3.3 Experiences, Issues and Needs of Asian and Black Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Youth

There are three parts to this section: (a) the experiences, issues and needs of young Asian bisexuals, gays and lesbians followed by an overview of other studies' findings, (b) the experiences, issues and needs of young Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians followed by an overview of other studies' findings and (c) discussion.

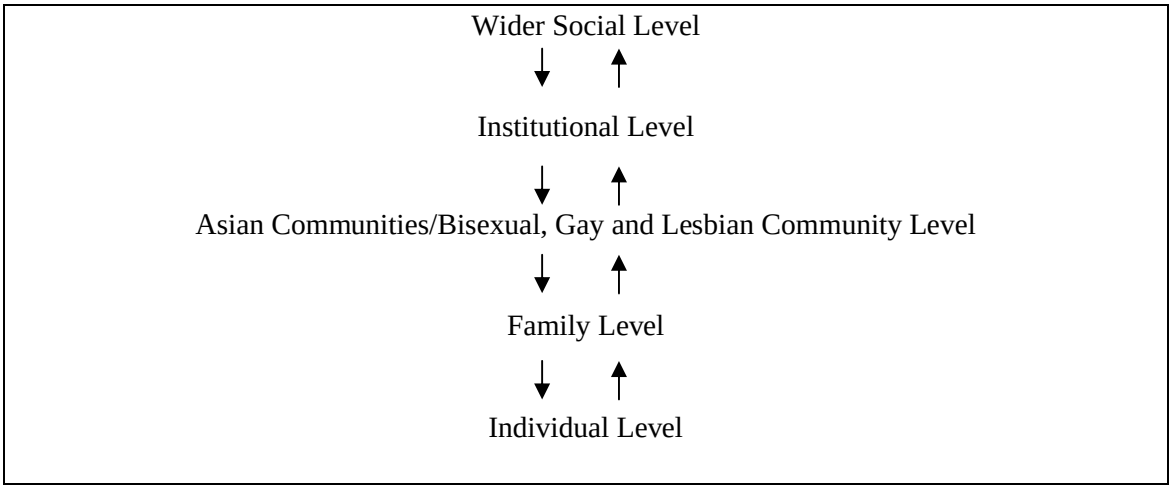
(a) Asian Experiences, Issues and Needs

Interviews were conducted with:

- ⇨ Six young men who identified as Pakistani, Muslim and gay.
- ⇨ One young man who identified as mixed race (Asian and white) and gay.
- ⇨ Two men who identified as Asian and gay and one woman who identified as an Asian lesbian. They worked with a voluntary health promotion agency in London (providing services for the Asian and Black communities).
- ⇨ One woman who identified as an Asian lesbian. She worked with a community organisation in London (providing services for young bisexuals, gays and lesbians).

Following the schema outlined in Figure 1, data from the interviews was structured using five levels of analysis: individual, family, community (Asian and bisexual, gay and lesbian), institutional and wider social levels as shown in Figure 22.

Figure 22: Levels of Analysis



(i) Experiences and Issues of Asian Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Youth

Figure 23 shows a summary of the typical experiences and issues of young Asian bisexuals, gays and lesbians as identified from the interviews.

Figure 23: Summary of Experiences and Issues of Asian Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Youth arising from Interviews

Level	Experiences and Issues
Individual Level	▪ Identity: ethnic and sexual. ▪ Labels and language (problems of). ▪ Lifestyle. ▪ Mental health. ▪ 'Middle way' strategies. ▪ Options (or lack of). ▪ Peer pressure. ▪ Personal loss and sacrifice (coming out, etc.). ▪ Personal safety (homophobia, racism, etc.). ▪ Importance of religion.
Family Level	▪ Expectations of the family. ▪ *Izzat* (Muslim concept meaning 'family and community duty and honour'). ▪ Male privilege. ▪ Marriage (pressure to marry). ▪ (Family as) source of support *and* oppression.
Asian Communities Level	▪ Bullying. ▪ Communalism. ▪ Community 'leaders' and organisations as 'gatekeepers'. ▪ Conservatism and minority status. ▪ Homophobia. ▪ Inter-generation issues. ▪ Invisibility of Asian bisexuals, gays and lesbians. ▪ Position of some women within the Asian communities. ▪ The Asian 'veto'.
Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Community Level	▪ Invisibility of Asian bisexuals, gays and lesbians. ▪ Racism. ▪ Relationship issues. ▪ Sexualisation. ▪ Stereotyping. ▪ Support services.
Institutional Level	▪ Anglo-centric mainstream services.
Wider Social Level	▪ Education system. ▪ Homophobia. ▪ 'Minority within a minority' status. ▪ Racism.

The following data was extracted from the interviews.

Individual Level

Identity: Ethnic and Sexual

In terms of ethnic identity the following statements were made:

"I'm proud to be Asian. It's cool to be Asian." (Young man.)

"I don't really think of myself as Asian. I try to play it down a lot because of my experiences. Being gay has been a more positive experience for me than being Asian. I could quite happily drop almost all of my Asian culture, in fact I sometimes forget that I am Asian." (Young man.)

"Yes, I'm Asian but I was born in Britain so I'm a mix of two different cultures, as much British as Asian. And I'm not just Asian. Asia is a big place. My parents are from Karachi in Pakistan and Karachi has a distinct culture, different from Islamabad or India, etc. So 'Asian' is a broad term and sometimes isn't useful in terms of identity. 'Asian' is just a word that other people use to label and describe me. It's not something that I relate to as a word. Yes, I have my cultural heritage but the word 'Asian' doesn't really mean anything." (Young man.)

"At home you may be speaking Urdu, Punjabi or Gujarati, but as soon as you leave the house you're speaking English. When you come home it's a different world. It can feel like a schizophrenic existence." (Young man.)

"In terms of culture, Asian culture is very closed. There is the family, the extended family, and the connections are very strong." (Young man.)

"You are not who you are. It's your connections to everyone else that determines your identity." (Young man.)

"The expectations of an Asian way of life are being religious, following the faith, getting married, having children, the man always being the breadwinner, the woman at home being the housewife looking after the kids, grandparents living in the family home too, kids doing well at school and then getting a good job. All that stuff." (Young man).

"There is variation within the Asian community and within families on many issues. Some people have more open minds, others more extreme reactions. Asian culture is not homogenous. It depends on how religious your family is, how open-minded and how educated they are. If you are from a strict family then there can be problems." (Young man.)

"I'm mixed race and gay but it's taken me quite a while to come to the point of being so clear. When you're growing up you have to define yourself, Black, white, gay, straight [heterosexual], etc. so because I'm mixed race or whatever, I had a quite a few

discussions with my parents about it. It was disconcerting not to fit in one of those categories. Children like to fit in and it's quite difficult if you don't know what box to fill in. Being mixed race means you don't know which one you are. Colour and race were hurdles, but you have to get over the stereotypes and come to an understanding yourself. I didn't put much emphasis on labels so I think the problems have been far less for me." (Young man.)

"One of the big challenges of growing up in this country as a second or third generation Asian, British Asian, is about integrating and being part of the cultures you are growing up in, and having a strong sense of those identities. In particular, having a strong sense of your Asian identity. The biggest challenge is having a healthy balance between the two." (Female worker.)

"Ethnic identity became something I had to deal with because I had had no contact with white people [in contrast, those so immersed in the dominant culture] sometimes have no contact with their roots, or they deny them. There are parents who, in the hope that their children will 'get on and do well', negate their own cultural traditions and language. [Your identity therefore] only becomes an issue when you are older. Only then do you realise there is a gap missing as the gap may not be evident when growing up. So a big challenge is growing up being successful and having a strong identity in an often racist society, and being able to deal with that, being equipped with the skills to deal with that." (Female worker.)

"People sometimes think of the Asian community as homogenous, but it's not. It differs according to class, money, level of education, etc." (Female worker.)

"Having a sense of their Asian-ness is crucial for young people." (Male worker.)

In terms of sexual identity, the following statements were made:

"I feel embarrassed to say sometimes that I'm gay, and there's more to life than being gay anyway." (Young man.)

"'Gay' is just like the word 'Asian'. I don't think it adds any value to understanding that person. It's just another label." (Young man.)

"[Asian] culture conflicts a lot [with being bisexual, gay or lesbian] and the stereotypes don't help." (Young man.)

"Some Asian people view being gay as a 'white Western disease'. White people say it's a 'continental European thing'. Everybody blames everyone else." (Young man.)

"In South Asian cultures, because men and women are separated, there are different ways of doing and seeing things. For example, men can experiment with their friends and you're not considered gay and as long as you say you're not gay, you can do as you want." (Young man.)

"You can experiment and as long as you say that you're not gay, then you can do as you want, especially if you are sexually active rather than passive. Then you're even more of a man." (Young man.)

“For an Asian woman to explain that she is a lesbian is very hard. She would be viewed as having become too Western, too independent, too educated. There would also be fears of being disowned and being alone.” (Female worker.)

“It took me a long time to positively identify as a lesbian, although I always knew.” (Female worker.)

“It is accepted that men can be attracted to other men but it then becomes another issue if that man decides that he doesn’t want to have to deal with the facade of having a wife. But a man being attracted to other men is not really a big issue as long as its done in private.” (Female worker.)

“Men who penetrate others are still viewed as men whereas those who are penetrated are not.” (Male worker.)

In terms of identity conflict, within and between identities, the following statements were made:

“Most people of my age are trying to find their own identity, trying to do their own thing. But it’s not easy.” (Young man.)

“I’ve started hanging round more with some of my white friends, and some of my Asian friends are a bit jealous because they think I’m being bad to my culture, to my roots. But I don’t think we should see people in that way, that just because they’re white they can’t be a friend.” (Young man.)

“There is Asian culture and there is white culture, and there is the gay community, and we’re in between. Asian gay people find ourselves with three or four communities to deal with.” (Young man.)

“There’s a conflict being gay in British society. It’s difficult for everyone generally. If you grow up in any culture, whether Pakistan or Yorkshire, then sexuality is looked down upon.” (Young man.)

“Some Asian people consider and keep their sexuality very separate from their culture. When they’re at home they are exactly as their family expects them to be, and their gay life, their sexual life, is something they do in private.” (Young man.)

“I feel that with Asian families you have to be bonded to them completely so it’s a lot more difficult to lead a separate life, especially if you are gay. Being bonded in the family is very easy if you are heterosexual because it fits in with the values of getting married and having children, whereas being gay doesn’t.” (Young man.)

“Even families that are fairly liberal will never accept the gay part of you. So you have to keep it to yourself. You end up having this lack of communication and this distance with your family.” (Young man.)

“I think there are loads of Asians of my age who are gay. They are just so scared. I’ve taken one step by coming to ReachOUT but most are afraid to even take that step.” (Young man.)

“Juggling all these identities, which often conflict, is messy.” (Young man.)

“It’s a shame that I have left my culture behind because there is a lot of good you can get from culture, and the Asian culture has a lot of good things in it. But because of the antagonism of being gay I just thought, after weighing it up, that I would let it go and live by British culture. It wasn’t even a choice really. It’s something I had to do. I can’t imagine living with both and being gay, I can’t imagine it, I don’t think it’s possible.” (Young man.)

“I’ve known women who have been aware of their sexuality from an early age but who have gone into denial. They don’t believe it can be true because of their nationality or religion. They believe it doesn’t happen to Asian people and that they must have taken on something that is not part of their culture. There are big issues when dealing with a culture and/or a religion that stipulates that homosexuality and lesbianism are appalling offences.” (Female worker.)

“Asian people often make the statement that homosexuality is a ‘white thing’. I think on some level that this is true. What I mean by that is that the ways we identify, the ways we define sexual activity, behaviour and identity are very different in Asian cultures compared to British.” (Female worker.)

“All the images of queer culture depict white faces. This gives you very confused messages about who you should desire. It took me a while to start to desire Asian people and to feel desired as an Asian woman. And even more fundamental is the ‘I’ bit, the ‘I must be desirable’ bit. People underestimate how long it can take you to get there.” (Female worker.)

“There can be a loss of Asian identity in the predominantly white gay scene. You may be gay, but what about being Asian? There are pressures to conform to gay culture at the expense of your own. Gay culture is reflected in the music people listen to, fashion, etc. The loss of your own cultural identity can leave people feeling lost.” (Male worker.)

“There are few Asian men on the gay scene. Many go to ‘Club Kali’ and ‘Shakti’ where they can express themselves. Culture is still important to young Asians, and you don’t find Asian space on the scene. That is why these club nights are so popular. They allow young people to express their Asian-ness.” (Male worker.)

“Only a minority of gay Asian people completely sever their links with their community. Most maintain some link.” (Male worker.)

Labels and Language (problems of)

“There are no words for gay, only words that are derogatory like ‘kosra’, ‘kosree’ and ‘gundu’ for mocking people. None of these words actually mean gay or lesbian. That is how the Asian community deals with it. It is something that is not even recognised for being a thing in its own right. It’s just that it’s disgusting and isn’t right.” (Young man.)

“As you learn new attitudes and words, they soon conflict with the older ones. They conflict with one another. You can also sometimes forget how you are coming across to someone.” (Young man.)

"Labelling is important, how we are allowed to identify in different cultures. I think when you're younger, your ethnic and sexual identity is very important to you. It's not so much of an issue when you get older because you have more freedom to look positively at it." (Female worker.)

Lifestyle

"There is a big difference between public and private behaviour in Asian communities. As long as you maintain the veneer of what is considered appropriate publicly, then you are okay. For example, a lot of Asian men don't identify as gay or bisexual, but do have sex with other men." (Female worker.)

"Homosexual behaviour may be tolerated because of gender segregation and the 'policing' of women which limits men's access. The issue of homosexuality is taboo though. It is not talked about and there is still the expectation to get married. A gay lifestyle is generally not acceptable." (Male worker.)

Mental Health

"I feel that I'm living a lie. It's gets on top of me and it's very stressful." (Young man.)

"I have to make excuses to my parents. You start lying and its lie upon lie to cover your tracks. And your parents start to think you're on drugs or something. It's horrible." (Young man.)

"I know people who have been really run down by their experiences of racism on the gay scene." (Young man.)

"If you don't meet your family's expectations and standards you start getting negative feedback. Consequently you get negative about them for making you feel bad. I ended up with a certain amount of bitterness towards them and being Asian." (Young man.)

"Being gay and Asian can be difficult to manage and sometimes I don't succeed. Sometimes you just have to take time out for yourself so I stay at home and stay away from everybody. It makes you feel ugly as well. It brings out a lot of negative feelings, insecurity about the way you look, the way you talk, the way you act." (Young man.)

"Gay Asian people have to do so much hiding away and we face that extra pressure, the extra burden, of the Asian community and being a minority is this county." (Young man.)

"I remember as a boy I was very quiet, shy and withdrawn. I remember having arguments with my mother at a young age about why I had to be around when relatives visited to do the family thing. I found it stressful and hard work, and I never enjoyed it at all." (Young man.)

"That's where some of my resentment towards the Asian community comes from. The fact of all the lying I had to do, all the rubbish I had to put up with." (Young man.)

"I have unhealthy feelings towards being Asian and the Asian community because of my feelings from my past, growing up. I blame the Asian community for some of these bad feelings." (Young man.)

"Sometimes people just see your colour and make assumptions, that it doesn't matter what is going on inside your head." (Young man.)

"I don't like carry this negativity around with me about being gay and Asian. It's so destructive and slowing. It doesn't help you get anywhere. But I don't know how I'm going to reconcile it though, I really don't." (Young man.)

"Given all the pressures on women, especially lesbian women, it is not surprising that suicide rates for young Asian women are three times the national average. It is not just about lesbianism. It is about women and how they grow up trying to balance all the different pressures, conflicts and desires." (Female worker.)

"Many young people conceal their sexual identity, or deny it. This can have serious implications for their mental health." (Male worker.)

"There are serious mental health implications for married gay men leading double lives." (Male worker.)

'Middle Way' Strategies

"Some young people choose to come out, others stay quiet. There doesn't seem to be any 'middle way'. You feel you either have to come out and challenge the family and community or stay in the closet and hide your feelings away. Locating your own network of gay Asian peers is one way of overcoming this. Potential 'middle ways' are emerging, like the 'Shakti' support group, the 'Club Kali' and 'Shakti' club nights. These are political statements for some Asian gay people. And young Asian gays are beginning to develop their own peer support networks to end their isolation. It's difficult to know how young lesbians are dealing with their situations because of the lack of research." (Male worker.)

Options (or lack of)

"I have to find the strength and the material security first [before I can lead a more independent life]." (Young man.)

"There's a lot of conflict [between being Asian and bisexual, gay or lesbian]. There are loads of gay Asian people who don't want to come out and they get married." (Young man.)

"It's scary thinking about how past generations, and this generation, doesn't seem ready enough for change. It means we are stuck and have no choice but to keep quiet." (Young man.)

“I’ve decided that when I go to university, I going to be out to the people I hang around with. It’s my chance to do what I want to do and to open up.” (Young man.)

“I’d like to live openly as a gay man and sometimes I feel like running away from home and living as a gay man. But realistically, I see myself going to university, getting a job and then getting married.” (Young man.)

“Some of my friends, straight [heterosexual] friends who were born in Pakistan but who have lived her for five or six years, feel that they get more support from their circle of friends in Pakistan. I’ve talked to people in Pakistan and they have more opportunities to mix with people and access to sex.” (Young man.)

“It’s difficult to be gay, Asian and independent if you’re young. [Welfare] benefits are so low, the benefits system still expects your family to look after you, and support for young gay people is almost non-existent.” (Young man.)

“If you come from a working class background and the ties to your family and community are very strong, so much so that you have very little sense of your own identity, because you can’t afford to, then it’s very difficult to be gay.” (Young man.)

“I think that’s how it is for a lot of Asian people who come out. They go away to university and being away from home and the community gives you the strength to go through it and come out.” (Young man.)

“I’ve been friends with a young man who, as he grew in confidence and became more comfortable with his sexuality, wanted to come out to his parents. I advised him not to because he had no independence, no money or place to live. You can provide information and support, but if problems arise, they can be for nothing. You have to be sensible about it.” (Young man.)

“I’ve talked to women who were in heterosexual relationships who were questioning their sexuality. Yet they could not perceive of any way out. Even coming to a support group was an issue. How would they account for their time?” (Female worker.)

“I think class does make a difference to people’s experiences in a lot of ways. For example, how you perceive yourself, your level of confidence, what you consider your rights to be. I know some Asian lesbians who I consider very middle class and I see a world of difference between them and some other women that I’ve met. Some of these differences result from educational access, whether they come to Britain to study or work, so they have greater freedom, etc. If their family is not here, they have a certain degree of independence. But a lot of it is about attitude and self-perception. If you can afford good and safe housing and you have a good job, you are economically independent from your family, then you don’t need to call on them so much. This can facilitate a certain lifestyle. I imagine a measure of independence alters the power relationships and this can make a difference.” (Female worker.)

“Class is important. There may be differences in people’s experiences because of socio-economic background, religious, cultural affiliation, education, etc. But a family is still part of a community no matter what class they are, whether educated or not. The pressures are still there.” (Male worker.)

Peer Pressure

"A lot of white ReachOUT kids come out and it's like, 'it's okay now'. They say, 'why don't you just come out, what's the problem?' I would love to come out but I can't. They don't know half the problems us Asians face. They don't understand even though they try to." (Young man.)

"There is a lot of pressure for everyone to conform to what is right. It's very difficult." (Young man.)

"As a child I remember relatives coming round and treating me as they treat all Asian boys growing up, conditioning me. It's the way in Asian culture." (Young man.)

Personal Sacrifice and Loss (coming out, etc.)

"I'd be prepared to lose my family so that I can live as a gay man. But if I do leave my family, I have to leave them as dead. I'm going to have to leave the community to start my own life." (Young man.)

"I think that many of the problems that gay people face are intensified for Asian people. If you are white, living in Britain, and you come out, you have a better chance that your family are going to accept it to a greater degree." (Young man.)

"Rather than get married to maintain a facade, maybe what women need is the traumatic wrench of coming out and then they can begin to heal the rift with their family after making their stand. But it can be petrifying to do this. It is one of the hardest decisions to make in life. It's really scary because you don't know whether your family is just going to cut you off, and even if you have a good relationship with them. It can be one of the scariest times. Then you ask yourself, if they cut me off, who have I got? Who have I got around me?" (Female worker.)

"It takes a long time to come out. It's not just an issue of your family. There's the extended family. There is an inter-link between your family and the extended family. Coming out is very long-term and difficult." (Female worker.)

"When young gay men come out they are sometimes disowned. This has ramifications for their place within the community because if you are not a son, then you are not part of the community." (Male worker.)

"The fear of coming out, of losing friends and not having any support, is powerful. Loss is a major issue. Are the short-term losses because of coming out worth it for long-term gain? The potential loss of family and security are big issues. Coming out may not be the answer. It may not be worth it because of what is lost." (Male worker.)

Personal Safety (homophobia, racism, etc.)

"My brother, he's quite a gangster. He admits he goes queer bashing." (Young man.)

"You wouldn't dare say anything about [homosexuality]. It's not an issue to bring up. You'd bring up a lot of anger." (Young man.)

"There's a lot of homophobia among my generation." (Young man.)

"I would like to come out. I don't really care about the community but in terms of me being safe, I don't think so." (Young man.)

"Because the gay pub is in an area where there is a big Asian community, I used to worry that people would see me going in. It was a tense thing to begin with." (Young man.)

"As far as wider society is concerned, there is queer bashing and that sort of thing. And on the gay scene, young people can be taken advantage of by other people." (Young man.)

"Safety is a big cultural issue. Some people don't have the freedom to go out and even when they do, there are safety issues like racism, etc." (Male worker.)

Importance of Religion

"I know the Koran is against homosexuality, but I want to be a good Muslim. The whole of me is Islam [and] there are reasons for things, and there's got to be a reason I'm gay." (Young man.)

"Religion is not really important. But I do keep to certain things and I do believe in God. It's part of my personality. But the Koran doesn't condemn it so I don't think it's wrong. As long as I respect other people, don't steal or be bad or sinful. I've got basic morals and as long as people keep to their basic morals then I see everyone as equal." (Young man.)

"I think Islam is very strict. Everything is according to rules, so it is more difficult to interpret and bend the rules when it comes to things like homosexuality. It's more difficult to say being gay is okay within the religious context. The religious culture determines how things like homosexuality are seen, rather than the Koran. There are five pillars of Islam: charity, fasting, prayer, etc. and these are personal things between you and God. If you stick to these principles then being good is good. You can then justify things to make your life more comfortable." (Young man.)

"I know gay Hindus who feel more connected to their religion because of Hinduism's homosexual references. These people have generally been more confident about being gay and a good Hindu. But for Muslims I think it is trickier. You have to do more research and soul-searching." (Young man.)

"Religious extremism is very often about politics. Look at Ireland. Very often it's got nothing to do with religion. Religion, as far as I'm concerned, is something very personal between you and God." (Young man.)

"Islam is a very regimented religion, full of rules and regulations. It's a political thing, a way of life, more than a spiritual thing. You don't have to think about anything, it's all stated. I personally think it's outdated. Islam is supposed to be modernised and updated for each period of time but it hasn't been generally. There has to be more of a push to modernise it so that people can gain more independence, individuality and sense of identity." (Young man.)

"It would be good if religion was positive and for everyone. If Asian people received some positive messages from their religions then maybe they wouldn't have to live two different lives, one according to the religion and the other gay." (Young man.)

"I know that in Christianity, homosexuality is not considered right and proper by some. But there is a growing lobby within Christianity who identify very strongly as gay and lesbian Christians and more people are coming out. This has developed over ten or fifteen years. But this hasn't happened within Hinduism, Sikhism or Islam." (Female worker.)

"Religion tends to be a cultural tradition rather than about belief and faith. Going to the temple is a social thing. It's part of your life. Temple-going and observing customs is part of what you do as a family and as part of society." (Female worker.)

"Homophobia is a social phenomenon that feeds into religion and shapes its stance." (Male worker.)

Family Level

Expectations (of the family)

"There are differences between Asian and white people in terms of cultural issues. A good example is family expectations. White people don't face so many expectations compared to those of us who grow up in Asian cultures. We are expected to reach certain standards and conform in certain ways. Like how you relate to the family, how much time you spend with them, how much time you spend thinking about the family's future as opposed to your own personal future, that we are supposed to stick together, look after our parents when they are old, etc." (Young man.)

"My mother always pressurised me to conform, to try to get me to fit in with what the relatives wanted me to be." (Young man.)

"I am out to my mother now and she had sort of accepted it. But if we have a visitor round, or relatives, then I am still expected to do the family thing. I am expected to slip

back into that role acting again. So now I ignore them. I don't go round to relatives." (Young man.)

"Expectations on young men are powerful, often taking the form of emotional blackmail." (Male worker.)

"A gay son with a family is more okay because he has fulfilled his family and community expectations whereas single gay men are viewed as not yet having grown up." (Male worker.)

Izzat (Muslim concept meaning 'family and community duty and honour)

"You always have to put on a front to the community to keep your *izzat*. What is important is family pride." (Young man.)

"There is the honour thing. If you are rejected by your parents then you will be rejected by everyone else." (Young man.)

"I think the notion of community and family duty and honour is an incredibly important concept. Asian people are brought up with the idea that your individual identity is really not that important, but the collective, community and family, identity is paramount. If you go back to India or Pakistan then you are representing the family. If you do something bad or unconventional that's considered bad, then it will reflect on the whole family. As a child you're instilled with these concepts. And until you get older and learn to negotiate and compromise, to look at those values for what they are, emotional blackmail sometimes, then you really take them on fully and feel you have to adhere to them fully." (Female worker.)

"Don't underestimate the amount of guilt and pressure that gay men and women feel about putting their sexuality on the backburner and doing what is considered right and proper. The dilemma is massive." (Female worker.)

"Cultural identity, including duty and honour, are still very important to young gay people and their sense of identity." (Male worker.)

Male Privilege

"There are lots of pressures on men, but if you look at how men and women are brought up in Asian communities, then nine times out of ten, men will have more freedom. Opportunities to go out, to bend the rules with parents complicity, maybe going away to study with parents knowing that they are having sexual relations, or whatever. The result is that there are fewer restrictions for men. Whereas with women, there is not the same degree of being relaxed. For women it's much more vigorous. There is this generally accepted code of conduct that says that if men have sex before marriage then it's not as bad as when women do. A lot is placed on women's virginity and not being 'soiled'. It is a very traditional concept but it does have some bearing." (Female worker.)

"A lot of women do feel that men who identify as gay sometimes cop out and get married because it's the easiest thing to do. But I've known men who have had that option but chose not to because they did not feel they would be being true to themselves. Gay men do have more privilege than women do. If women don't want to get married and they take a stand, they risk losing a lot and it's traumatic." (Female worker.)

"It is more difficult for a woman to enter into a marriage and say, 'you can have your girlfriends and I'll have mine' whereas a man could say that." (Female worker.)

"Whatever men may say, they do have more choice. And even if they get married, they can have sex with other men. And as long as you don't talk about it then you are fairly safe. Women don't have that choice. How could you, outside of your marriage, go off and look for other women? You couldn't, the spaces don't exist. The opportunities for you as a woman to go out of the family set-up without answering to men don't exist." (Female worker.)

Marriage (pressure to marry)

"My dad never really sat down and asked me if I was ready to get married. I got engaged at the point where I realised I was gay. I told myself that I was going to make it work. I thought I'd be able to live individually and that my parents' expectations would die down. When I got married the expectations increased and for me being gay, there was no way out. The only way was to leave because in Islam, marriage is not about two people it's about two families." (Young man.)

"You should not underestimate the pressure that there may be on you to get married, especially for men because they are considered much more prize-worthy anyway. And the whole idea of marriage is about giving away daughters and accepting daughters-in-law. So for an eligible young man to turn round and say he's not going to get married can be devastating for a family. They cannot understand and that's why homosexuality is more tolerated or viewed as a phase. Or they may say, 'get married and carry on as you please afterwards', and a lot of men do. There is parental and family complicity sometimes." (Female worker.)

"Lesbian women often talk about the pressure to marry and how they are driven to desperate means to find someone to marry, a mutually beneficial arrangement for example. It may seem like a quick fix solution, but it is a short-term remedy and it is complicated. Within Asian communities, it is not just a marriage of two people but a marriage of two families, two extended families. And as soon as you get married, the pressure doesn't end. The pressure then starts to produce children." (Female worker.)

"Those who came to this country with very little money will probably want their children to find some sort of stability. Marriage is an obvious way of doing that. So there are lots of economic reasons why the marriage thing might be much more important to some people than others." (Female worker.)

"Can it work when two self-identifying queer people marry? You sometimes see adverts for a partner for a marriage of convenience. But how can it work? Expectations don't end with marriage. You then have to have children, socialise with the family, and

become part of the family network. How could you protect a secret like that?" (Female worker.)

"A gay friend of mine recently got married but I'm not sure if his wife knows. The other thing is that queer culture is not very welcoming. He is a large man and he has never found satisfactory relationships within queer culture. They despise him because he is large. He doesn't fit in with that lovely shape that gay men are supposed to be. He has decided to prioritise his family rather than his identity. It may be that his wife supports him and gives him the stability that he would not get in white queer culture." (Female worker.)

"For those who have been to university, which many people use an 'escape' to be able to come out, the pressure to marry remains after they have finished their studies. In fact, the pressure may be worse because they are seen as more economically valuable and better marriage material." (Male worker.)

"Arranged marriages are still forced sometimes. You may see adverts in the papers for marriages of convenience but there are questions about how successful these are as no research has been done. Marriage is not necessarily the answer because the expectations do not end there." (Male worker.)

(Family as) Source of Support *and* Oppression

"I had to come back [to the family home] because my life went downhill very badly [and] I needed the security and a roof over my head." (Young man.)

"There's a different bond with family than with friends. In coming out I'll probably lose my family. I would need a lot of support if I lost my family, like housing. And if you've got of lot of family in the area, I'd probably lose all of my Asian friends as well." (Young man.)

"Losing my family is what stops me coming out, or I'd have come out long ago." (Young man.)

"Gay people have so much to lose, all the support networks in terms of family and relatives. All of your experiences of youth revolve around the family. If that connection is severed then you have lost everything, your whole sense of stability." (Young man.)

"Family is not just there for emotional support, but also financial support. They are important to your sense of stability." (Young man.)

"When I told my parents, who are very traditional, they asked me if that was the reason I left home and wouldn't come back. I had an argument with them and my brother threatened to beat me up if I didn't come back, he said he wouldn't be my brother anymore. I spoke to my mum and told her why I left, how I felt when I was young, the reason I was really depressed, the reason I felt I had to leave, because I didn't want to hurt them. I told her and she was fine. She cried and hugged me and that's what I wanted. But she had no concept of what gay was anyway. Later on, after it had had time to sink in, she just thought I was being silly, being influenced." (Young man.)

"My sister was going out with an Asian man from another religion and my parents found out. She ran away with him. My parents hired 'hit men' to get her back. They then shipped her off to Pakistan against her will and forced her to marry someone she didn't know." (Young man.)

"There is the fear of falling out of the jigsaw that is the family and community, especially when the wider community is hostile." (Male worker.)

"Men are cared for within the family and those who do not marry face the issue of who will care for them. This is a potential loss if you come out." (Male worker.)

Asian Communities Level

Bullying

"I was bullied and called names when I was young, not at school but in the community, because I didn't do the typical things that other Asian kids did. I often did my own thing." (Young man.)

Communalism

"There are inter-cultural tensions and problems in some areas. There can be a tendency to segregate regardless of being gay because of community and religious affiliations. Segregation and conflict can be a problem for some Asian couples from within and without. Within relationships there can be differences in food, language, customs, acceptance in the family, etc. Inter-cultural problems may be getting worse. Men in particular tend to grow up with stereotypes about other Asian religions whereas women tend to discuss issues more." (Male worker.)

Community 'Leaders' and Organisations as 'Gatekeepers'

"The community is always holding people back. And the community often holds back knowledge from people." (Young man.)

"Because parents make you believe it's a 'white Western disease' and because of the community too, you don't get any information about gay issues." (Young man.)

"There's no scope within the community for helping things along in terms of supporting young gay Asians." (Young man.)

Conservatism and Minority Status

"Things are different in Britain compared to Pakistan. I think they're more broadminded there. They are moving with the times whereas people here and trying to keep their culture." (Young man.)

"My parents know a lot of clerics and when they come over here from Pakistan, they actually say that Muslim people here are better behaved." (Young man.)

"Asian people coming to this country experienced loss. This carries over into the ways that people react, for example, their expectations of children. The loss of identity when you come here, maybe wealth or the loss of your extended family, when you make a new start is important. Although your primary motive for coming to this country is the extent of choice and freedom that you have, the loss means that communities spend a lot of time and energy trying to re-group, to re-create a more stable community. And although people came to this country to avail themselves of these choices and freedoms, they then spend the rest of their lives telling their children they can't have them. This is clearly about loss and about trying to re-group." (Female worker.)

"A community can outgrow cultural norms and traditions and can get to the stage where people do not know why certain things exist or why things are done in a certain way. Nobody knows anymore, they just are. And then even to ask why is a crime. The challenge is that once you outgrow something, you should question it. I don't think these changes will occur unless young people begin to develop a voice of their own. They can then challenge with a collective voice." (Female worker.)

Homophobia

"I have some neighbours who found out that their daughter was a lesbian. They disowned her." (Young man.)

"One person I know told his family he was gay when he was about 18. He had the closest bond imaginable with them. He was relied upon and was responsible for many of the family's affairs, ever since his dad died. When he told his mother and brother he expected them to understand, that their love and the bonds were strong enough. But they weren't. They beat him up badly until he was unconscious. He had to escape from his house without shoes. He was homeless and had to leave the area. His identity was taken away. His family traced and found him all the way in London. They kidnapped him and took him back to Yorkshire. They beat him up again and threw him out. They left him penny-less and said they would kill him if they ever saw him again. He now lives in fear." (Young man.)

"My mum had a falling out with someone and this woman sent out a 'fact sheet' to the Asian community organisations in Reading about my mum. In it she said that, 'her son tragically is also gay'." (Young man.)

"If you look at the recent case of the Muslim youth worker in Bradford, and the hateful propaganda leaflets that were distributed, that shows you how difficult it can be for a Muslim women to come out. She was driven from her job and her life was threatened. That was a reaction to an individual asserting her sexuality. That woman received no

support from the Council. They are not supporting her in terms of equal opportunities because they are scared of upsetting the Muslim majority there, votes." (Female worker.)

"The Asian community is at the stage of debating the authenticity of being gay or lesbian. Not issues like gay marriage, or adoption, or rights, but whether we are allowed to exist. Or whether, if they found the gene, they should terminate a pregnancy if they knew the person would be gay. That is where the discussion is at." (Female worker.)

"Homosexuality is invisible within our cultures. People say you can't be gay because it does not exist. It's not a way to be." (Female worker.)

"There is denial within the Asian community, which sometimes views homosexuality as a 'white Western disease'. Consequently, young Asians sometimes have to look outside of their community to meet their needs." (Male worker.)

"HIV has helped to raise the issue of homosexuality within Asian communities. However, it is a double-edged sword because it has also been used by the community as a homophobic weapon making it even harder for some people to come out. From a religious point of view, it is seen by some as a punishment from God. Sex is a taboo subject and sex outside of marriage is seen as a bad thing. HIV is seen as 'getting what you deserve'." (Male worker.)

Inter-generation Issues

"The key question is how young Asian gay people can come out or seek support? Challenging the Asian community is an issue that faces most people at some point in their life, irrespective of their sexual identity." (Male worker.)

"There's a bit more openness among the second and third generations. Different cultures and lifestyles are emerging, people finding their own identity. But as far as sexuality is concerned, I don't think my generation is ready to come out." (Young man.)

"It's hard for us now. There's a lot of pressure on my age group to perform now." (Young man.)

"Second and third generation Asians often have different perceptions to their parents who came here forty years ago. They have a concept of what their culture was when they were young and this has become almost frozen in time for them. Being Asian and gay in Britain in a closed cultural circle is worse than being gay in Pakistan because society has developed in Pakistan over the forty years. Over here it's stuck and the conflicts just get bigger and bigger, but parents tend to believe that things haven't changed." (Young man.)

"Recently there was a programme on television looking at young Asian people's disillusionment. It looked at relationships between parents and their children. It was about a group of people brought up in a certain way, but for whatever reason had abandoned that and had gone a different way. It was about how parents were coming to terms with that. That is a real challenge to young people." (Female worker.)

"Another problem in our communities is that older people do not talk to younger people. Older people have status and they make the decisions. There is little communication between the generations beyond the family context. Older people have a status and rights that can never be challenged by young people. As a young person you have very little voice in the Asian community because you've not 'achieved' anything yet. " (Female worker.)

"There isn't a culture in which young people have a voice, or are encouraged to challenge opinions or older people. The right of older people to have the absolute say on everything is a cultural thing from back home." (Female worker.)

Invisibility of Asian Bisexuals, Gays and Lesbians

"You've got to know how to act with different people especially if you're not out. That's the main thing. You definitely have to have a double life." (Young man.)

"The issue [of homosexuality] is taboo within the Asian community so seeking support can be difficult. If a young person is unsure, it can be very hard." (Male worker.)

Position of Some Women within the Asian Communities

"For women the pressures are much greater. To a degree, some women are told who to marry. They are given choices but they still have to marry someone. As they get older the family may start to question and complain about the fact that they're not married. Then they have to do something. Some people need a way out. Maybe a marriage by arrangement is an option then you can relieve the pressure through a beneficial arrangement. Women generally don't have as much choice whereas men can say no. Parents are likely to be forceful and women often can be more pressured into doing things. Because of the way many Asian people are raised, especially if in strict families, it often means than men's lives are more relaxed whereas women are expected to clean and cook from an early age. I can imagine them thinking that they have little choice and so they are not going to rebel. Women's choices are then made more extreme. Men can get away with lying and deceiving their families, which is painful, but women can't. Once lesbians reach a certain age and parents start saying they have to marry, then they have to leave. Men on the other hand can be 30 and be a bachelor." (Young man.)

"The Asian gay support networks and organisations are male-dominated. There is a big divide between men and women in Asian culture, whether you are gay or straight [heterosexual]." (Young man.)

"It depends on how strict your family is, but even for men it can be difficult to be independent from the family. Your family often wants to know where you are and what you're doing all the time. If you are a woman, it's even more difficult. In Asian culture, women are kept tabs on more and it's difficult for them to be independent." (Young man.)

"Having a personal sexuality, owning a personal sexuality, is considered a very Western idea, not that Asian women don't have sexuality. But to talk about owning a personal

sexuality and expressing it are seen as indulgent. Women traditionally don't have relationships with people of the opposite sex, or sexual relations before they get married, and when they do it's with their husband. But things are changing, and some Asian families are happy for their children to have sexual relations. But in the main, it is still a common thing that they follow. That they don't have a personal sexuality until they get married, and then it is heterosexual." (Female worker.)

"Lesbianism is way more threatening than gay men to patriarchal society, including Asian culture. That is why homosexuality is easier to deal with than lesbianism." (Female worker.)

"Young women are generally invisible and don't socialise as much as young men. They have less freedom and often find their 'middle ways' through the Black women's movement. Some leave home in order to come out. Women generally tend to come out later than men do and they think it through more because of the consequences. Women face great pressures to marry and so they have to be more careful about their future. However, women's experiences depend on their background, like education, environment, etc. Although young women now enjoy more social outlets, like school, youth groups, university, etc. is can still be difficult to come out because of homophobia and the family and community finding out." (Male worker.)

"Women are often isolated and feel a lack of support from Asian gay men who often still have a traditional view of how Asian women should behave. Men are still dominant. Gay men may relate to lesbian women as their 'sisters' but they may not want this. This may fuel women's confusion about her role and raises issues around the expectations and stereotypes of lesbians. Consequently, friendship networks may take longer to develop." (Male worker.)

"Economically and culturally, men are favoured in Asian families." (Male worker.)

"Young men are often treated well by women." (Male worker.)

"Even when men do come out, they sometimes need the practical help of female friends, to help them cook, etc. So women still figure highly." (Male worker.)

The Asian 'Veto'

"There is a hesitancy and nervousness when it comes to working with Asian young people, a fear of offending cultural beliefs. This sometimes prevents workers doing their job and this is not on. I see it in schools all the time where, in sex education lessons, teachers are frightened of offending parents and so they omit certain information or don't make it available to the young people. And yet the guidelines clearly say that they should provide a service regardless of race or sexuality. That doesn't happen. Unfortunately, issues like homosexuality and homophobia are left to really dynamic and innovative personal and social education co-ordinators to deal with." (Female worker.)

Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Community Level

Invisibility of Asian Bisexuals, Gays and Lesbians

"Asian people generally don't go out on the scene." (Young man.)

"When you do see Asian people on the gay scene, they probably won't say anything to each other. But they will probably think to themselves that other person has an idea of where they're coming from because they've had to go through the same thing." (Young man.)

"I suppose I'm cold to other Asian people when I see them on the gay scene, because of my past experiences with the Asian community." (Young man.)

"I have often wondered whether it's because it's too close to home. When you look at another gay Asian person, in a sense you don't want to face the ugliness of their experience. It is very ugly in the Asian community and all the experiences we face because of that, so maybe we shy away from other gay Asian people because we don't want to bring these things into the open and face them together." (Young man.)

"If an older Asian man wondered into a gay pub, most people would probably just assume he was a taxi driver looking for his customer. They wouldn't think that he was gay." (Young man.)

"If you go on the lesbian scene you can see that a lot of white lesbian women's identity is very different. Asian lesbians often don't have the 'uniform' and this contributes to their invisibility. Being invisible to other lesbians is an issue. Once you come out, there is the issue of developing a whole new network of support." (Female worker.)

"Being a 'learner lesbian' is quite hard when you don't know anybody and for an Asian person it can be even more difficult. Some people in the past have just thought that I was in the wrong place. That can be really disheartening if it's your first time and you desperately want to be accepted, when you can see lots of other lesbians, but they can't see you. It can be upsetting." (Female worker.)

Racism

"Racism isn't any less within the gay community. There is a lack of understanding about what it is to be Asian, never mind gay and Asian." (Young man.)

"I think there is a lot of racism and a lack of understanding within the gay community about those who are not white. I've had some very bad experiences. For example, me and my friends were involved in a disagreement in a bar and it resulted in people telling the bouncers to 'get those 'Pakis' out of here'." (Young man.)

"I come across prejudice on the scene as well as everywhere else. Racism comes back every so often like a wave, it hits you, then you forget about it for a while, then it's in your face again and you think, 'how am I going to deal with this?'" (Young man.)

"I got on really well with this lad, each of us was what the other was looking for, but he said that he wouldn't go for anyone that wasn't white. It was a shock to hear that, and irrational." (Young man.)

"Just because someone is gay doesn't mean they're not prejudiced. I think that racism would be silent. I think without knowing it, you could be ostracised from certain groups, but because it's silent you wouldn't know." (Young man.)

"Racism on the gay and lesbian scene is an issue." (Female worker.)

Relationship Issues

"I think the fact that lots of Asians seem to go out with white people is because of access. White gay people are easier to find. Some Asian people may relate homosexuality to white culture. When I was young I had no idea that there were other Asian people who were gay. Only later did I meet someone who felt the same way as me and I was shocked. Maybe there are lots of Asian couples who are not on the scene." (Young man.)

"I've talked to many women having relationship difficulties and I've tried to support them. I've talked to a lot of women who feel that because it is their first relationship with another woman, that they are not going to meet anyone else. There are just grateful to be loved even if it wasn't working out. It's a real psychological trip to get over your first few relationships. Sometimes these relationships are with bisexual or heterosexual women who retreat into the safe haven of heterosexuality. " (Female worker.)

"Asian gays and lesbians not wanting to mix with other Asians, or not wanting to have relationships with other Asians could be many things. It could be nervousness, a reflection of them. Or it could be from bad experiences with their family and culture and just wanting to get away from that. It could be internalised racism. However, it sometimes goes the other way. Sometimes when you see another Asian person you just want to rush up to them. It can go either way." (Female worker.)

Sexualisation

"The gay community can be seen as this adoptive family. However, the gay scene is very sexual and although young people have a desire and need for sex, there can be some confusion over the role of this community. It is supposed to provide shelter and emotional support like the Asian community, or is it just there for sexual gratification? Some young Asian men are also not used to the level of sexualisation that so often characterises the scene. This can lead to confusion for some." (Male worker.)

Stereotyping

"I think many people have a romantic view about what it is to be Asian and what our culture is: exotic saris, carrying pots on our heads, etc. I think some white people who have had relationships with Asian people may have experienced some of the difficulties they can go through, their family and the commitments, the expectations, pressures, etc., and they know it can be difficult. But then it's easy to fall into the stereotyping so that people then feel they don't want to go out with anyone Asian because it's too hard, too much trouble." (Young man.)

"There are men on the scene who drop hints and are interested in me because I'm Asian. I hate that, someone going for me just because of my colour." (Young man.)

"There is a myth on the gay scene that Asian men are passive. Yet young men face a great deal of pressure to do 'manly' things and fulfil their male roles." (Male worker.)

Support Services: Anglo-centric and Lack of Specific Services

"I think support is geared towards white gay and lesbian people. It's not intentional. It's just that they're the ones offering support to others. So because there are so few Asian people who are out, there are no specific services. And if there are no specific services, people don't find it easy to get support and so don't come out. It's a vicious circle." (Young man.)

"Getting support is easier for white gays and lesbians, acceptance by the gay community is easier if you are white. Even when they come out and experience difficulties, they can count on being accepted by some people." (Young man.)

Wider Social Level

Education System

"Because of racism, I changed from being someone who was very jolly, successful and out-going to someone who was miserable, just keeping my head down. My academic standards declined." (Female worker.)

"I was bullied at school because I'm Asian. All through school there was one girl who used to wait outside for me and ask if I wanted a fight." (Female worker.)

Homophobia

"Most of the schools I have been to in London have major problems with homophobia. Teachers report that a culture has developed where it is acceptable to use 'gay' and 'lesbian' as insults, for abuse. It is seen as completely acceptable and everyone understands what you mean when you say it. That is really sad." (Female worker.)

'Minority within a Minority' Status

"Gay Asian people face a lot of discrimination for being a minority, and for being a minority within a minority." (Young man.)

Racism

"Because my older brother's generation had a lot of problems in London with racism they'd go 'honky' [white people] bashing." (Young man.)

"I felt I had to make myself invisible because of racism. I had a very strong accent and people often don't acknowledge what a difference that can make. Accent can be one of the ways that people discriminate." (Female worker.)

(ii) Needs of Asian Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Youth

Figure 24 summarises the main needs of young Asian bisexuals, gays and lesbians as identified by interview participants.

Figure 24: Summary of Needs of Asian Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Youth identified during Interviews

Level	Needs
Individual Level	▪ Emotional and holistic support. ▪ Mentors and role models (who are Asian and bisexual, gay or lesbian). ▪ 'Middle way' strategies. ▪ Peer support. ▪ Support group. ▪ Visibility: being out and coming out.
Family Level	▪ Choices and freedom (recognition of). ▪ Family mediation (need for).
Asian Communities Level	▪ Awareness and debate (encouraging). ▪ Challenging the Asian communities. ▪ Developing an Asian youth voice.
Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Community Level	▪ Publicise helping organisations. ▪ ReachOUT's image. ▪ Specific provision for Asian bisexual, gay and lesbian youth. ▪ Staffing issues (for Asian bisexual, gay and lesbian helping organisations). ▪ User-led service assessment and development.
Institutional Level	▪ Asian staff. ▪ Specific resources. ▪ Training on Asian issues, 'middle way' strategies, safety issues, stereotypes and assumptions and Asian bisexual, gay and lesbian youth issues. ▪ Improved training provision for teachers and youth workers around bisexual, gay and lesbian youth issues. ▪ Visibility: imagery.

Interview participants identified the following needs.

Individual Level

Emotional and Holistic Support

"Young gay Asian people need so much emotional support, to rebuild an identity that isn't so stitched in with the family and community." (Young man.)

"Young Asian gay people need emotional and holistic support, not just specific services that have a limited remit and that are only open for particular times. Setting young people up to think there are services and support, and encouraging them to come out, and then leaving them to cope is not acceptable." (Male worker.)

"While for most young gay white people, coming out and standing on your own two feet are the most important issues, for Asian young people they may not be. People should not just assume that coming out and independence are always the best things." (Male worker.)

Mentors and Role Models (who are Asian and bisexual, gay or lesbian)

"One thing that would have made life easier, and still would, is to know older gay Asian people. There isn't anyone older than I am and we are in uncharted territory. There isn't any guidance from people who can understand where we are coming from." (Young man.)

"We should have more Asian gay role models, people to come and tell us how it was for them." (Young man.)

"More role models would be useful. We need more visibility in terms of resources and images. More people being out and being on TV would help a lot, though it would be a hard thing to do. We need more people facilitating workshops and making speeches." (Female worker.)

'Middle Way' Strategies

"Schools are a good place to start raising the issue. We need to get it discussed within youth culture." (Young man.)

"I want to set up a mental health promotion project for bisexual, gay and lesbian young people. But it will have to be targeted very differently to the Asian community. There is no way we could call it a gay project. We would have to sell it as a mental health project where you can talk about sexuality issues." (Female worker.)

"There are many possibilities for forging 'middle ways'. Schools for example are a good way of circumventing the family and community." (Male worker.)

"There is a need for agencies to develop strategies to deliver this holistic support, to help young people find 'middle ways'. Just having warm phrases like' culturally appropriate and sensitive' is not enough." (Male worker.)

Peer Support

"It's been therapeutic to talk about these things. If a group of us here in Reading could meet up and talk, to see what different people are thinking, what they wanted and needed, the kinds of problems they were facing, that would be good." (Young man.)

"I would like to meet other gay Asian people. I can really communicate with them and express myself." (Young man.)

"It is a source of comfort, reassurance and validation to meet other people from the same cultural background as you with the same sexuality." (Female worker.)

"Schools and community centres are good places to focus on and the gay community is also good at community infrastructure building and peer support. A lot of the projects that I have been involved in are about enabling peer support and developing a collective voice. But I've noticed that a lot of projects that offer assistance to Asian people often base their services on individual support. They very seldom talk about what to do when you walk out the door, what you can create that will be useful collectively." (Female worker.)

"Peer support networks of young people would be useful so that gay issues could be discussed. Education is the key and it should start with schools. But it's got to be done in such a way that it mobilises young Asian people so that they feel part of a community, that they have a right to explore choices and to make them. They need to see that they can develop strategies to live their own lives. This needs to encompass career choices, marriage, sexuality, everything." (Female worker.)

"To break the feelings of isolation and achieve some sense of commonality, some young Asians feel the need for Asian gay peers, both on the gay scene and within the Asian community. This can help in the normalisation process and can act as a bridge for these young people between being Asian and being gay." (Male worker.)

Support Group

"Maybe we need a contact group or support group for Asian people in Reading. You would have to have a safe space and think carefully about the venue." (Young man.)

Visibility: Being Out and Coming Out

"It would be good for gay Asian people to go out and give talks. If people don't have information, then people only have stereotypes to cling to." (Young man.)

"I think being out and coming out would help gay young people, especially those who are respected in the community. It's about visibility. Discussing homosexuality within the family and community would also help." (Female worker.)

Family Level

Choices and Freedom (recognition of)

"A huge help would be an acknowledgement by parents that they are in a different country and that things will not happen in the way that they want them to. An acknowledgement that they have left behind those cultural norms, and that although they may want to hold them, they cannot make their children hold them. I think if parents accepted that it would be easier for young people in so many areas of life." (Female worker.)

"For parents, their choices back home were limited. To be able to make positive choices is what people came here for, so parents should let their children make positive choices. It's about cultural perceptions, that it's a positive thing to be here and that their children have these choices." (Female worker.)

Family Mediation

"Work needs to be done in the family, for example, mediation that is linguistically appropriate." (Male worker.)

Asian Communities Level

Awareness and Debate (encouragement of)

"We need to encourage debate within our own communities." (Young man.)

Challenging the Asian Communities

"There is a lot that needs to be done within our communities. It's not just about sexuality. The idea of self-identity is often just not there. It's not a concept common in our communities. We should work in partnership with some Asian support organisations and the Asian media to challenge this. Challenging the community can be shocking but it is a way of making clear when something is wrong. People need to realise that people have to be respected." (Young man.)

Developing an Asian Youth Voice

"Young people feeling able to more positively make choices and have more freedoms will take time. These changes will not occur unless young people begin to develop a voice of their own that can then challenge." (Female worker.)

Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Community Level

Publicising Helping Organisations

"ReachOUT and other gay services need to publicise themselves more. There's definitely a need for an alternative to the scene venues because they are terrifying places for most people." (Young man.)

"It's unrealistic to try to put up posters in Asian community. I can't imagine them going up there." (Young man.)

ReachOUT's Image

"I think ReachOUT needs to change its image. When I first saw the poster I thought, 'I don't want to go'. It seemed like a group for people with problems." (Young man.)

Specific Provision

"ReachOUT should introduce more Asian issues into their mainstream work." (Young man.)

"I'd like more Asian people in ReachOUT. And the group should do more serious stuff, like identity, family, relationships, things like that." (Young man.)

"I'm quite surprised at the number of Asian and Black people that go to ReachOUT. Obviously having a Black youth worker helps, and groundrules that discourage prejudice, all that helps." (Young man.)

"On the one hand there are many shared experiences for all young people regardless of sexuality or ethnicity. So is there a need for separate provision? But on the other hand, there are some very specific things about being gay and Asian, your background, the way you relate to your culture, etc. A person needs to know that the person who is listening and helping them can really understand, so there is a need for something specific or separate." (Young man.)

"Not every Asian person has a strong connection with culture. If people have problems because of their culture and sexuality then they need support. If not, then they don't need support. We need to be there for those who do, but we should highlight differences and needs where they do exist, and not just assume that they do." (Young man.)

"I don't think that there should be separate provision, but there will always be a place for an Asian support group, an Asian women's group, etc. I don't see it as separate provision. It's just diversity. Asian people may want to be with other Asian people. I don't see it as act of separatism but it's just natural that that will happen. But services should be integrated. For example, Asian people should feel as though they belong to a mainstream project just as much as everyone else. When an Asian is the only one is a group though, it is understandable that they want to retreat back into places where there are lots of Asian people." (Female worker.)

"Yes, there is a need for separate, specific provision but there has to be integration too. Otherwise, what's the point? We are not at the stage where we have equal access because we are not fully empowered because of the way society is. You have to have that space so that people can feel empowered. At a very basic level, they have to feel that black skin is beautiful. That is fundamental." (Female worker.)

"There should be generic and specific service provision and there should be a choice. Groups ideally should be mixed because young people need the wider picture. And sometimes services need to be prescribed or structured, at least initially, otherwise there will be just emptiness." (Male worker.)

Staffing Issues

"We need Asian gay youth workers, Asian and Black role models, people in the media and newspapers, and Asian counsellors." (Young man.)

"I don't think many service providers know how difficult it is to be Asian and gay. They can be sceptical about how much we need." (Young man.)

"We need gay Asian role models and mentors. And more helping organisations. We have the ideas about what needs to be done, but what we need are the resources and the skills. 'Shakti' had been running for about ten years are we had been doing the best we could with the resources, skills and time available, but the service was limited. We need full-time staff to help projects get underway. We need people who have the time

because everyone was voluntary. There are people out there, what we need to do is to bring people together and get things going." (Young man.)

"There is a need for more Asian youth workers and more gay Asian youth workers." (Female worker.)

User-led Service Assessment and Development

"User-led assessment of services is crucial and service development should also adopt this approach." (Male worker.)

Institutional Level

Asian Staff

"Support services need to have Asian staff for the Asian dimension. It's good to identify with someone who understands. People say they want to help but then you get there and they often say they don't have the time or resources." (Young man.)

Training on Asian Issues

"Support services need to be aware of the dangerous situations that can sometimes occur. They need to make provision for extreme situations and have some training on these things." (Young man.)

"Care needs to be taken because this type of work can be dangerous." (Male worker.)

Improved Training Provision

"We need more youth workers with a healthy attitude to sexuality. We need Asian male youth workers who aren't homophobic. I have trained Asian youth work staff and afterwards I have thought that they are just appalling. And I've thought to myself, 'Are these the people that are going to work with Asian youth, to help and guide them?' Sometimes, the only reason these people got the jobs was because they were from a particular ethnic group and not because they've got any skills." (Female worker.)

"I think it's important that within teacher training courses, people are given the opportunity to develop their skills in dealing with people with diverse sexuality. Their remit should be to look after young people's emotional well being. So if a young person goes to talk to them about sexuality, then because you are a person that they trust, you

should have the skills to deal with it. Teachers' attitudes about sexuality also need to be challenged." (Female worker.)

Visibility: Imagery

"Improvements could be made by service providers, for example, the images they project." (Young man.)

(iii) Other Studies' Findings

Asian and Black Communities in Britain

It is the author's opinion that any study of the experiences of young bisexuals, gays and lesbians who are Asian or Black must be set within the context of the wider experiences of their communities in Britain. The history and present realities of Asian and Black communities will have a direct bearing on the experiences, issues and needs of these young people. After an overview of studies of Asian (and Black) communities in Britain from a historical perspective there follows a discussion of the contemporary realities for young Asian bisexuals, gays and lesbians.

African-Caribbean people began to arrive in Britain *in a systematic way* in June 1948, Asians, in the early 1950s. By 1958 there were 125,000 African-Caribbean people and 55,000 Indian and Pakistani people in Britain. (Fryer, 1984).

Most early settlers were young and contrary to popular myth they were not unskilled: only 13 per cent of men and five per cent of women who settled were unskilled. Nevertheless, they were disproportionately employed in lower-status jobs. By the 1960s, only half of Britain's white population had ever met an Asian or Black person. Prejudice however was widespread: polls at the time revealed that two thirds of people held a low opinion of Asian and Black people. They were seen as 'inferior', resented when poor and envied when successful. They were feared as competitive 'intruders', 'promoters of crime' and 'carriers of disease' (Fryer, 1984).

From the early 1950s, Asian and Black people had to endure racist abuse, hypocrisy and violence. Anti-Black rioting occurred in London and Nottingham in 1958 and in London racist incidents (including murders) were commonplace. So too were media sensationalism and police indifference, collusion, and complicity. Outside of London, identical patterns emerged in almost every area where Asian and Black people settled (Fryer, 1984).

Between 1962-71, racism was institutionalised and made respectable in a series of overtly racist immigration laws. Blackness was officially equated with second-class citizenship, the status of the 'undesirable immigrant'. Asian and Black communities

were subject to entry controls, threats of deportation, forced separation of families, detention without trial, raids by police and immigration officials, medical examinations, etc. Although the 1966 Race Relations Act outlawed 'incitement to racial hatred' the legislation was framed so as to make it ineffective; it was limited to public places, providing no redress for discrimination in employment, housing, etc. (Fryer, 1984).

By the mid-1970s, two out of every five Asian and Black people in Britain had been born here. However, in key areas such as education, employment and housing, those born of African-Caribbean or Asian parents faced – as their parents had faced – discrimination and prejudice (Fryer, 1984).

Governments between 1974-76 published four Political and Economic Planning Reports. Based on interviews with 3,292 African-Caribbean and Asian people these studies concluded that Britain's two million Asian and Black people were disproportionately represented in all unfavourable social statistics. For example, the unemployment rate among young Black people in the mid-1970s was twice that of young white people, Black children were three to four times as likely to be classed as 'educationally sub-normal' than white children, etc. (cited in Fryer, 1984).

Policing was (and remains) a central issue for Asian and Black people in Britain with the police being seen as the agents of a white racist society. Several sociological studies have found the criminal justice system to be biased and racist. For example, a study by the Institute of Race Relations (1979) concluded that the police not only reflected society's racism but recreated it through their stereotyping and their use of criminal procedure to harass the Black population (cited in Fryer, 1984).

Between 1976-81, 31 Asian and Black people were murdered in Britain and many others were abused, attacked and harassed. These incidents often went unreported, and even when they were reported, the police consistently and systematically denied the racial motives. The results were the Brixton, Moss Side and Toxteth riots in 1981. These were followed by riots in Birmingham, Bolton, Bristol, Leicester, Luton, Nottingham, Reading and dozens of other cities and towns across Britain (Fryer, 1984).

The 1990s have seen a number of important studies on ethnic minority communities in Britain. The Labour Force Survey (1995) estimated that there were 3.2 million ethnic minority people in Britain, constituting 5.7 per cent of the population (cited in *Shabaab*, 1997). The Labour Force Survey found that only 50 per cent of women from ethnic minorities were in paid employment compared to 68 per cent of white women. This total figure hid some important differences: 60 per cent of Caribbean women were in paid employment compared to only 13 per cent of Bangladeshi and 17 per cent of Pakistani women (cited in Pool, 1997). The Labour Force Survey also found differing rates of unemployment, as shown in Table 26.

Table 26: Unemployment Rates (averages for June 1995 to May 1996)

	Black-African	**Black-Caribbean**	**Bangladeshi**	**Indian**	**Pakistani**	**White**
Men	27%	22%	26%	13%	26%	9%
Women	29%	16%	-	11%	25%	6%

Source: Labour Force Survey (1995) (cited in Pool, 1997).

Home Office statistics released in 1996 indicated a rapid increase in the number of racial incidents reported to the police: from 4,383 in 1988 to 12,222 in 1996 (cited in Travis, 1997b).

A report by Human Rights Watch (1997) stated that the human rights of Britain's ethnic minorities were being violated by the rising tide of racially motivated violence and that Britain had one of the highest rates of racially motivated crime in Europe. The report stated that between 1989-96 the number of racist incidents trebled to 12,199 reported crimes (Human Rights Watch claimed the true figure was higher, including 32,500 assaults and 26,000 acts of vandalism). Nearly one in five crimes suffered by members of ethnic communities was linked to the colour of their skin. There were 14 racially motivated murders between 1991-94 and there were increasing numbers of Asian and Black people beaten into comas and forced from their homes. The report concluded that attackers were rarely prosecuted and that the police were often unable or unwilling to respond effectively to racist violence. The report noted that all too often the police were responsible (i.e. the ten Asian and Black deaths in custody) (cited in Dodd, 1997).

A survey by the Institute of Public Policy Research (1997), based on 1,700 interviews, found that:

- Members of the Asian communities were often more prejudiced against African-Caribbean people and immigrants and more set against inter-racial marriage than white people.
- Asians were also concerned that refugees were causing a 'problem' for Britain.

(Cited in Ahmed, 1997).

A survey by the Policy Studies Institute (1997), based on interviews with 5,196 African-Caribbean and Asian people and 2,867 white people, found that:

- Seventy-four per cent of Muslims, 71 per cent of New Protestant Caribbean people, 46 per cent of Sikhs and 43 per cent of Hindus stated that their religion was very important to their way of life. This compared to 32 per cent of white Catholics and 11 per cent of white people who were members of the Church of England.
- Half of all Black men and one-third of all Black women had white partners.
- The younger generation of British-born Asians and Blacks were shedding some of their parents' cultural modes – clothing, religion, use of the mother tongue, etc. – but were still keen to maintain a strong sense of their ethnic identity.
- Bangladeshis and Pakistanis were among the poorest people in Britain (four out of five lived below the poverty line).
- There was a 'glass ceiling' barring Asians and Blacks from the top ten per cent of jobs in big companies.
- White people still admitted to being prejudiced.
- Asian and Black people felt *more* unfairly treated by employers than they were ten years ago.
- Two hundred and fifty thousand people were victimised by racial harassment each year.
- A majority still lacked confidence in the police and favoured self-defence groups.
- One-in-five British-born Indian people had white partners.

- Ethnic minority people were more likely to continue their education beyond 16 than white people and, apart from Caribbean men and Bangladeshi women, were more likely to go to university.
- Indian and Caribbean men's earnings had not yet caught up with white men's.
- There was above average unemployment among Indian and Caribbean women.
- Young Caribbean men obtained fewer educational qualifications and were more likely to be unemployed.
- Caribbean people associated strongly with their colour and Asians with their religions.
- Cultural identity was increasing among young Black women but declining among young Asian women.
- Arranged marriages were declining. More Hindus and Sikhs were choosing their partners.
- Bangladeshis and Pakistanis had the poorest health of all ethnic minority groups.
- Young white people were more likely to be prejudiced against Asian than Black people.
- Fifteen per cent of Caribbean people were subjected to racial harassment as were ten per cent of Indians, 14 per cent of African-Indians, 13 per cent of Pakistanis, nine per cent of Bangladeshis and 16 per cent of Chinese.
- Most people from the ethnic minorities did not believed enough was being done to tackle discrimination.

The results of this study suggest that differences *between* ethnic minority groups were as important as the traditional Asian/Black-white divide. The study concluded that Britain had undoubtedly made progress towards developing multi-racial equality over the past three decades, including a move away from the policy of colour-blindness (the outlawing of discrimination based only on colour). The study recognised that policies designed to tackle racial discrimination needed to address the needs of the different ethnic minority groups who had distinctive cultures, values and policy agenda (cited in Travis, 1997a).

An emerging issue in the 1990s was 'Islamophobia' (irrational anti-Muslim hostility) towards Britain's 1.5 million Muslims. The Runnymede Trust (1997) castigated the media for their 'mad mullah' stereotyping and argued that the race relations laws were not adequate as there were important differences between racial and religious identity (the government's response was that religious legislation was not the answer.) Bunting and Black (1997) noted that the media, in their search for drama and conflict, had tended to seek out the most extreme voices of the British Muslim community. They also reported a 40 per cent increase in the number of Muslims in prison between 1991-95, to nine per cent of the prison population.

Rowan (1997) discussed the invisibility of Asian and Black people within the British State: the Armed Forces, Civil Service, Parliament, Police Force, etc. Dodd (1998) noted the continued invisibility since New Labour came to power, despite its rhetoric of an inclusive society. "Whitehall is still white", noted Keith Vaz, who conducted the survey (cited in Dodd, 1998).

The above studies of the experiences of ethnic minority communities in Britain – from the first waves of immigration in the 1950s to the present – reveal the common

threads of criminalisation, disadvantage and exclusion. Studies of the experiences of Asian and Black young people in the 1990s suggested their continuation.

The Labour Force Survey (1995) found a younger age structure among ethnic minority communities: one third of the ethnic minority population was under 16 in 1991 compared to only one fifth of the white population (cited in *Shabaab*, 1997).

In 1991, 18 per cent of the prison population was aged 17-20. Fifteen per cent of these young men and 23 per cent of these young women were Asian or Black. Between 1990-92, four times as many African-Caribbean young people were excluded from schools than would be predicted from their numbers. Of the 15 racially motivated murders between 1993-97, nine of the victims were under 24 years of age. Fifty per cent of racial incidents were perpetrated by young people on young people (cited in *Shabaab*, 1997).

The Labour Force Survey (1995) also found higher rates of unemployment among Asian and Black young people, as shown in Table 27.

Table 27: Youth (16-24) Unemployment Rates (averages for June 1995 to May 1996)

	Female	**Male**
Black	38%	36%
Bangladeshi/Pakistani	36%	33%
Indian	22%	23%
White	12%	17%

Source: Labour Force Survey (1995) (cited in Pool, 1997).

Asian Bisexuals, Gays and Lesbians

The following two studies were conducted in the United States.

Chan's (1989) study of Asian-American gays and lesbians found that they identified more with their sexual identity than they did with their Asian identity. However, participants said both were desired (cited in Lesbian Information Service, 1995a).

Morales (1989) found that the coming out process for ethnic minority bisexuals, gays, and lesbians presented more challenges, both in terms of identity formation and conflict in their loyalties to different communities. Participants reported feeling confused with living in three different worlds: the Asian/Black world, the bisexual, gay and lesbian world and wider society. This was suggested as a source for many of their problems (cited in Lesbian Information Service, 1995a).

In a British study, Gupta (1989) discussed the invisibility of Asian bisexuals, gays and lesbians, their reluctance to integrate their daily and sexual lives and the fact that the anonymity of the scene discouraged identity-formation based on sexual identity and

culture. Gupta cited a survey showing that only half of Asians who were bisexual, gay or lesbian identified as Black. Gupta argued the gay sub-culture was constructed in a particular way (of and for white, affluent men of a certain body type) and that this excluded Asians and needed to be deconstructed. The important struggle therefore was to displace the white subject from the centre of the discourse around gay identities. Gupta also discussed the denial of homosexuality within Asian communities and its implications.

Khan (1991) described the formation of Shakti (a social and support group for South Asian gay men and lesbians) and its growth from six members in 1988 to 600 in 1989 (with another 300 overseas) as evidence of hitherto unmet needs.

Khan's (1991) study of 50 Asian bisexuals, gays and lesbians and ten Asian community organisations researched the attitudes, experiences and needs of participants. The findings were summarised under the following headings: family, health (mental and sexual), identity, language, marriage, relationships, religion, visibility and women

Although families were felt to be a crucial source of shelter and support, imparting an important sense of cultural identity, they were also felt to be restrictive and oppressive for Asian bisexuals, gays and lesbians. Participants argued that the individual's duty to maintain family solidarity often negated their personal right to make individual choices. It was felt that to lose family networks was to lose a central element of what it meant to be Asian. However, it was also felt that the primacy of the family, of *izzat* (meaning duty and honour), effectively suppressed feelings and desires.

In terms of mental health, Khan argued the dichotomy of identities and the processes of denial and self-oppression created enormous psychological pressures. Manifestations – alcohol and drug abuse, depression, mental health problems, suicide attempts, violence, etc. – were found in the study. Alienation, homophobia and racism entwined to form a complex matrix of self-depreciation. Personality at times was felt to be almost schizophrenic: being Asian and being bisexual, gay or lesbian. One identity had to be repressed and many people in the study felt they had be become less than oneself to survive.

In terms of sexual health, the study revealed that men enjoyed greater opportunities for anonymous sex than women both within the community and through cottaging and cruising (with their obvious risks). Sexual encounters were defined around sexual stereotypes and roles, the penetrator for example, being seen as the heterosexual. Male participants reflected the view that the term 'gay' defined an effeminate homosexual, while 'homosex' defined behaviour rather than identity. Sexual behaviour and lifestyle were separate; behaviour could be hidden and invisible whereas lifestyle choice could not. Anecdotal evidence suggested that the incidence of HIV was increasing in Asian communities, although it was perceived as a 'white disease'. The study found unsafe sexual activities to be the norm, condom use low and resources lacking (especially for lesbians). There were also risks of transmission to partners. For those who were HIV-positive, their safety and confidentiality within the community were important issues, as was their access to mainstream services.

In terms of identity, participants felt Asian bisexuals, gays and lesbians often lacked an integrated sense of self. They felt torn between their sexual identity – based in a predominantly white bisexual, gay and lesbian community and a racist white society –

and their Asian identity – within communities that offered shelter and support, but also homophobia. Several participants reported feeling forced to choose between their identities: to leave their communities or stay hidden by denying their sexual identity.

The study revealed that labels ('gay', etc.) also presented problems for those who did not or could not identify with them. These labels were Western terms, originating in 19th Century Europe, reflecting the medicalisation of homosexual behaviour and the construction of identities around sexual behaviour and desire. It was felt these labels often had no congruence within Asian communities. In terms of language, participants reported translation difficulties, as there were few appropriate terms that were positive and meaningful and which adequately described bisexual, gay and lesbian experiences and identities. Language and terminology were of great important, central to cultural and sexual minorities who were attempting to forge positive and affirming self-identities following constant subjection to derogatory labelling.

Participants reported intense pressures to marry from both the family and the wider community. This contributed to many problems particularly around expression and identity. Most men in the study were married whereas most women were not. Young gay men felt they had little choice but to get married and often saw gay relationships as transient. Men however felt able to fulfil both their parents' expectations (children, marriage, etc.) and their emotional and sexual needs. Asian lesbians in marriages however reported extreme difficulties, and women who did not marry reported great pressures to leave the family and community. Few men had informed their wives of their sexual identity, and they reported that their marriages were often based on duty not choice. Participants also described the great pressures exerted to maintain the family even when one of the partners had come out.

Participants revealed that relationships were often difficult. Their dual identities, one of which was often hidden, created many problems, especially for mixed-race relationships. Some participants favoured same-race relationships while for others it was too painful a reminder of their cultural roots.

Khan noted the increasing evidence of religiosity among ethnic minority communities in Britain. To study participants, religion was viewed as central to self-affirmation and community solidarity and was seen as a public and not a private function, the flouting of which risked sanctions. Participants felt strong links with their religions.

In terms of visibility, participants felt the denial of Asia's long bisexual, gay and lesbian history served to maintain certain myths within Asian communities, which in turn encouraged fear, hostility and ignorance. Despite this denial and invisibility, there was a high incidence of homosexual behaviour. Khan cited a study that found that 35 per cent of Asian students had had at least one homosexual experience, often with another Asian. Khan's survey of ten Asian community groups found that reactions against homosexuality came most strongly from Muslim communities, Asian communities were more accepting of gay and bisexual men than women, few members of these groups admitted to knowing any bisexuals, gays or lesbians and they could not identify any historical characters who were. The survey also revealed that homosexuality was not discussed at home nor within the communities.

The study acknowledged the intense pressures on women from both the family and the wider community. Women felt they had less control over their lives and less

economic and sexual freedom compared to men. Lesbian Asians in the study voiced their disquiet at what they saw as gay male privilege: maintaining a traditional wife while pursuing a gay lifestyle outside the home. Young women in particular felt more restricted and supervised compared to young men. Consequently, young Asian lesbians exhibited a greater tendency to resist parental pressure and to leave home, with all its consequences. Women in the study reported physical and sexual abuse in addition to repression of their sexual identity.

The study concluded by stating that the issues of personal choice, rights, and sexual identity had created many dilemmas for Asian bisexuals, gays and lesbians. What seemed alien to their communities would be isolated and rejected, seen as a challenge to Asian values and the communities themselves. Homosexuality was dismissed as the pursuit of unhealthy Western values. This created a painful situation for those who found their emotional and sexual desires in conflict with the enforced heterosexual norms.

Khan (1992) summarised some of the major issues facing Asian bisexuals, gay men and lesbians:

- The risks associated with coming out, including losing one's identity and family and community support.
- Racism within the bisexual, gay and lesbian community and wider society.
- The powerful role of culture and tradition.
- That homosexuality was seen as a 'white man's disease'.
- The conservatism of Asian communities, which were antagonistic towards anything seen as a threat to 'Asian values'.
- That sex was a taboo subject.
- The lack of support services and networks.
- The role of *izzat*.
- The importance of marriage.
- The invisibility of Asians in the bisexual, gay and lesbian sub-culture.
- The loss of Asia's long gay and lesbian history.

Naz Project London's (1997) survey of 115 Asian men's sexual health found that 48 per cent identified as Indian, 19 per cent as Pakistani, five per cent as Sri Lankan, four per cent as Bangladeshi and 19 per cent as 'other'. Thirty-eight per cent identified as Muslim, 25 per cent Hindu, 13 per cent Sikh and eight per cent Christian. Sixty-three per cent identified as gay, 27 per cent as bisexual and seven per cent as heterosexual. Eighty per cent were single and six per cent were married, 65 per cent were out to friends, 43 per cent to family and 18 per cent to the community. Ninety per cent always practised safer sex, seven per cent sometimes did and three per cent never did.

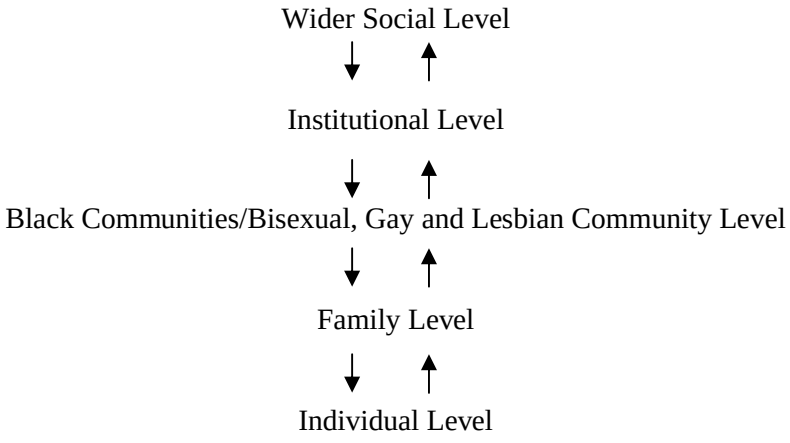
(b) Black Experiences, Issues and Needs

Interviews were conducted with:

- ⇨ One young man who identified as Black Caribbean and gay.
- ⇨ Two young men who identified as mixed race (Black Caribbean and white), one who identified as bisexual and the other gay.
- ⇨ Two women, one who identified as a Black African lesbian, the other as a Black Caribbean lesbian, who both worked with a bisexual, gay and lesbian youth organisation.

Following the schema outlined in Figure 1, data from the interviews was structured using five levels of analysis: individual, family, community (Black and bisexual, gay and lesbian), institutional and wider social levels as shown in Figure 25.

Figure 25: Levels of Analysis



(i) Experiences and Issues of Black Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Youth

Figure 26 shows a summary of the typical experiences and issues of young Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians as identified from the interviews.

Figure 26: Summary of Experiences and Issues of Black Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Youth arising from Interviews

Level	Experiences and Issues
Individual Level	▪ 'Attitude' (meaning 'truculent demeanour'). ▪ Identity: ethnic and sexual. ▪ Language (power of). ▪ Mental health. ▪ Multi-oppression. ▪ Peer pressure. ▪ Personal loss and sacrifice (coming out, etc.).
Family Level	▪ Community connections. ▪ Exclusion and homophobia.
Black Communities Level	▪ Black 'brothers and sisters'. ▪ Homophobia. ▪ Inferiority. ▪ Lesbianism. ▪ Position of some women within the Black communities. ▪ Racism. ▪ Religion.
Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Community Level	▪ Empathy among Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians. ▪ Racism. ▪ Relationship issues. ▪ Sexualisation. ▪ Stereotypes.
Institutional Level	▪ Education system. ▪ Youth Service training.
Wider Social Level	▪ Cultural 'norms' as means of social control. ▪ 'Minority within a minority' status ▪ Racism.

The following data was extracted from the interviews.

Individual Level

'Attitude'

"You have to have strong 'attitude' because of the way things are." (Young man.)

"It's the world. You have to have an attitude for yourself and about people to be able to look after yourself." (Young man.)

Identity: Ethnic and Sexual

In terms of ethnic identity, the following statements were made:

"I don't think of myself as being half-caste or anything. I never think about it." (Young man.)

"I describe myself as a Black lesbian of Afro-Caribbean origin, although I'm mixed race. As I grew up I made that choice to describe myself as Black." (Female worker.)

"One of the things that forced me to consider and describe myself as Black was all the abuse I would get. My dad was the first Black person in the town where I grew up and we were the first mixed race kids." (Female worker.)

"I describe myself as a Black lesbian." (Female worker.)

"Identifying as Black was a decision I made early on, when I came to this country. People did not perceive me as mixed race. You were either white, or not." (Female worker.)

In terms of sexual identity, the following statements were made:

"I am gay." (Young man.)

"I'm a gay man, but it's quite a complex issue I think to be so clear about it." (Young man.)

"I'm bisexual, but I tend to say either gay or straight [heterosexual] to people because bisexual tends to confuse people." (Young man.)

“I had this suspicion when I was younger. I knew there was something wrong but it wasn’t even mentioned. Nobody said the words gay or lesbian and there wasn’t any literature around to help.” (Female worker.)

“I had crushes on girls and then it dawned on me. I started to investigate. I had relationships with boys but they were nothing really, just experimenting with sex. Acceptance came much later, I felt shameful about being a lesbian until I was 18.” (Female worker.)

“When I first became aware of my sexuality, which was when I had my first sexual experience, I assumed that I was someone who had fallen in love with another woman. I did not assume that I was a lesbian and therefore would only be attracted to women. My mother saw identifying as one or another as closing doors, which should be left open. This made me slow to identify as a lesbian.” (Female worker.)

“You only have to identify yourself if you are other than the ‘norm’. If you are the ‘norm’, then no one ever talks about it or questions it. Assumptions are made and that’s that.” (Female worker.)

In terms of identity conflict, within and between identities, the following statements were made:

“My mum thinks it’s going to be really hard for me, because people are against Black, half-caste and gay people. Because I’m both she thinks it’s going to be really hard for me.” (Young man.)

“There is conflict in juggling my identities all the time.” (Young man.)

“I felt I was living in three worlds sometimes, my school life, being gay, and coming from a very large Afro-Caribbean family. I had to be different in each one to fit in. Like I had four Rastafarian brothers so I felt I had to hide away my gay side to fit in with the family.” (Young man.)

“I think it was the late teens or early twenties before I took on board that I was Black. To a certain degree that’s because I spent most of my social life on the gay scene so Black issues, a lot of aspects of being Black, didn’t really come to light. I wasn’t confronted by them.” (Young man.)

“Becoming comfortable with your sexuality is difficult. For those who are Asian and Black it is even more difficult because of the cultures you live within. You have your family and community telling you one thing and your mind telling you another.” (Young man.)

“You have straight [heterosexual] people who will never believe that a Black man can be gay. It’s a though we are fighting a battle from within, to be Black and gay, but if we lose that fight, we lose it as a whole.” (Young man.)

“When eventually I accepted that I was a lesbian I just thought, ‘God, I’m Black and I’m a lesbian’. That was quite scary. It’s hard for some people to accept me as Black

and then I tell them I'm a lesbian. I thought the whole world would be against me." (Female worker.)

"People see your colour first, not that you are gay or lesbian. When they see that you are gay or lesbian, it is often ten times worse." (Female worker.)

"When I came to Britain I first went to an all-white school. Later, when I went to a more ethnically mixed school, because of the way I talked and because of my class, people talked about Black people as if they were somewhere else. They would tell anti-Black jokes and then say, 'oh, but you're not like that'. The more time I spent away from my father's country [The Sudan] the more anglicised I became. That is the price you pay for integration, you lose part of your culture." (Female worker.)

"There is a whole generation of Black people living in Europe and the United States who haven't given much thought to where they come from, their cultural roots." (Female worker.)

"I felt that my different identities were parts of me and I played these different parts depending on where I was. I did not see them as mutually exclusive within myself, but I would censor parts of myself depending on the environment and the audience. I felt it was a game when I was younger." (Female worker.)

"Although I define myself as a Black lesbian, the truth is that I analyse and respond as a women, as a Black person, and as a lesbian, because I cannot actually find a way of analysing and responding that pulls all these things together." (Female worker.)

"It strikes me that the longer I live with the emotional centre of my life around white people, the more I forget about who I really am." (Female worker.)

Language (power of)

"I don't think some people grasp the power of words, even those that have been reclaimed. There is a big difference between those who are saying it and those who are listening. For example, Asians using the word 'Paki', Black people using the word 'nigger' and gay people using the word 'queer' and how some people hear these words. I think the irony is lost on some people and that is dangerous." (Female worker.)

Mental Health

"You have to try not to get upset about the way the world is. If you don't let yourself care, then you don't get tired. If you care, you get frustrated." (Young man.)

"Juggling identities and trying to manage them felt impossible when I was younger. They felt like issues I really couldn't control. I was too young to leave home, too young to leave school, etc. so I just went out clubbing and that was my way of releasing the tensions and pressure that came on a day to day and week to week basis. When I was left on my own and released from the shackles of home and school I just went mad as a young gay man." (Young man.)

"Coming out can be very stressful because you run the risk of total isolation from the people that brought you up, who love you and who you always thought would be there for you." (Young man.)

"I know of one Black gay man whose family supports him. Most have no support at all. And they hold out their hands to the gay community for support and it just isn't there. So what do you do? Just go and lock yourself away again? Don't confront it, just go out partying every night, take loads of drugs and feel very unhappy? That what I did when my family left for Barbados." (Young man.)

"I felt that being a lesbian was wrong. I thought they would send me to the 'funny farm'. I was too afraid to tell my parents to start off with, or even to confide in them that I thought something was wrong with me." (Female worker.)

"In the past when people used to come out that would send them to the doctor. Because in the end it can be very depressing, really depressing, thinking that you are alone." (Female worker.)

"Someone pointed out to me once that I never look at myself in the mirror. That is a very easy way to forget that you are Black. If you never see yourself, if you live in a white culture and see lots of films with white people in them, read books written by white people, wear white clothes, etc. then it's easy to forget that you are Black." (Female worker.)

Multi-oppression

"I think very often young Black bisexual, gay and lesbian people are scared, that they're the only one. And they face oppression in many areas of life, more than young white gay kids do. They are often invisible and face major problems because of their cultural and religious background." (Female worker.)

Peer Pressure

"I have always known that I was gay, even since I was thirteen when I had my first sexual encounter. But peer pressure at secondary school and the fact that I had a large family meant that I didn't question it and I had a girlfriend for a while." (Young man.)

Personal Sacrifice and Loss (coming out, etc.)

"My mum doesn't know I'm bisexual and it's quite difficult." (Young man.)

"I'm good at excuses and lies when people ask about what I am." (Young man.)

Family Level

Community Connections

"My dad has lots of connections with the Black community." (Young man.)

"My dad knows quite a few people, but not the rest of the family." (Young man.)

Exclusion and Homophobia

"Not through choice, I was forced to stand on my own two feet. After my dad died my mum and brothers decided to move back to Barbados. But they found out I was gay and that was the reason I wasn't invited or allowed to move back to Barbados." (Young man.)

Black Community Level

Black 'Brothers and Sisters'

"I've met lots of Black people with hang ups. I've come across a lot of, 'I'm Black, you're Black, we're sisters', and I don't like that. If I find that someone is doing something wrong, then regardless of colour, it's wrong. Just because I'm the same colour doesn't mean I'm going to go along with what they're doing." (Female worker.)

Homophobia

"Black people are mostly against homosexuality." (Young man.)

"Black people don't like gay people." (Young man.)

"The Black community is really against gay people especially if you're camp. People look at Black or half-caste people if they're camp, they give them a strange look. It's okay for white people to be camp but not Black people." (Young man.)

"Things are different for young Black gay people compared to white people. They don't have to face the Black community." (Young man.)

"The Black community is very fixed and very inflexible about a lot of its beliefs and attitudes towards things. I feel that a large proportion of Afro-Caribbean men do have a problem with homosexual men. Once my family found out, including the extended

family, I was an outcast. There was no communication with me from my family, purely on the basis of me being gay. I have tried to talk to them about it. I went to Barbados and I was supposed to stay with my mum for a month. We hadn't spoken since I was 16. I moved into a hotel after two days because she didn't want to discuss it." (Young man.)

"I was worried about the reaction of the Black community because I know they are really hard, and being Afro-Caribbean I know they are really against homosexuality. I knew I would get a lot of shit." (Female worker.)

"I think the Black community carried their values over when they started coming to Britain. To be gay was something that you would get beaten up or stabbed for, and they brought that view with them. The Black community wants to be a natural and conservative as it can because they have enough trouble being Black in this country never mind being lesbian, etc." (Female worker.)

"My dad is Black. His side of the family rejected me when they found out that I was a lesbian. They totally cut me off." (Female worker.)

"I think a lot of the Black community's homophobia comes from religion, from Christianity. It is just not seen as acceptable." (Female worker.)

"I applied to do a youth work course once and the administrator, who was a Black woman, was very prejudiced against gay people." (Female worker.)

"Coming out was culturally repellent to my family and the wider Black community." (Female worker.)

Inferiority

"My grandmother said to me that I would find it easier to find a husband because my skin is so fair. This is from a woman who is black. What does that tell you? That says she does not think that black skin is very attractive. Within Sudan there are very black people in the south and not so black people in the north. Arabs feel themselves to be superior to Black African people, that division is clear in Africa. Take for example shampoo adverts, they still feature light skinned women with blonde hair. So advertising is a vehicle for maintaining white as the status quo." (Female worker.)

Lesbianism

"I think lesbianism is generally perceived differently within Black culture because two thirds of the population would love to be in bed with two women. So because they can associate themselves with the fantasy it becomes far more acceptable to the norm. Yes, lesbians suffer prejudice, I'm not saying they don't, but to a certain degree it's more acceptable." (Young man.)

Racism

"I applied to do a youth work course once, and the administrator, a Black woman, was very prejudiced against white people. That is racism in itself but it isn't always looked on as racism because Black people are the ones who have been downtrodden, so we can't be. Some people play on that. I really can't stand that. As youth workers we are supposed to be educating and challenging kids, but how can they when they have attitudes like that? No wonder young people don't come out to them half the time, it's all this 'Black thing'." (Female worker.)

"I experienced some of Black lesbian culture when I lived in London. I was looked down on and given a hard time for having a white partner. I was seen as a traitor to my race. It's the same for heterosexuals, a Black woman who marries a white man will probably be give a hard time by her family. I think sometimes that the Black community wants to keep itself to itself, to preserve itself." (Female worker.)

Importance of Religion

"I think one of the main reasons behind the Black community's homophobia is religion. Black culture has very strong ties with religions, all sorts of religions. And it feels like they sometimes use religion as a way of denying themselves being able to confront sexuality. So even if people aren't religious, religion has an impact on culture and norms. There's sub-cultures within the Black community but they all say the same thing, that homosexuality is wrong. At whatever level you try to confront the issue of sexuality, you will come up against 'religion' for want of a better word. That sets out their perception of things before they have even thought about it." (Young man.)

"Religion is often used as a method for controlling people, especially women. But very often homophobia was not in the original religious texts." (Female worker.)

Position of Some Women within the Black Communities

"The position of women is not surprising because they are kept under the thumb. Their duties are to wash, clean and bloody iron and basically look after all the men. And it's harder for women to break away from their families, to sneak out, for fear of being found out." (Female worker.)

"It's more acceptable for an unmarried man to be able to have a boyfriend, or a sexual partner who is male, and then supposedly give them up when they get married. There is no equivalent for women. However, women, who raise the children both male and female, very often head the households in Asian and Black communities. Therefore bonds with and between women are very strong. This is important to your identity." (Female worker.)

Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Community Level

Empathy among Black Bisexuals, Gays and Lesbians

"When you see someone else who is Black on the scene it makes you feel good that you are not alone, that there is someone else. I often look at someone who is Black and although you may not speak with each other, we have noted each other. It makes you feel good inside knowing that there's someone else. We share, without actually saying anything, being Black and what it's all about. It's like a little secret. Being Black and a lesbian, you know that deep down your experience has probably been the same. It's a weird feeling that comes over you." (Female worker.)

"There are a couple of Black women that I have been exchanging glances with for years, like when a 'drag queen' performs and makes a joke of questionable taste. There will be something that makes you look at each other and you exchange a look that speaks volumes but you say nothing." (Female worker.)

Racism

"When you come out, you face all sorts of issues with your family. Then you go on the gay scene and face a load more issues, somewhere you least expected to. It can be pretty scary. When I had to confront racism on the gay scene, I was shocked by it." (Young man.)

"I don't think the gay scene as a whole is a very friendly place. It can be very hard and very lonely when you're Black." (Young man.)

"The reaction of the gay and lesbian community was awful. When I came out and first went out on the scene, I would walk into a pub and everyone would just stare at me. That would make me feel quite bad and conscious of my colour. It used to happen every week but I was determined. It was somewhere I wanted to be and I was not going to be put off. After a few months, I just found being stared at quite irritating." (Female worker.)

"I have found that often the most racist women are those who fancy you. I have proved that for myself many times." (Female worker.)

"When I came out, I experienced problems from my family and the Black community and I expected the gay and lesbian community to be welcoming and supportive. This wasn't to be. My reception was harsh. This shouldn't surprise though because the gay and lesbian community is but a microcosm of wider society." (Female worker.)

Relationship Issues

"I have known women who have wanted to have a relationship with another Black woman so that they can rediscover their Black culture and history, and that by hanging

round the white scene with white women, that they are in danger of losing their Black culture. It's not something that I have worried about." (Female worker.)

Sexualisation

"I was young, Black, and in a minority whenever I went out so I received a lot of attention. I did play the field without realising that a large proportion of the people who fancied me did so because of the colour of my skin." (Young man.)

"After months of being stared at by women when I started going to the gay and lesbian pub, I realised that it wasn't just because they were prejudiced and hadn't seen a Black woman before. It was because they fancied me. Then I turned it around and got to know lots of people." (Female worker.)

Stereotypes

"When you see gay images, you never see Black images who are not well built. I aspire to the role models in the magazines. I don't feel I should. I just want to." (Young man.)

"The gay community is a lot more comfortable putting people into stereotypical slots rather than finding out who the person is." (Young man.)

"Black images in the gay press conform to the stereotypes. And there are even less Asian images. The press seems to be aimed at the white majority." (Young man.)

Institutional Level

Education System

"Lesbian and gay issues weren't even discussed at school, or if they were, briefly and negatively. A whole chapter was missing from the curriculum. 'Lesbian' was something you called someone at school as an insult." (Female worker.)

"Black history isn't covered in schools, never mind gay and lesbian Black history. This lack of history and conjuncture means that we are not equipped to be able to bring identities together easily. There are no points of reference. We are not really taught to be able to think for ourselves." (Female worker.)

"I've been in British education a long time, lots of different types of schools, and not once was my history, or even part of my history, ever represented. It's a shame. Therefore, I had to teach myself because there was no one there to teach me." (Female worker.)

"We don't get taught to see ourselves as individuals. We get taught to see ourselves as members of a group, to fit in with the crowd. We need to be taught about possibilities, and not just those concerning sexuality, but wider possibilities." (Female worker.)

"One gay teacher who was out had accusations made about him by a student. He set himself alight and he died. What would that say to young gay and lesbian people?" (Female worker.)

Youth Service Training

"It was terrible, awful. I was mortified that some of these people wanted to be youth workers. They didn't have a clue about things like gay issues, HIV, etc. They were just full of prejudice and stereotypes. I wouldn't have passed any of them. It was shocking to think that people so closed minded were going into a profession that was supposed to be open and challenging. In another area where I worked, there was training on all sorts of issues. We would get together, share our experiences, develop strategies for dealing with them, and all that. People at all levels would attend the training courses, managers, workers, volunteers, etc. but not here. Some of the people on the course who were Black were really surprised that you can be Black and gay and that young people might come out to them." (Female worker.)

Wider Social Level

Cultural 'Norms' as a Means of Social Control

"I think very often cultural 'norms' are just a method of social control. The culture that we live in which values above all the white heterosexual as the norm can only exist successfully by subjugating as the other members of society as outsiders, or not 'normal'. If that is the 'norm' then everything else is 'other'. But for the system to work people from other groups must believe parts or the whole of that ethos. For example, Black people who see homosexuality as a 'white thing'." (Female worker.)

'Minority within a Minority'

"The gay community is a minority, and Asian and Black people are a minority within it. Then even within that, there is ageism, etc." (Young man.)

Racism

"I've experienced racism at work." (Young man.)

"Us kids got abuse all the time, every day. From neighbours, school teachers, other kids, police, and everywhere we went. We are always surrounded by fights and stuff." (Female worker.)

"I've experienced racism in all areas of life. At work, when I've tried to find housing, walking down the street, everywhere. It's a daily fact of life." (Female worker.)

"A lot of expressions that are racist have become normal and sometimes the people who use them don't see themselves as racist. For example, I have a Black neighbour who uses the term 'Paki'. Some people just don't think. However, I wouldn't want people to police their thoughts and language all the time." (Female worker.)

"Racism is not one-way, it is two-way. There are as many myths about white people as there are about Black people. That's how the system works." (Female worker.)

"Although I welcome all the race relations legislation and equal opportunities stuff, what we really need to be doing is tackling racism, sexism and homophobia at an earlier age. It's no good tackling only some areas of society rather than the whole." (Female worker.)

(ii) Needs of Black Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Youth

Figure 27 summarises the main needs of young Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians as identified by interview participants.

Figure 27: Summary of Needs of Black Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Youth identified during Interviews

Level	Needs
Individual Level	▪ More information and support. ▪ Role models.
Family Level	
Black Community Level	▪ Outreach within the Black communities. ▪ Publicising bisexual, gay and lesbian helping organisations within the Black communities.
Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Community Level	▪ More connections between Asian/Black services and generic services. ▪ Counselling services. ▪ Drop-in service with quality time available for service users. ▪ Expanded ReachOUT provision ▪ Asian and Black space. ▪ Specific provision for Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians.
Institutional Level	▪ Improved counselling services in schools. ▪ Improved education provision. ▪ Training on Asian and Black bisexual, gay and lesbian issues by Asian and Black people.
Wider Social Level	

Individual Level

More Information and Support

"Young Asian and Black bisexual, gay and lesbian people need a lot of information and support given all the problems they potentially face. They need to be able to talk to people who understand." (Female worker.)

"Young Black kids need additional help and support because of their colour. Getting to grips with that and being gay." (Female worker.)

"Young people need support around personal feelings, how to cope with everyday life, and mental health generally." (Female worker.)

Role Models

"Role models do help. For those in the Asian and Black communities, those who have come out can emphasise to those who haven't that they can." (Young man.)

"Young people desperately need role models." (Female worker.)

"Role models would help. It's amazing what a difference they can make." (Female worker.)

Black Communities Level

Outreach within Black Communities

"I think Black workers and/or young people need to do outreach within the Black community, but this needs to be done with care." (Female worker.)

Publicising Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Helping Organisations within the Black Communities

"ReachOUT should promote itself better to all communities." (Young man.)

"We need adverts in the press, the Black press and local press." (Young man.)

"We need to promote ourselves better, but it has to be done with care because some Asian and Black organisations have problems with gay issues." (Female worker.)

More Connections between Generic and Specialist Services

"ReachOUT should develop more connections with other groups, especially Asian and Black ones." (Young man.)

Counselling Services

"I think there is a need for more counselling services, preferably open 24-hours." (Young man.)

Drop-in

"A drop-in would be useful, then us workers could spend more quality time with the young people that need us." (Female worker.)

Imagery

"Black imagery is very important and it isn't found very often in the gay press, Black images that aren't stereotypical anyway. And Asian images are even more rare." (Young man.)

Expanded ReachOUT Service

"ReachOUT should meet more often." (Young man.)

"We need more 'chill out' nights without a formal programme." (Young man.)

"ReachOUT needs a counsellor who isn't involved in the group." (Young man.)

"ReachOUT needs to meet more often so that we can better meet the needs of young people." (Female worker.)

Asian and Black Space

"We need more Asian and Black space, on the scene, in the press, etc." (Young man.)

Specific Provision

"I don't really think there should have to be separate services for Black young people who are gay, but it would be nice." (Young man.)

"Many projects don't cater for Asian and Black people. I definitely want to go to where there are other Black people because the wider gay community often does not take Asian and Black issues seriously. Although if we retreat into specific and separate groups it can serve to isolate people further, I believe that it is necessary to gain our voice, to get a sense of who were are, so that we can truly belong in the gay community. But separatism is wrong I think." (Young man.)

"I think separate provision would help but ideally everyone would be accepted. But sometimes people need their own space, their own people around them." (Female worker.)

Institutional Level

Improved Counselling Services in Schools

"There should be school counsellors, or people identifiable in school, that you can trust and that you can talk to." (Young man.)

Improved Education Provision

"Covering gay issues in sex education should be compulsory in every school." (Young man.)

"The most important and powerful thing is education. Education within the gay community about Black issues and Black gay issues, but also education outside too." (Young man.)

"Young people need to be taught how to think for themselves and about the whole range of possibilities open to them." (Female worker.)

"Schools are a way of reaching people, because it is the most liberated institution available for this type of work. For those who are routinely denied access to information, for example, Asian women." (Female worker.)

Training

"We need more specific training around Asian and Black gay issues, preferably by people who are Asian/Black and gay." (Female worker.)

(iii) Other Studies' Findings

As already argued, the history and present realities of Black communities in Britain will have a direct bearing on the experiences, issues and needs of young Black bisexual, gay and lesbian people. See pages 161-165 for an overview of studies of the Black communities in Britain.

Black Bisexuals, Gays and Lesbians

The following three studies were conducted in the United States.

Hunter (1990) studied 500 young bisexuals, gays and lesbians (aged 14-21) in New York to investigate the incidence of violent assault and suicidal behaviour. Thirty-five per cent of these young people were Black and 46 per cent were Latino. The study found that 41 per cent had suffered violence from families, peers and strangers and 46 per cent of this violence was reported as being gay-related. The study also found a high proportion of suicide attempts: 41 per cent of young women and 34 per cent of young men (cited in Lesbian Information Service, 1995a).

Monteiro and Fuqua (1995) noted the virtual absence of empirical research on African-American sexual identity. However, they reported a Center for Disease Control study of bisexual and gay men with AIDS which found that only 15 per cent of European-Americans had had sex with women while 33 per cent of African-Americans had. These findings were consistent with other small-scale studies which found that African-Americans were more likely to identify as bisexual (Monteiro and Fuqua, 1995).

In terms of ethnic identity-formation, Monteiro and Fuqua (1995) proposed a four-stage model for ethnic minorities in a predominantly white society. Stage one: denial of culture and ethnicity. Stage two: experiences of racism and education about culture and ethnic history. Stage three: the valuing of Blackness and denigration of white culture. Stage four: confident acceptance of culture and ethnicity, opposition to racism and other oppressions, and a feeling that it was no longer necessary to denigrate all that is white. Monteiro and Fuqua stated that empirical evidence had been found to support this model.

Sears (1995) noted that Black bisexual, gay and lesbian young people struggled with their identity in a society fractured along the fault lines of class, ethnicity, gender and sexual identity. Sears suggested that ethnicity and sexual identity often separated the individual's private and public worlds. This fracturing and duality of identity could leave young people feeling confused. Sears distinguished between 'gay Blacks' (who identified as gay and lived in the predominantly white gay community) and 'Black gays' (who identify as Black first and often led bisexual lives in the Black community) to illustrate the problematic nature of identity. This classification was supported by evidence from several studies. Sears also noted significant class differences. Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians from working class backgrounds were less likely to be

rejected than those from middle class backgrounds who tended to be more conservative and concerned with their social standing (Sears, 1995).

Burgess (1988) noted the incidence of homophobic abuse, harassment and violence within (often very religious) Black communities and racism within the predominantly white bisexual, gay and lesbian community. Burgess argued that the central issue was one of invisibility rather than non-existence (the Black Lesbian and Gay Centre in London for example, had a membership of over 500). Burgess also warned of the dangers of isolation and the risk of suicide among young Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians as a result of lack of support and resources, especially outside of London.

Burke (1993) commented on the central importance of the family in Black communities and its typical structure in terms of traditional gender relations. These were felt to be major factors in the lives of Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians. It was argued that the fear of coming out and being 'cast out into the white man's world' was one of the reasons many Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians chose marriage, lives of secrecy, and denial of sexual identity as coping strategies.

A project by the North Birmingham Community NHS Trust (1994) gave a voice to a small number of African-Caribbean men and women – both heterosexual and bisexual, gay, and lesbian – to discuss heterosexism and homophobia within their communities. It was felt by some participants that:

- The experiences of Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians had not been acknowledged or documented.
- Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians lived in fear of rejection and relative silence.
- Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians were invisible in the mainstream, Black and bisexual, gay and lesbian media.
- Heterosexism, homophobia and sexism were to be found within Black communities, as reflected in some language and music.
- Some Black men's misogyny and homophobia were forms of internalised racism (their projection of masculinity, status, and virility).
- Abuse and violence against Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians was sometimes perpetrated by other Black people.
- There was a taboo around sex and sexual issues.
- Young Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians had to struggle with immense peer pressure and a lack of support.

Other participants felt that:

- The importance and centrality of religion to the Black communities was being undermined and eroded by Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians.
- Homosexuality was seen as a 'sickness' and a 'white man's disease'.
- Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians 'betrayed' the Black communities.
- The Black communities were not ready or willing to accept homosexuality.

Bathia (1995) noted the invisibility of Asian bisexuals, gay men and lesbians in the media that overwhelmingly tended to portray white lifestyles. Bathia also suggested that mainstream services were not accessible to young Asian and Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians for two reasons: they tended to offer and promote their services to the bisexual, gay and lesbian community in commercial scene venues where few young Asian and Black people were found and many services operated in the evenings, often in central city and town locations where young Asian and Black people did not feel safe. Bathia also noted the particular importance of families – particularly extended ones – to young Asian and Black people and highlighted the difficulties faced by these young people in deciding whether to come out, and so risk losing this support.

Suriyaprakasam (1995) surveyed seven young Black lesbians (three African and four Asian). The participants expressed the following views:

- Few studies included the voices of young Black lesbians.
- Few Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians attended youth groups.
- Specific social and support networks were underdeveloped.
- There was little affirming imagery or literature.
- Sex education at school was not appropriate.
- Racism, both personal and institutional, was widespread.
- Identifying as Black was a longer process.
- Homophobia existed within Black communities.
- Families were a crucial source of emotional and cultural support and coming out carried serious risks.
- The scene was often white and unfriendly.
- There was little knowledge of Black lesbianism or its herstory.

Gill (1997) noted the widespread racism within some lesbian communities and challenged the notion that lesbians are more enlightened and open to diversity. Gill discussed the issue of racism in the context of mixed-race relationships and their acceptance by the community. Gills also discussed the consequences of racism within these relationships, pointing out the particular difficulties experienced.

Liburd (1997) reported the views of several Black lesbian women who felt that coming out as lesbian provoked less hostility in their families and communities than would be experienced by Black bisexual and gay men.

(c) Discussion

One of the stated objectives of this research project was to identify the *particular* experiences, issues and needs of young bisexuals, gays and lesbians who are Asian (of South Asian descent) and Black (of African and Caribbean descent). The findings reveal that many of these young people's experiences, issues and needs are not particular or specific to Asian and Black communities but may be found in other ethnic groups (e.g. the pressure to get married and the pressure to protect the family name from gossip and shame by not coming out are also found in Anglo-Saxon societies). However, young Asian and Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians may face pressure to marry because of their family's desire to maintain cultural norms and traditions or to keep the community together. Therefore the issues that these young people face reflect, result from, or are amplified by the nature of British society, the nature of the British Asian and Black communities, the status of ethnic minority communities within wider society and the fact that these young people are a minority within a minority. Thus the author contends that their experiences, issues and needs may be better conceptualised as being *culturally pronounced* rather than *culturally particular* or *specific* since they are particular to the distinct social processes to which these young people are subject as a minority within a minority.

The complimentary holist approach (see Section 2.2) was particularly useful for this research objective for three reasons. First, the research project sought to extract from young Asian and Black bisexual, gay and lesbian people's *whole reality* those experiences, issues and needs that were different, pronounced and/or specific *because* they were Asian or Black, i.e. to view the five levels/spheres sketched in Figure 1 from an ethnic perspective. However, complimentary holism asserts that researchers should expect interdependence and an interconnected reality. This was found to be the case because their experiences, issues and needs varied according to class, gender, etc. However, using this approach, several typical experiences, issues and needs were identified.

Second, just as we seek to avoid particularism – seeing individual's experiences, issues and needs as unique and without pattern – so we need to avoid universalism as generalisations lend themselves all too readily to prejudice and stereotyping. As several interview participants and research projects have shown, Asian and Black communities are not homogenous; there is great diversity. So in considering and using the findings of this study, agencies, researchers and workers looking at Asian and Black bisexual, gay and lesbian youth issues *should not assume or expect that these experiences, issues and needs will be found in all cases at all times*. They should be aware of them, and develop strategies to deal with them, but they should expect independence and an interconnected reality: diversity. This is not just of academic interest but has important consequences for service delivery and provision.

Third, because the extraction of the *different, particular* and *pronounced* and from the whole reality of young Asian and Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians is problematic, and as there is the concomitant danger of exaggerating or simplifying phenomena (which can lead to poor or wrong conclusions), so the sophistication of the complimentary holist approach further proved itself useful. Just as the heterosexual white majority is often responsible for exclusion and oppression, so Asian and Black

individuals and communities are also sometimes responsible, and not just when it comes to sexual identity. Complimentary holism can accommodate and reflect these truths.

The central questions are what is meant by the term ‘Asian’, and what is meant by the term ‘Black’? The nature of these questions is both semantic (about meaning) and about definition (both social definition and who is doing the defining).

First, semantics. Do these terms describe a person’s heritage in terms of colour, geography and cultural or religious background? Are they political terms? Or are they all or any of these? Those who use the terms ‘Asian’ and ‘Black’ arguably attach particular meanings to these terms and seek to convey these meanings. Concomitantly, those who hear these terms will filter them according to their understanding. The potential for stereotyping and misunderstanding is obvious. This point is not just of theoretical interest. It is important to consider semantics and to deconstruct labels such as ‘Asian’ and ‘Black’ to ensure clarity of meaning. This has implications for service delivery and planners who are seeking to improve provision for Asian and Black people, i.e. *who* and *what* are Asian and Black people? It had profound implications for the research as will become clear.

Second, definition: social definition. The term ‘Asian’ in Britain has a particular meaning, used to refer to people from the Indian sub-continent (Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka). Likewise, the term ‘Black’ is used to refer to people from Africa and the Caribbean. Collective understanding and usage of these terms have developed over time as a result Britain’s empire, its colonial legacy and because of significant immigration from these countries/continents. However, although Asian and Black people are an integral part of British history and present society, they are minority communities within a predominantly white society and it can be argued that very often these terms are used to denote difference and ‘otherness’, by both Asian and Black and white people. The point is that these terms are socially defined and relative. For example, a person living in Calcutta may not identity as ‘Asian’, just as someone living in Kingstown, Jamaica, may not identify as ‘Black’. Definition is relative and therefore these terms have a peculiarly *British* meaning. This then raises the important issue of who is doing the defining?

Semantics and definition are not just of academic interest; they have practical consequences. When considering the research theme and methodology the author interpreted the terms ‘Asian’ and ‘Black’ in a particular way: that of a white person having been brought up in Britain. This had implications for who was invited and targeted to participate in the research project.

A case could be made that the author’s interpretation of the terms ‘Asian’ and ‘Black’ was racist and exclusive. For example, in terms of a region, Asia includes China, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, etc., but people from these countries were not included or targeted for the research. ‘Black’ could have been interpreted in a political sense to include all those who were non-white. And finally, ‘Asian’ and ‘Black’ could have be been viewed as ethnic minorities, but then what of other ethnic minority groups, e.g. Irish, Jewish people, the Romany, etc? Research shows that they are often disadvantaged and excluded too.

The points raised above highlight the importance of semantics and definition. More specifically, they highlight the power of the author in constructing and executing the research project and who was involved because ‘Asian’ and ‘Black’ were

interpreted in a particular way. Although this is not an anthropological or sociological study, these issues are of profound importance and practical significance.

Turning to the data, ReachOUT's research project found several typical experiences and issues pertaining to young Asian and Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians.

At an individual level, some of the young participants who identified as Black discussed their 'attitude' and how it was a self-defence mechanism; an attempt to protect themselves from peer and social oppression.

All participants discussed the importance of identity, both ethnic and sexual, and the frequent conflict and confusion between identities. In terms of ethnic identity, there were mixed feelings about the meaning and use of the term 'Asian', both negative and positive, and one young person highlighted the limitations of the term as a label as already discussed. For some of the Black participants, identifying as Black was a conscious and sometimes political statement. What was clear however was that ethnic identity was central to these young people's sense of belonging and sense of self.

In terms of sexual identity, several participants argued that some Asian and Black individuals and communities saw homosexuality as a 'white Western disease', a 'white thing' and something 'foreign' to their culture and history. This was evidenced by the lack of positive terms to describe sexual identity and the censorship and denial of bisexual, gay and lesbian people's place and history in Asian and Black cultures. Ironically, in those Asian and Black societies that were part of the British Empire the social unacceptability of homosexuality was entrenched by colonial administrations. There is evidence to suggest that in some of these countries there was a more relaxed attitude to same-sex relations in previous times. Participants also discussed the important distinction between behaviour and identity, for example, men having sex with other men does not necessarily imply that they are bisexual or gay or want to identify as these.

Most participants experienced some conflict and confusion around their identities. Some felt that being Asian or Black *and* bisexual, gay or lesbian was mutually exclusive. Some felt excluded from their own communities and the bisexual, gay and lesbian community; they felt 'in between'. Identity then was clearly an arena of conflict, both personal and social. There was evidence of some young people struggling with what were perceived to be conflicting identities: being bisexual, gay or lesbian in sometimes homophobic Asian and Black communities, being Asian or Black in an often hostile and unwelcoming bisexual, gay and lesbian community, being bisexual, gay or lesbian in an often heterosexist and homophobic society, being Asian or Black in an often racist society, being young in a society that often marginalises youth and being women in a male-dominated society. These conflicts and the resulting confusion were felt by some participants to be responsible for stress and mental health problems.

In terms of language, several participants reported experiencing difficulties in communicating and expressing their sexual identity, especially to older generations, because of the lack of meaningful and positive terms. Existing words were argued to be derogatory and negative, with little congruence in Asian and Black cultures. One participant also highlighted the power of language: how words had been reclaimed, but how the irony was lost on many people.

In terms of labels, several participants discussed both the importance and limitations of labels of sexual identity: the need to label (for the sense of belonging and sense of self), the problem of labels being dichotomous and feeling forced to choose between gay/heterosexual, Asian/Black/white, etc and the need to distinguish between behaviour and identity, as discussed.

Several participants discussed the mental health consequences of multi-oppression. Some felt confused about their identity, some felt they had to deny and hide their identity, some felt excluded from their communities, some felt they had no support, some felt discriminated against by the bisexual, gay and lesbian community and wider society. Many faced a barrage of discrimination, expectations and pressure from all sides and these can be argued to adversely affect these young people's mental health, self-esteem and general wellbeing.

Some of the participants highlighted the need to develop 'middle way' strategies for the collective progress of Asian and Black bisexual, gay and lesbian youth. Strategies were needed so that those young people who need to can find a 'middle way' through: finding alternatives to either having to come out and challenge the family and community single-handedly or deny and hide their feelings away. Given the potential loss and sacrifice involved in these positions the efficacy of 'middle way' strategies is clear. Participants also noted the potential of schools, youth centres and going to university as vehicles for 'middle way' strategies. These are vehicles that potentially offer young people some measure of freedom, a way of circumventing families and communities that are obstructionist, an escape from families and communities that exercise a 'veto' and opportunities to progress their independence and/or increase their leverage and power *vis-à-vis* families and communities.

Many participants felt that their options and opportunities (in many areas of life, but principally living as bisexual, gay or lesbian) were constrained or non-existent because of the expectations and pressures placed on them. Potential options and opportunities were sometimes viewed as unattainable and some young people seemed resigned to their fate, stating that their communities were not ready to accept their sexual identity.

Several participants reported feeling intense peer pressure from three different sources: from their families, their communities and bisexual, gay and lesbian peers (the pressure to 'live the lifestyle').

Some participants argued that by coming out they risked losing their cultural, family and community affirmation, connections and support. What was also clear was the scale of the potential loss and sacrifice and how they may be exiled in a hostile wider society. Many young people saw this as a non-choice. The notion that coming out may not be the most immediate or sensible option for young Asian and Black people has important ramifications for service providers. They very often view coming out as a milestone event in the lives of young bisexuals, gays and lesbians and something to be aspired to.

Personal safety was found to be an issue: some young Asian and Black people not only face dangers and oppression from other young people when on the streets or accessing services, but also widespread homophobia and racism.

Religion was found to be an important issue from two perspectives: one an individual desire on the part of some young people to be religious, to "be a good Muslim" for example, and the other in its impact on cultural norms and perceptions. In the latter sense religion is seen by some as a way of life, central to self-affirmation and community solidarity. Further evidence to support this view was found in the Policy Studies Institute (1997) study. The conspicuous absence of debate and discourse on bisexual, gay and lesbian issues within Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism *in Britain* arguably makes life very difficult for those young people who are and want to be religious. As one young man stated: "you have to do more research and soul-searching [yourself]". There is also the issue of the power of religious leaders to define and delimit the nature of these debates and so religious culture.

At a family level, some young Asian people felt that their filial expectations and responsibilities were greater than for their white counterparts. This was felt to have consequences for their freedom, lifestyle and options. Central to the notion of responsibility was the particular Muslim concept of *izzat*. Some participants argued that although this concept was valuable, central to identity and community solidarity, it was also felt to sometimes negate the right of individuals to assert themselves and make personal choices.

In terms of male privilege, some Asian and Black women felt that they had less control over their lives and less sexual and social freedom compared to men. Some of the Asian lesbian women in particular voiced their disquiet at what they saw as gay male privilege: maintaining a traditional marriage and wife while pursuing a gay lifestyle outside the home. This was not felt to be an option for women, who had to account for their time to men. Several participants expressed the view that women are more restricted and supervised and consequently faced even fewer options, often exhibiting a greater tendency to leave the family and community because of their sexual identity.

In terms of marriage, the pressures to marry, several Asian participants noted that it was central to the concept of *izzat* and maintaining community solidarity. It was also noted that marriage was not just of two people, but of two families (including extended families). There was some debate about the choice of some bisexuals, gays and lesbians to marry, a 'marriage of convenience', in an attempt to fulfil family and community expectations, and its long-term sustainability. The fact of forced marriages was acknowledged too. At the time of writing, this issue is being investigated by a newly appointed government working party since forced marriages are thought to involve about 1,000 people a year in Britain (Hencke, 1999). ReachOUT's study found evidence that parents who knew or suspected their sons to be gay had forced them to get married.

Several Asian participants felt that families were both sources of shelter and support *and* oppression. Families imparted an important sense of cultural identity and economic security but they also sometimes restricted choice and freedom, forced marriages and were responsible for homophobic violence, kidnapping, etc.

At an Asian and Black communities level, some Asian participants raised the issue of communalism (inter-cultural and religious conflict and tensions within the Asian communities) and the role of some *self-appointed* community 'leaders' and organisations as 'gatekeepers' i.e. determining people's access (or not) to information and hence services. This has important implications for agencies seeking to publicise what may be seen as controversial issue and services.

Several Asian and Black participants also highlighted the conservative nature of their communities and their resistance to change. Two factors were seen to be responsible: their minority status and religion. It was suggested that given that Asian and Black communities are minorities in an often hostile society, so there is a tendency to want to maintain cultural norms and traditions as a form of self-defence and 'keeping communities together'. Religions form part of this process and the result is conservative communities. Given that some Asian and Black individuals and communities see homosexuality as anathema to 'their' cultural traditions and values, so this conservatism reinforced the exclusion of bisexuals, gays and lesbians necessitating some to seek peers and support outside of their communities.

Participants highlighted the existence of homophobia within the Asian and Black communities, sometimes with its roots in religions. This homophobia sometimes deterred young people from coming out and manifested itself in abuse, harassment and violence against some of those who did.

Several participants raised the issue of inter-generation conflict and tension, particularly within the Asian communities. Young people were felt to lack a social voice *vis-à-vis* their elders. Some of this conflict and tension was felt to arise from the fact that young people desired more freedom, but given the conservative nature of some of these communities, were forced into conflict to assert it. This is where the issues of personal loss, risk, and sacrifice (discussed earlier) necessitate a collective youth response and voice.

Several participants raised the issue of their invisibility within their communities. However, young Asian and Black bisexual, gay and lesbian young people are invisible rather than non-existent, and central to an understanding of this invisibility is the myth that homosexuality does not exist in Asian and Black cultures and the often conservative nature of these communities, as discussed.

In terms of the position of some women within Asian and Black communities, a common view was that they were sometimes denied the same freedom and opportunities afforded to men and that respect and reverence for women within these communities is *not necessarily* the same as women's autonomy and freedom.

Some of the participants raised the controversial and emotive issue of Asian and Black people feeling inferior to white people as a result of centuries of colonisation and subjugation, including cultural colonisation which continues today. One participant felt that Asian and Black people had to struggle to assert their history and identity in an overwhelmingly white world.

In the author's opinion, the Asian (and Black) 'veto' is a particularly powerful weapon in the hands of those who want to maintain their position and privilege. There is evidence that Asian and Black individuals and communities sometimes play the 'race card' to keep certain issues off the agenda. For example, they may argue that homosexuality and bisexual, gay and lesbian issues have no congruence within their communities and that in attempting to raise them, the perpetrators are guilty of cultural 'imperialism' and 'insensitivity'. The 'race card' is sometimes played in reverse by white people who view these issues are too sensitive and best left alone. There are similarities with other issues, like forced marriage, which some believe to be an issue "that has been covered up by the Asian communities and which is considered too 'culturally sensitive' for government agencies to tackle" (cited in Chohan, 1999). A

representative from Southall Black Sisters added that, "authorities were all too ready to side-step problems for fear of offending minority sensibilities" (cited in Hencke, 1999). Perhaps the correct approach is to highlight the human and legal rights (however few) of bisexuals, gays and lesbians as the way forward, an approach being adopted to deal with the issue of forced marriages.

Several participants raised a number of important issues concerning the nature of the bisexual, gay and lesbian community: the invisibility of Asian and Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians, its hostility and racism to some Asian and Black people (which should not surprise given that it is but a microcosm of society), the sexualisation of young Asian and Black people and the feelings of confusion that can engender and the related stereotyping of these young people by the white majority. The bisexual, gay and lesbian community is often not the safe haven it is sometimes viewed as.

As a result of a number of factors – the unwillingness of some young people to identify as bisexual, gay or lesbian, the role community leaders and organisations sometimes play (as 'gatekeepers'), the conservative nature of the community, homophobia and the Asian 'veto', discussed elsewhere – one worker noted that it may be necessary to develop and promote services for Asian bisexual, gay and lesbian youth in a less explicit and specific way so as not to discourage access. This is a good example of a 'middle way' strategy.

At the institutional level, some participants felt excluded from what they saw as Anglo-centric mainstream institutions and services i.e. institutions and services that reflect white culture, being predominantly staffed by white people. It is likely that this is not just a reflection of demographics, but a reflection of institutional racism, see for example Rowan (1997) and Dodd (1998). The end results seems to be the same: exclusion and a vicious circle whereby Asian and Black people's issues and needs are not addressed, which in turn does not encourage them to access services, which in turn does not encourage providers to consider their issues and needs. Some participants also highlighted the inadequacies and limitations of two important and pertinent institutions: the education system and youth services, the former failing to educate young people about Asian and Black history; the latter failing to prepare workers with the necessary skills to support Asian and Black young people.

At the wider social level, both Asian and Black individuals and communities face the dual realities of their minority status and institutional and widespread racism. As a result of their minority status these individuals and communities are often invisible and/or marginalised. Hence they have less social power with which to effect change. As a result of racism these individuals and communities often face abuse, harassment and violence from others in society and the state, and often face discrimination in nearly every area of life, from education to employment to housing to justice, etc. Asian and Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians additionally face widespread homophobia and, being a *minority within a minority*, enjoy even less social power.

In terms of the needs of young Asian and Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians, interview participants expressed a wide range of needs with some more easy to meet than others. In terms of service provision, participants expressed the need for family mediation, inclusive imagery, outreach, peer support, the promotion of existing helping organisations, *user-led* service assessment and service development, specific resources, improved support services including a support group, training on Asian and Black

issues and improved training provision generally. These needs could be addressed by existing agencies *in the short-term*.

The need for liberalisation within the Asian and Black communities, 'middle way' strategies, role models, specific services, more Asian and Black bisexual, gay and lesbian staff (and Asian and Black staff generally), greater visibility and the further development of the Asian and Black youth voice are arguably more longer-term goals that require substantial effort.

In terms of Asian issues, the findings of ReachOUT's research project mirror the findings of Khan's (1991). For example, both found evidence of the following issues: family expectations, gender issues, homophobia, identity, invisibility, language and labels, marriage, mental health, racism, relationships, religion and the position of some women, among others. ReachOUT's research project however expanded on Khan's, finding evidence for example of inter-generation issues, the need for 'middle way' strategies and what these might be, and the Asian 'veto', etc.

In terms of Black issues, the findings of ReachOUT's research project confer with the findings of the Burgess (1988), Burke (1993) and North Birmingham Community NHS Trust (1994) studies. Several typical issues were identified by these studies: family expectations, homophobia, invisibility, mental health, peer pressure, racism, among others.

The differences and similarities between the experiences, issues and needs of young Asian and Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians is a matter of debate which will not be entered into here. Indeed the author doubts whether it is of any real *practical* significance (as opposed to political or sociological significance) because most institutions and services are staffed by white people who often see Asian and Black people as one and the same, as 'other'. To bring about practical changes, and more inclusive services, there is arguably a need to challenge the white majority. In terms of improving the majority of institutions and services it seems a more sensible strategy to highlight the common issues and needs of Asian and Black youth as opposed to the differences. Of course, this argument does not hold when it comes to improving Asian and Black institutions and services, or specialist provision.

On the same theme, the author would argue that because many of these young people's social realities, social processes and needs seem to be similar, there is little need to differentiate in terms of bringing about practical change. However, only by *separately* analysing, structuring and comparing experiences, issues and needs was the author able to come to this conclusion.

ReachOUT's research project found that some young Asian and Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians face exclusion and oppression on several fronts: as Asian or Black people, as bisexuals, gays or lesbians, as women and as young people. They also face exclusion and oppression from several constituencies: the Asian and Black communities, the bisexual, gay and lesbian community and wider society.

The evidence suggests that some young Asian and Black bisexual, gay and lesbian people face expectations on the one hand – from their family and communities, the bisexual, gay and lesbian community and wider society – and choices and opportunities (whether attainable or not) on the other. This can lead to conflict, confusion and great pressure on some young people (for example, over identity). This conflict, confusion

and pressure can have consequences for some young people in terms of their lifestyle, mental health, perceived options, etc. and evidence was found to confirm this.

Some young Asian and Black bisexual, gay and lesbian people also face conservative (often religious) Asian and Black communities unwilling to acknowledge or include them, and resistant to change generally. Some also face a hostile and racist bisexual, gay and lesbian community and wider society. Asian and Black bisexual, gay and lesbian youth are therefore an often-excluded group within an excluded minority community.

Slow but steady progress has been made in addressing some of these issues and the needs of Asian and Black bisexual, gay and lesbian youth as a result of the pioneering research of Khan and the work of agencies like Big Up, the Naz Project and Shakti. There are now helplines and several support groups for Asian and Black bisexuals, gays and lesbians, there is an Asian and Black bisexual, gay and lesbian youth project in London, the ‘Festival of Diversity’ in May 1998 saw the first national gathering of Asian and Black bisexual, gay and lesbian youth and both Big Up and Naz Project London have conducted research and are developing and expanding apace.