisis and likely to be a threat to himself?
- Do the mother's actions, taken in context, rise to the level of child abuse within the state's definition of emotional or psychological abuse or maltreatment? If emotional/psychological abuse/maltreatment is suspected based on your assessment of the child, must it be reported under state law? If so, have you advised the client of your legal obligation to report the abuse? How will this report impact the teen's situation?
- Does state law allow parents to rely on religious or spiritual treatment for the care of their children's illnesses? If so, is homosexuality encompassed within that provision, despite the pronouncements from professional mental health provider associations that homosexuality does not constitute a mental illness? Do the mother's text messages, in contrast to treatment from a licensed mental health professional, constitute a form of treatment since the texts were provided to her by her pastor, who engages in faith-based counseling?

Because of the wide variation in state laws, it is impossible to examine each question in significant depth. A broad review of these issues is provided below. Readers facing such issues are urged to consult with their professional associations and/or seek legal counsel as needed for the particular situation.

A brief review of even a few states' laws exemplifies the wide variation across states with respect to the provision of mental health treatment to minors. In general, Washington State requires that an individual have reached the age of 18 to consent to the provision of medical care. However, a child who is 13 years of age or older can consent to receive outpatient or inpatient mental health care without parental consent. Nevertheless, parent/guardian notification is required if the treatment is to be provided on an inpatient basis. (Annotated Revised Code Washington 2012; Columbia Legal Services, Public Health Seattle & King County, & University of Washington Medicine n.d.). In Connecticut, a licensed psychiatrist, psychologist, certified independent social worker, or marital, and family counselor

is permitted to provide up to six outpatient mental health treatment sessions to a minor child without parental consent or notification if the requirement of notification or consent would cause the child to reject the treatment; treatment is clinically indicated; the failure to provide the treatment would be detrimental to the well-being of the child; the child knowingly and voluntarily sought treatment; and in the opinion of the mental health professional, the child is mature enough to participate in treatment productively (Connecticut General Statutes 2012). After the sixth session, the provider must notify the child that parent or guardian notification or involvement is required in order to continue with treatment, unless doing so "would be seriously detrimental to the minor's well-being," which must be documented in the record and reviewed and redocumented every sixth session.

California's provisions are different yet, allowing a child who is 12 years of age or older to obtain outpatient mental health treatment or residential shelter services if in the opinion of the mental health professional the child is sufficiently mature to participate intelligently in the services and the child would present a danger of serious mental or physical harm to him-/herself or others without the service or is the alleged victim of incest or child abuse (California Family Code 2013; National Center for Youth Law 2010). However, the professional must use his or her best efforts to notify the parent or guardian and must involve the parent or guardian, unless in the opinion of the professional it would be inappropriate to do so and this is documented in the record. California law specifies that the parent or guardian is not liable for the cost of the outpatient services provided unless he or she has participated and is not responsible for the cost of the shelter services unless he or she has consented. Additionally, the statute prohibits the mental health care professional from administering convulsive therapy, psychosurgery, or psychotropic drugs without the consent of the parent or guardian.

How emotional abuse/maltreatment is defined varies among scholars as well as across states. In general, professional understandings emphasize the repetitive nature of the behavior, which may include terrorizing, withholding emotional responsiveness, isolating, and rejecting behaviors, and the association between these acts or omissions that convey to the child the parent's feelings of indifference, hostility, or rejection (Doyle 1997, 336; Iwaniec 1997, 372; van der Kolk 1987). State laws also vary with respect to how emotional abuse or maltreatment is defined; the terms used, with some states utilizing the term "abuse," others "mental injury," and still others "serious mental injury"; and whether the behavior must have resulted in perceptible diagnosed injury, such as depression or an inability to accomplish age-appropriate developmental tasks (Loue 2005, 196). Some states allow parents to provide treatment for mental illness through prayer. As an example, Ohio law provides:

> No person, who is the parent, guardian, custodian, person having custody or control, or person in loco parentis of a child under 18 years of age or a mentally or physically handicapped child under 21 years of age, shall create a substantial risk to the health or safety of the child, by violating a duty of care, protection, or support. It is not a violation of a duty of care, protection, or support under this division when the parent, guardian, custodian, or person having custody or control of a child treats the physical or mental illness or defect of the child by spiritual means through prayer alone, in accordance with the tenets of a recognized religious body (Ohio Revised Code Annotated 2013).

This suggests that the transmission of biblical texts to a child to "cure" him of his homosexuality, despite the child's significant level of distress, might arguably be construed as a form of prayer and therefore condoned by law. And, while several scholars have queried whether parentally mandated faith-based cures for homosexuality, such as reparative therapy, constitutes child abuse (Hicks 1999; Loue 2005, 2010; Talbot 2006), only California has attempted to prohibit its use with minors (Gomstyn 2012).

Oftentimes, due to limited resources and the large number of abuse reports filed, agencies will give priority for investigation to those situations in which the children appear to be at greatest risk of serious physical injury or death, resulting in the failure to follow up on complaints that allege emotional abuse only. It is important to recognize that even if the state agency charged with the investigation of child abuse is unlikely to investigate a report of emotional abuse/maltreatment, the mental health care provider is not relieved of the obligation to report the abuse. The failure to do so could lead to legal repercussions for the professional, depending upon the provisions of state law.

The answers to the following questions may help the mental health care provider to determine whether the teen's situation potentially constitutes abuse or suspected abuse that would be reportable under the respective state law.

- Does state law refer to emotional or psychological abuse or emotional or psychological maltreatment? If so, does the teen's situation fall within the definition?
- Is a professional assessment and diagnosis such as depression or anxiety required for a report? If so, has the teen been evaluated and does he have such a diagnosis?
- Does state law require the reporting of only confirmed abuse/maltreatment, or must suspected abuse/maltreatment also be reported?
- Is the mental health care provider a mandated reporter under state law, so that the provider is legally required to report abuse or maltreatment?

Assuming for the purpose of this discussion that mental health treatment or counseling without parental consent or notification is permissible under state law and the situation does not require an abuse report, the provider will likely wish to strategize with his/her client as to the most appropriate way to bring his mother into the counseling. One approach that this provider has found somewhat successful is to have the teen initiate a discussion with his parent, suggesting that she accompany him for his benefit to a counseling session. Prior to moving forward with this approach, it is critical that the mental health care provider review with the client the client's expectations, the fact that the provider cannot and does not have the right to tell the client's mother what she can or should think, the range of potential outcomes of such an approach, the reality that neither the client nor the provider can predict or control the parent's response, and the possibility that the parent's response may differ significantly from what the client either wants or expects. Role playing may also be helpful to the client prior to engaging his mother in the discussion. In short, the client must be made aware of all of the

potential risks and benefits to proceeding with this strategy and must have sufficient capacity and understanding to consent.

Yet another approach consists of the provision to the teen of a listing of resources and support services in the local community that are directed specifically to parents of gay children; these can be passed on to his mother at an opportune moment. Foremost among these is Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). There are many local chapters; specific information is available on their website (http://www.pflag.org). The demographics of each local chapter vary and the parent's level of comfort may depend to some extent on the racial/ethnic/socioeconomic characteristics of the local chapter's membership. Other resources include racially diverse, gay-friendly/gay-welcoming churches that may also provide support services to gay/lesbian youth and/or their parents. (See note 21 for a listing of gay-friendly/gay-welcoming churches.)

Texts of Terror Versus Texts of Empowerment

Consider the situation involving the mother who is torn between her love for her son and her concern about his sinfulness, based on her understandings of the biblical passages that have traditionally been utilized to condemn homosexuality. (See Chap. 3 for a review of those Biblical passages that have been labeled by some writers as "texts of terror.") How the mental health care provider proceeds can only be determined through much deeper discussion with the mother regarding her religious beliefs and their importance; the benefits that derive from her religious beliefs and her affiliation with and participation in her particular church and faith community; and her willingness and ability to examine more fully the meanings of the biblical passages, the relevance of additional biblical passages, and the possibility of seeking out a different and more open place of worship.

It will be important to emphasize that most mental health professionals and all major professional mental health organizations believe that homosexuality per se is not a disorder or illness and that no cure or attempted cure is warranted. The basis of the mother's depression should also be explored. Although she is attributing it to the conflict surrounding her son's sexual orientation and her religious beliefs, there may be other contributing or associated factors that require attention.

It may be possible, depending on the comfort level of the mental health care provider and the mother, to engage the mother in a discussion of the varying interpretations of the scriptural passages that appear to be creating the conflict for her. She may believe, as the result of her own upbringing or the statements of her clergy that the Bible views homosexuality as deviant or abnormal and that homosexuals are sinners who are condemned by God or who will go to hell. A discussion of the varied interpretations may help to broaden or shift her understanding and possibly alleviate feelings of guilt that she may be experiencing because she continues to love her son, "the sinner." The discussions may also provide her with fortification against the words of the pastor and perhaps fellow congregants of her

church. Depending upon the situation and the mental health care provider's contacts with religious figures within the community, the provider may wish to consult with or co-counsel the client with an appropriate spiritual professional.

The therapist may also refer to the biblical passages that have been termed "texts of empowerment." These include the Book of Ruth, 1 Samuel 18–20, 2 Samuel 1:26, Matthew 8:5–13, Luke 7:1–10, and Acts 8:26–40. Like other biblical passages, these verses are subject to multiple, widely divergent and often conflicting interpretations. Indeed, "our reading is deeply controlled by where we are coming from, how we are reading, and why we are reading" (Kim 2000, 263). Some interpretations of these passages may provide hope and comfort to parents struggling to reconcile their love for their child with their religious beliefs, and may help to promote healing of a rupture in the relationship between parent and child. Alternative interpretations of these passages are also noted briefly in the chapter and in the accompanying notes.

The Book of Ruth

The Book of Ruth relates the story of Naomi, the death of her husband, the marriage of Naomi's sons to Moabite women, and the death of her sons. Naomi decides to return to Bethlehem from Moab, where she and her family had once fled to escape the famine in Palestine. According to West (2006a, 191), Naomi and her daughters-in-law Ruth, and Orpah "are women who are worthless and on the margins of Near Eastern society" because they are neither virgins in their fathers' households nor child-producing wives in their husbands' households. Naomi encourages her daughters-in-law Orpah and Ruth to leave her and try to find new husbands. In response, Ruth promises to follow Naomi wherever she might go. Following their return to Bethlehem, Naomi orchestrates Ruth's sexual liaison with Boaz, a distant relative. Ruth becomes pregnant and gives birth to the son of Boaz. The newborn is named Obed and the women of the town proclaim, "A son has been born to Naomi" (Ruth 4:17).

There have been numerous and widely divergent interpretations of this proclamation of the birth.[25] One scholar has interpreted it as the recognition of a spousal relationship between Naomi and Ruth, even if that relationship did not include sexual relations (West 1997, 59). West asserts further:

> Ruth is our Queer ancestress…. She provides us with an example of self-determination, refusing to accept a marginalized status based on heterosexist patriarchal definitions of marriage, family, and procreation (West 2006a, 191).

Samuel 18–20 and 2 Samuel 1:26

It is believed that the books of 1 and 2 Samuel were originally one book and were later divided into two at the time the Hebrew text was translated into Greek (Stone

2006, 197–198). These books relate the story of how Samuel was born and given by his mother Hannah to the priest, Eli, who then raised him. Samuel, who has become a prophet, serves as a judge for Israel. A conflict between Israel and the Philistines leads to the Philistines' capture of the Ark of the Covenant. Eli dies after hearing what has happened to the Ark, which is later returned to Israel. Although Samuel had appointed his sons as judges, they have failed to live up to their responsibilities and Samuel then anoints Saul to lead Israel. Saul, however, is rejected by God as the result of his disobedience; Samuel subsequently anoints David as the ruler of Israel. Saul's children Jonathan and Michal help David to escape from Saul. Saul and his three sons, including Jonathan, are killed in battle with the Philistines. David is told about the deaths of Saul and his sons at the beginning of 2 Samuel. David engages in battle against the Philistines and is successful in bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. Although David wishes to build a temple, God informs him that his son will be the one to do so. God also promises David that he will build a "house," which is interpreted as "an inherited dynasty" (Stone 2006, 199).

1 Samuel 18–20 and 2 Samuel 1:26 speak of the relationship between David and Jonathan. "The soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1 Samuel 18). "Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him for he loved him as he loved his own life" (1 Samuel 17). In 2 Samuel 1:26, David laments the death of Jonathan:

> I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; greatly beloved were you to me; your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

Four possible interpretations of the relationship between David and Jonathan have been noted: (1) the relationship may be homosexual or at least homoerotic; (2) the relationship is suggestive of homosexuality, homoeroticism or homosociability; (3) the relationship serves as an example of extraordinary loyalty and friendship between two men; and (4) the relationship may be read within the framework of queer theory to advance a specific agenda (Zehnder 2007, 127–174). Recalling that sexual orientation is not only about with whom one has sex with or to whom one is attracted, but also with whom one bonds emotionally and romantically, it is entirely possible that Jonathan and David maintained a homosexual relationship, with or without sexual relations. Horner has argued in support of this position that

> when two men come from a society that for 200 years lived in the shadow of a culture which accepted homosexuality; when one of them—who is the social superior of the two—makes a public display of his love; when the two of them make a lifetime pact openly; when they meet secretly and kiss each other and shed copious tears at parting; when one of them proclaims that his love for the other surpassed his love for women—and all of this is present in the David-Jonathan liaison—then we have every reason to believe that a homosexual relationship existed (Horner 1978, 28).

Minimally, the passage indicates that extremely close emotional bonds between men not only occurred, but were deemed to be acceptable, even when those emotional attachments were stronger than they might have been with a woman. Several scholars have maintained that the closeness of the relationship between David and

Jonathan does not signify a sexual relationship (Coogan 2007, 488 HB), that the language of love was frequently used at the time as a means of describing the political relationships between rulers and their subordinates (McCarter 1980, 281), and that term was used here to suggest a political significance (Thompson 1974, 335, 338).

Matthew 8:5–13 and Luke 7:1–10

It has been suggested that Matthew was written as a response of the population of Antioch, located in the western region of ancient Syria (Bohache 2006, 492; Coogan 2007, 7 NT) to Roman imperialism (Bohache 2006, 491). The population was comprised of generally poor artisans who were experiencing overcrowding due to the influx of refugee peasants who had migrated to Antioch after losing their farms as the result of exorbitant taxation and/or the land's overwork to meet the production demands of the empire's elite.

Matthew was written during the period of time between the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE and the rise of rabbinic Judaism that occurred between 135 and 200 CE (Coogan 2007, 7 NT). The Gospel of Matthew reflects the tensions that existed within the Jewish community, as various Jewish groups struggled to determine which of many interpretations of Jewish law and tradition would govern Jewish life and ensure Judaism's survival (Coogan 2007, 8 NT). Scholars do not agree on whether the Gospel of Matthew was directed to Jewish Christians who had abandoned Judaism or Christian Jews who still thought of themselves as Jews and viewed Jesus' teachings as one interpretation of Judaism among many (Bohache 2006. 490).

Matthew 8:5–13 relates the story of how a centurion approached Jesus for his assistance in healing his ailing "servant"/"slave." A similar story is told in Luke 7:1–10. Reliance on Matthew 8:5–13 and Luke 7:1–10 as texts of empowerment rests, first, on the language utilized in the texts. In Matthew, the passage was directed to a Jewish audience that spoke Greek; one scholar has suggested that the term *pais* used for "servant" was the same term that was used for "lover" (Horner 1978). Although the same story was retold in Luke, the term for "servant" or "slave," *doulos*, was utilized instead in speaking to a predominantly Gentile (Greek) audience that would have understood the same-sex implications of the term *pais* (Goss 2006, 537). Various writers have interpreted this story as suggestive of or at least allowing the possibility of a homoerotic relationship between the centurion and his servant (Hanks 2000, 48; Horner 1978, 122; Jennings 2003, 131–144; Jennings Jr. and Liew 2004; McNeill 1995, 132–136; Saddington 2006, 142; Williams 1992, 60–63). It is significant that there is no condemnation voiced regarding this relationship. Instead, Jesus declares of the centurion, "Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith" (Matthew 8:10). This has been understood to mean that

> a segment of the early church … in which Matthew arose, was not concerned, when confronted by a responsible, loving pederastic relationship, but rather held it subordinate to the question of faith (Mader 1992, 231).

Acts 8:26–40

Acts 8:26–40 relates how an Ethiopian eunuch was baptized as a Christian at the direction of an angel of the Lord. Because Deuteronomy 23:1 explicitly excluded eunuchs from membership with the people of Israel—"No one whose testicles are crushed or whose penis is cut off shall be admitted to the assembly of the Lord"—the passage in Acts has been interpreted to mean that the church is to include those who have traditionally been excluded, including those who have been excluded for sexual reasons (Wilson 1997). The eunuch was believed to be someone who followed the principles of the Torah and worshipped the God of the Jews, but who had not been circumcised (Fitzmyer 1998, 449). Pursuant to the injunction set forth in Deuteronomy he would have been excluded from membership with the people of Israel. Therefore, he has been called "the first baptized gay Christian" (McNeill 1995, 143). West (2006b, 573) explains:

> Queer people of faith would read this story as our own. We are kept from full participation in the Church because of what is perceived as our outsider sexual status. We have been denied ordination and communion. Our relationships are also not blessed by the Church. At best we are allowed to attend worship if we 'leave our sexuality at the door'. We are allowed marginal participation in the body of Christ if we adopt a 'don't ask, don't tell' policy, or if we promise not to be a 'practicing' homosexual.

Working with Clergy and Faith Communities

The third situation involving the clergy who denounced homosexuals and homosexuality from the pulpit also presents numerous challenges. Depending upon that individual's relationship with his congregation, his view of the world outside of his faith community, and his personality, he may not be willing to engage in discussion with the mental health provider under any circumstances, regardless of how the provider approaches the situation. In such instances, the provider may have to inform the client that this approach will not be successful and then explore with the client what he or she would like to do. Choices include, but are not limited to, continuing to attend the same church, despite the pastor's denunciation, and working toward the resolution of her own feelings; seeking out another church or faith community that is more open to membership and in which the client feels comfortable; and removing oneself from any faith community for a period of time, however long or short it may be.

Additionally, the mental health professional must evaluate his or her own comfort level with respect to engaging the clergy in a discussion relating to his interactions with the client. Does the provider feel that engagement with the pastor is within the parameters of his or her relationship with the client, or is this stepping outside of the therapist's scope of practice and/or comfort level? How will the provider respond if the pastor appears to be intransigent? Should the therapist agree to proceed and attempt to engage the pastor in discussion, what would be the purpose

of that discussion? Does the therapist wish to mediate the situation so that the client can feel more comfortable attending her church? Is the therapist attempting to change the pastor's religious beliefs, an effort that is unlikely to succeed and that is much more likely to exacerbate the situation? It is critical that the therapist know and understand him- or herself, his or her own motives for pursuing the client's request, and what he/she and the client wish to accomplish and why.

Assuming for the purpose of this discussion that the therapist has adequately engaged in this self-inquiry and evaluation and has decided to proceed in order to understand better the client's circumstances and to attempt a reconciliation between the clergy and the client, it is important that the provider not prejudge the clergy person or the situation. The client's rendition of the troublesome event represents one perspective; it does not inform the provider of either the pastor's perspective or the experiences that he may have had that have led him to reach this conclusion. Too often, the media generalizes across all African American churches and all African American clergy, portraying every church and everyone in these churches as rabidly homophobic. In fact, considerable nuance exists across clergy, and even among those clergy who appear reticent to embrace the idea of gay marriage.

As an example, consider the explanation provided to this author by one African American minister affiliated with the United Church of Christ in a discussion of his own and his church's views of homosexuality.

> My general view … I would say that after a long period of time, I have been growing spiritually … it's acceptable. I would put a caveat on that to say that because of Southern upbringing and some help from fundamental biblical teaching, at a particular point I would have seen it as an abomination…. And God knows if I would be Pentecostal it would be a lot different. But being a member of the UCC, they were very open…. The slogan, the big slogan, "Jesus never turned anyone away, neither do we…." [A]t one of our national summits, the denomination voted to be in favor of same-sex marriage. As a result, some churches felt so strongly against it that they left the denomination…. [O]ne of the cautions that you have in the UCC, especially among African Americans is that 9 times out of 10, members are generally something else, people who came into our churches were former Baptists, former Pentecostals, and so you have a lot of range of opinions … so if I was to get up in the pulpit and say homosexuality is not a sin, there's a matter of fact, no doubt in me, no matter what I think of it, it would get a lot of attention…. There would be a discussion and I think they'd throw me out on my head, but it would sure facilitate a lot of discussion (Confidential interview with Clergy #1, Cuyahoga County, Ohio 2012).

Clearly, this minister not only has been pursuing his own religious/spiritual journey with respect to this issue, but is aware that he has held varying views at different points in time. This suggests that an attempt to engage the minister in a discussion of homosexuality would have yielded quite different responses to the substantive issues depending upon where he was in his own journey at the time of the questioning. It is important to note, as well, the conflict that exists between his more recently developed views of homosexuality and the views that he perceives to be common among his congregants. The church's slogan indicates that it remains open to members who self-identify as homosexual. What would happen

if the minister were more vocal about his own view that homosexuality is not a sin? Would he risk the loss of his congregation? Would that in the long-term be more likely to bring about greater acceptance of homosexuality within his church or would it be more likely to lead to the adoption of a policy of "don't ask, don't tell," despite the slogan of openness?

An interview with a second African American minister also revealed both a difference between her original and current church affiliations and a shift over time in her approach to nonheterosexuality.

> Currently I'm affiliated with a nondenominational church, Church of God…. I was taught in the ministry at a Baptist church so I can see myself as nondenominational…. I was brought up in a church where I now have been accepted as a lay minister and ironically the language is different in even the denomination. So the Baptist church where I was called put me in the category of associate minister, the church where I am now as lay minister.
>
> I believe my personal beliefs are at odds with my church. And I say that because in both churches I've heard sermons … and I think I have chosen not to have conversations with either pastor about it. So my personal belief is that there are sexual orientations that I do not understand and that I have chosen not to judge or denigrate. And I think this is because I have so many friends who are lesbian or gay. To my knowledge I don't have any friends who are transgender, but then again that's to my knowledge and to my knowledge I don't have any who are bisexual. So because I have so many close friends I have purposely chosen not to be, even become familiar with the passages in the bible that people use to beat people up with. I know this sounds odd coming from a minister because I feel like my obligation is to know the whole bible. And so I don't know the whole bible yet….

After recounting when, as a young emerging adult, she came into contact for the first time with women who openly identified as lesbian, the minister continued,

> But I've had to deal with it mentally, intellectually, spiritually I've had to deal with it and so I think there's a need right now but I've chosen not to do it but I have lots of friends who could want to know what the church teaches and the church teaches that it's a sin, and we love the sinner but hate the sin so I think the cliché is in the church. And it annoys me because you know I just keep my, where is, where is it in the bible that says it's such a sin? And so I just considered myself kind of an odd bird at church sometimes because I've chosen not to beat up on people. You know at the same time I have very strong feelings about heterosexuality… (Confidential interview with Clergy #2, Cuyahoga County, Ohio 2012).

This clergy person's story suggests that even within churches that appear to denigrate and diminish nonheterosexuals, there may be clergy who are sympathetic and who themselves have struggled to reconcile their need for a spiritual home with the conflict between their own views and those of their church. This clergy person likely faces choices that are similar to the first minister. If she is vocal about her differing views, would she lose her position and her spiritual home, or would the congregation as a result of her voiced position be forced to reexamine its own attitudes and actions? Is she more effective in the long term by providing silent support and counsel to those who are able to connect with her? Can change ever occur if people do not speak out and make their voices heard?

Again, these interviews suggest that at least in some situations a clergy members may be more approachable and amenable to discussion than one might expect based on past experience. Even in situations in which the official church stance opposes homosexuals and homosexuality, support may nevertheless exist.

It is also possible that some clergy who have not thought deeply about the impact of their religion's stance or their personal feelings towards homosexuality and homosexuals may nevertheless be open to hearing "rational" arguments for the acceptance of homosexuality and homosexuals. In speaking about the necessity of adhering to laws, Thomas Aquinas observed that

> in certain cases the observance of [a] law would be against justice and against the common good which is what that law aims at …. In such cases … it would be bad to follow the law laid down, but on the other hand be good to ignore the wording of the law in order to do what is called for by justice and the common benefit (Quoted in Mahoney 1987, 235–236).

Accordingly, one might suggest to the clergy member that, although Aquinas' comments were made in the context of the Roman Catholic tradition, they may have relevance for his or her faith tradition as well. If the clergy member is open to discussion, the mental health care provider might explore with the clergy member the nature and extent of any good or any harm that may result from the clergy member's teachings about and views of homosexuality and whether, on balance, they lead to greater harm or greater good for individuals, families, and the community as a whole.

Summary

Various issues related to religious beliefs may be raised by and for families and communities that must address the nonheterosexual sexual orientation of their members. Oftentimes, these issues arise because of a conflict between an individual's religious beliefs or teachings and their feelings for a family member or concern for the family member's fate before God. Mental health care providers may be confronted with legal issues in working with minors; foremost among these are issues related to child abuse and the ability to provide treatment without parental notification or consent. The mental health provider can offer support to family members and may be supported through discussion of the varying interpretations of texts of terror, as well as the texts of empowerment that have been relied upon to provide support to nonheterosexual individuals. Support for nonheterosexual individuals may exist even in churches whose clergy denounce homosexuality.

It is critical that a provider engaging with family members and/or clergy recognize their own biases and religious values, the potential impact of these beliefs on the provider's interactions with family or clergy, and the purpose and goal of engaging in such exchanges. Supervision and/or referral to another provider should be utilized if the provider is unable to provide services in a nonjudgmental and unbiased manner.

Conclusion

The understandings of and responses to varying enactments of gender and gender role and to same-sex behavior and relationships within African American communities have been shaped in large part by the treatment of African American men and women since their arrival in the colonies. Their collective experience has included slavery, including the use of African American men and women as mere bodies to be had for the pleasure or profit of their owners; the depiction of African Americans and African American sexuality as deviant; the emasculation of African American men through lynching; and the ongoing discrimination against African Americans in the economic domain.

Religion has been a vital force for and within African American communities since the days of slavery, oftentimes providing the impetus for actions and movements designed to bring about freedom, recognition, and justice. Liberation theology, in particular, has facilitated transformation. Despite experiences of violence, oppression, and discrimination, African American art, literature, and music has flourished, reflecting themes of strength and liberation.

Notwithstanding the political advancements that have been made, African Americans continue to experience discrimination and economic marginalization. African Americans continue to be perceived as the "Other" and African American sexuality, when discussed at all, is often viewed as deviant. The oppressed have, however, become the oppressors in their rejection and denigration of homosexuals and homosexuality.

The characterization of homosexuality and homosexuals as deviant or sinful by some African American churches may represent an attempt of those who are relatively disempowered within the larger society to retain their power and/or to achieve greater power. In theory, the specification of a clear behavioral boundary between those who have sexual relations with members of the same sex and those who do not facilitates the demarcation between those who are "normal" and those who are "deviant." Additionally, continued reliance on a selective, literal, and uncritical understanding of these passages suggests that some clergy and laypersons and, indeed, some faith communities, may be unable or unwilling to

S. Loue, *Understanding Theology and Homosexuality in African American Communities*, SpringerBriefs in Social Work,
DOI: 10.1007/978-1-4614-9002-9, © The Author(s) 2014

recognize and integrate contradictions that exist between various biblical stories and between biblical and nonbiblical knowledge.

In voicing their condemnation of those who by virtue of their sexual behavior are to be considered deviant, some African American churches—and others—have relied upon various Biblical passages for support. However, an examination of these seven "clobber passages"—Genesis 1:26–29, Genesis 19:1–5, Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, Romans 1:18–27, 1 Corinthians 6:9–11, and 1 Timothy 1:8–11—through the lens of deviance theory reveals that (1) they are subject to widely divergent and oftentimes conflicting interpretations due to our lack of understanding of the original words used and/or the context in which they were first used and (2) same-sex relations were common during the historical periods when the passages were first composed and likely would not have been regarded as deviant by the original audiences of those passages. Other issues were then considered more critical and the failure to attend adequately to or ameliorate such concerns deviant: the violent and inhospitable treatment of strangers, a lack of respect toward God, the separation of the sacred from the profane, and a failure to adhere to the socially and politically prescribed roles of men and women. Many of the prohibitions that were voiced in these passages were intended to address these concerns and, in some cases, to construct clear distinctions between Jews and non-Jews, believers and nonbelievers.

Accordingly, the reliance of some African American churches on these passages for support of their exclusion and/or marginalization of homosexuals is misplaced. However, many individuals and their family members may be unaware of the diverse interpretations of these Biblical passages. As a result of both the teachings they have received and the actions of their churches, they may experience conflict between their religious beliefs and their own or another's same-sex identity or behavior. The extent to which nonheterosexual individuals reject or accept the teachings of their church may depend on the extent to which they have passed through any of the developmental stages to understand and accept their sexual identity.

A mental health provider may be helpful to a client seeking to reconcile his or her sexual identity with his/her religious beliefs, or to a family member experiencing distress in his/her attempts to come to terms with a loved one's sexuality despite their religious teachings, by emphasizing that homosexuality/lesbianism is not considered a mental illness or a disorder, providing new insights into the varying meanings of these passages, offering the client information about the texts of empowerment, and furnishing a list of gay-friendly/gay-welcoming resources, including places of worship. It will be important throughout the counseling process to remain attuned to the client's processes of identity development and faith development. Some African American clergy may themselves experience conflict between the teachings of their churches and their own beliefs. As a result, gay/lesbian individuals may find sources of support from clergy even within African American churches that have publicly condemned homosexuality and homosexuals.

Notes

1. The term African American is used to refer to individuals who identify with African ancestors who were brought to the colonies or the United States involuntarily. This is distinguished from individuals who immigrated to the U.S. voluntarily from Africa, the Caribbean, or other locales (Lewis and Kertzner 2003, 384). The term African American church refers specifically to African American Christian churches. Accordingly, the focus of this work is on the understandings of specific scriptural passages within various African American Christian churches and the implications of these interpretations for same-sex oriented or -identified persons, their family members, and their communities.
2. It has been suggested that deviance theory be abandoned in favor of a post-structural approach to understanding homosexuality because of the former's requirement that homosexuality be defined only as it exists in opposition to heterosexuality, which is presumed to be natural and stable (Namaste 1994, 227). A poststructuralist approach is admittedly more appropriate in efforts to understand homosexuality in the context of all sexuality. However, an understanding of sexuality per se is not the focus here. Rather, the focus here is on the provision of sufficiently detailed explanations of the relevant scriptural passages to enable the mental health provider to explore the salient issues with clients and with clergy.
3. This construct has been known variously, with some variation in its composite elements across scholars, as multigenerational trauma (Danieli 1998), historical trauma (Duran and Duran 1995), trans-generational trauma (Felsen 1998), intergenerational trauma (Sigal and Weinfeld 1987), and cross-generational trauma (Lowin 1983). Historical trauma has been defined as the "cumulative emotional and psychological wounding, over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experiences" (Brave Heart 2003, 7). Four mechanisms of transmission have been proposed: (1) the psychodynamic model, which posits that the child unconsciously absorbs the parent's unresolved trauma experiences; (2) the sociocultural model, which suggests that the child learns through observation of the parents and the external

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DOI: 10.1007/978-1-4614-9002-9, © The Author(s) 2014

environment; (3) the family systems model, which anchors transmission in the family's communication dynamics and the level of enmeshment within the family; and (4) the biological model, which hypothesizes that biologic and/or genetic factors play a role in the transmission of trauma (see generally, Kellermann 2001).

Symptoms noted among descendants include difficulty in interpersonal relationships, pathological mourning, social isolation, exaggerated dependence or independence, and symptoms indicative of posttraumatic stress disorder (see generally Baranowsky et al. 1998; Barocas and Barocas 1980; Brave Heart 1998; Gump 2010). These problems may be exacerbated by systemic factors such as inadequate health care access, racism, and socioeconomic conditions (Brave Heart and DBruyn 1998). Intergenerational trauma has been considered among Native Americans (Brave Heart 1998; Brave Heart and DeBruyn 1998; Evans-Campbell 2008; Sotero 2006; Whitbeck et al. 2004), children of Holocaust survivors (Baranowsky et al. 1998; Kellermann 2001; Yehuda et al. 2001; Wiseman et al. 2006), Japanese American former internees (Nagata and Cheng 2003), combat veterans (Davidson and Mellor 2001; Dekel and Goldblatt 2008); and Aboriginal peoples in Canada (Menzies 2009, 2010), as well as African Americans (Gump 2010; Leary 2005).

4. A 1715 North Carolina law addressed this possibility by imposing a fine:

> If any master or owner of Negroes or slaves … shall permit or suffer any Negro or Negroes to build … on their lands …any house under pretense of meeting-house upon account of worship … and shall not suppress or hinder them (Atlantic University Publications 1968, 11).An 1800 South Carolina law prohibited the assembly of free Negroes, slaves, mulattos or mestizos for religious worship before sunrise or after sunset, even in the presence of Whites (Atlantic University Publications 1968, 22).

5. Thomas R.R. Cobb, a lawyer in Georgia, opined:

> [I]n mental and moral development, slavery, so far from retarding, has advanced the negro race…. While, by means of this institution, the knowledge of God and his religion has been brought home, with practical effect, to a greater number of heathens than by all the combined missionary efforts of the Christian world. But remove the restraining and controlling power of the master, and the negro becomes, at once the slave of his lust, and the victim of his indolence, relapsing, with wonderful rapidity, into his pristine barbarism (Cobb, reprinted in Finkelman 2003, 51).

6. The need of some White churchgoers to maintain their physical separation from Blacks in church-, religion-, and/or God-related venues continues to persist. Only recently, a Mississippi church prohibited a Black couple from holding a marriage ceremony on its premises, although it would permit them to worship there (Associated Press 2012).

7. There appears to be some disagreement with respect to the year in which the Great Migration began. PBS, as cited in the text, dates its beginning to 1910. However, Painter (2007, p.191) dates it from 1916.

8. One commentator noted through her queries the ongoing adverse consequences within Black communities of this characterization:

> Why be afraid to admit that black sex was long defined as "queer"—outside the norms of society—through the legitimacy given the rape of black women, the breaking up of black families, and the emasculation of black men in slavery? Why not acknowledge that the history of racism had caused black people to become distant from the most intimate dimensions of their lives? (Patton 2012).

9. Black liberation theology is to be distinguished from Black theology. According to Evans (1983–1984, 39), Black theology includes the theologies of peoples of African descent in Zimbabwe, the Caribbean, and South America. Afro-American theology represents one form of Black theology. Some scholars have drawn a distinction between black theology and black liberation theology, arguing that black liberation theology is a distinct variant (Calhoun-Brown 1999, 208, n.1).
10. It should be noted that some individuals in African American communities view Christianity as the "white man's religion" and the "opiate of the people" (Evans 2008, 278). A discussion of this perspective is beyond the scope of this text. An examination of the origin of this view may be found in Evans 2008, 276–280.
11. Scholars of liberation psychology have characterized this approach as "knowledge-based, love-based, and action-based" (Alsup 2009, 391) and as "an innovative interpretation of the social creativity of Martin Luther King, Jr." (Alsup 2009, 388). It is also at odds with the teachings of Paolo Freire whose work was a major influence in the Latin American liberation process. Freire posited that both the transformation of the oppressor as well as the oppressed was required and was premised on an act of love (Freire 1972). His idea of conscientiziation envisioned a gradual transformation of consciousness that would ultimately bring about liberation of the oppressed and the oppressor (Duran 2006).
12. "Buckra" is a pejorative term used to refer to a White person, usually a man.
13. "Pickaninny" refers to a child of Black descent. The term was once used as an indication of affection but is now considered to be pejorative. (*The American heritage dictionary of the English language* 2000, 1327).
14. For an in-depth discussion of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, see Burkett 1989.
15. The majority of theologians agree that the Old and New Testaments were written by men at various points in history; a minority of clergy believe that the Old and New Testaments were written by and handed down directly by God. Portions of the Pentateuch have variously been attributed to the Priestly (P) writer, the Yahwist or J writer, the Elohim or E writer, and the Deuteronomist, or D writer (Levine, 1989, xxvii-xxviii).
16. Greenberg offers as support for this thesis a rabbinic legend:

    > Rabbi Yirmiyah ben Eleazar said: When the Holy One created the first *adam*, he made it androgynous. That's what it means when it says "male and female he created them" (Greenberg 2004, 47).

    This statement was followed by yet another rabbi's explanation:

    > Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahman said: When the Holy One created the first *adam*, he created it two faced and then (later) sawed it (in two) creating for it two backs, a back here and a back there. They asked him: But what of the verse "and he took one of his ribs (*tzela*)?" He answered them, [it really means that] "he took one of the flanks (*tzela*)."

The word [*tzela*] is also used to describe the flank or side of the tabernacle in Exodus 26 (Greenberg 2004, 48). Greenberg suggests that Rabbi Yirmiyah understood *adam* to be androgynous with a single face, who was sexually undifferentiated but contained the totality of human capacities. Rabbi Shmuel, in contrast, believed that *adam* was not fully integrated and encompassed two gender identities that were already in tension with each other (Greenberg 2004, 48). Greenberg uses the terms androgynous and hermaphrodite interchangeably. In fact, they refer to two different concepts. Hermaphroditism, now known as intersex, refers to a condition in which the sex of the individual is ambiguous; the condition may result from an inconsistency between the individual's phenotype (outward appearance) and the chromosomal type, from ambiguity in the individual's phenotype, from a particular condition affecting the adrenal glands, or from the effects of specific hormones (Josso 1981; Karkazis 2008). In contrast, someone who is androgynous has or may assume an ambiguous (male/female) appearance but is not intersex.

17. Like Davidson, Gellman (2006, 323–324) rejects the possibility that God might have been androgynous or that the first human being was androgynous. However, Gellman premises his argument entirely on the creation story of Genesis 2, ignoring the text and implications of Genesis 1:26–28.
18. There is evidence that the Old Testament did not prohibit same-sex relations between women and that, when such encounters did occur, they were viewed as mere lasciviousness. It has been hypothesized that no prohibition was imposed because female-female sex does not involve a crossing of boundaries between categories (male and female) and does not involve the act of being penetrated (or so it was thought) (Boyarin 1995, 348). See Boyarin, 1995, 339–340 for additional discussion.
19. According to one scholar, the original word for female in biblical and Talmudic Hebrew and Talmudic Aramaic actually means "orifice bearer" (Boyarin 1995, 345).
20. For a discussion of the longstanding exclusion of women from positions of importance and power within African American churches, and attempts to challenge this practice, see Lincoln and Mamiya 2000; Saunders 1989.
21. As an example, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) recently endorsed same-sex marriage (Barbaro 2012). It is noteworthy that many of the organizations' board members are religious leaders and that only two members voted against adoption of the resolution. President Barack Obama made history as the first president to use the word "gay" in his inaugural speech and to refer to equal rights for gays and lesbians (Camia 2013).
22. There are numerous Christian-based churches that are welcoming, inclusive, and/or affirming of lesbian, gay, and transgender individuals. These churches do not cater primarily or exclusively to African American communities but are welcoming to diverse communities. In the United States these include, but are not limited to, the United Church of Christ, the Metropolitan Community Church, the Unitarian Universalist Church, Affirming Pentecostal Church

International, the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists, the Evangelical Anglican Church in America, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and Unity Church. Some denominations have LGBT-welcoming programs, but not all churches within the denomination ascribe to these programs. These include Reconciling in Christ of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, More Light of the Presbyterian Church, and Supportive Communities Network of the Mennonite Church USA. There are also unofficial programs tied to specific denominations that are not sanctioned by the respective church hierarchy, such as Affirmation (Mormon), Dignity USA (Catholic), Welcoming and Affirming (Baptist), and Pink Menno Campaign (Mennonite).

Therapists and their African American gay, lesbian and transgender clients may find the website of Many Voices, a Black Church Movement for Gay and Transgender Justice, particularly helpful (http://www.manyvoices.org). The website provides guidance on scriptural interpretation, answers to common questions, and suggestions for prayer and study.

23. Liberation theology has provided a theoretical basis for an examination of sexuality in general and sexual orientation in particular (Althaus-Reid 2006; Bardella 2001, 131).
24. Many reparative/conversion therapies are embedded in religious groups that condemn homosexuality (Southern Poverty Law Center 2005). Religious groups that seek to change sexual orientation have been found to share various characteristics, including the use of manipulation and fear to retain their members; "love-bombing," referring to the use of affection and approval in return for remaining in the group; misrepresentation of information available outside the group; rigid distinctions between right and wrong and good and evil; intolerance of ambiguity, doubt, or questioning; absolute authority of the group's leadership; and oversimplification and deflection of problems (Chandler 1996).

    Exodus International is the largest Christian conversion organization, with 135 ministries in 17 countries (Morrow and Beckstead 2004, 642). Other religious groups advocating gay "conversion" include Jews Offering Alternatives to Homosexuality (JONAH), Evergreen International for members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon), and Courage for Catholics (Morrow and Beckstead 2004, 642). Although the current website for Exodus International indicates that "We do not endorse or employ Reparative or Conversion Therapies with the Exodus International Network" (Exodus International, n.d.b.), Exodus International previously proclaimed:

    > Exodus upholds heterosexuality as God's creative intent for humanity, and subsequently views homosexual expression as outside God's will. Exodus cites homosexual tendencies as one of many disorders that beset fallen humanity. Choosing to resolve these tendencies through homosexual behavior, taking on a homosexual identity, and involvement in the homosexual lifestyle is considered destructive, as it distorts God's intent for the individual and is thus sinful. Instead, Christ offers a healing alternative to those with homosexual tendencies. Exodus upholds redemption for the homosexual person as the

> process whereby sin's power is broken, and the individual is freed to know and experience true identity as discovered in Christ and His Church. That process entails the freedom to grow into heterosexuality. (Exodus International, n.d.a., para. 2–3).

In the past, biological conversion therapies included clitoridectomy, castration or ovary removal, electroshock therapy, and hormonal therapy. Behavioral interventions included the use of nausea-inducing drugs paired with homoerotic stimuli, visualization, and social skills training (Morrow and Beckstead 2004, 642).

25. According to Fewell and Gunn (1988, 107), Naomi is able to see only self-deprivation; she owes her restoration to Ruth, whose worldview challenges Naomi's view of a male-centered universe. To say that a son has been born to Naomi is, in the view of these authors, a rhetorical statement designed to address Naomi's emotional needs.

Hyman's understanding of this passage is somewhat similar. Hyman (1984, 190–191) views Ruth as a symbol of the new Israelites, a connecting link between the royal dynasty established by King David and the patriarchal family of Jacob. Ruth's accompaniment of Naomi affirms Ruth's new identity as a member of her new group and the commencement of her development as an Israelite. Naomi is similarly dependent on Ruth to affirm and revitalize her identity as a mother of Israel. Accordingly, the utterance "A son is born to Naomi" not only means that a male heir has been born, but also serves to secure the identity of both Naomi and Ruth (Hyman 1984, 194). Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky (2011, 91–92) also observed,

> The women redefine kinship by providing Naomi with a genealogical lineage where a "blood line does not exist legally or biologically…. The women who once welcomed Naomi and heard her lament of emptiness (1:21) now "intuit the significance of this child in restoring Naomi to her former 'maternal' self…. They recognize that it is Naomi and not Ruth who is fulfilled by the child's birth.

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DOI: 10.1007/978-1-4614-9002-9, © The Author(s) 2014

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