

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Questioning Youth—Special Populations

Ethnic and Racial Minorities

Adolescents of color who are experiencing same-sex attractions or behaviors may face additional challenges in integrating sexual, racial, and ethnic identities. As various cultural groups view sexuality through different perspectives, these youths may face the complex task of successfully and positively integrating sexuality into their overall identities. Specifically, LGB youth of color:

- May feel forced to choose between a racial identity or a sexual identity;
- May feel less secure in taking on yet another identity associated with societal stigma;
- May perceive the LGB community as racist, yet struggle with sexual prejudice within their own cultural or ethnic community; and/or
- May feel challenged by their faith tradition's view on issues related to sexual orientation.

(For more information, review Savin-Williams, R.C. (1996). *Ethnic-minority and sexual-minority youths*. In L.A. Peplau et al. (1996). *Gender, culture, and ethnicity* (pp.121-134). Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company.)

Rural Youth

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths who live in rural areas may feel particularly isolated and alone. For these youths, information about sexual orientation may only be available through the local library or through the Internet. Rural LGB youth may face additional concerns regarding safety and privacy because of the lack of anonymity in small towns.

(For more information, see Valentine, A. (2000, March). Rural gay youth in Illinois give advice on outreach to their population. *NASTAD HIV Prevention Update*, 6(1), 6.)

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Youth

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths who are hearing impaired have a unique subculture that represents aspects of both LGB identity and the deaf community. These adolescents may feel particularly isolated, depending on their school and community setting and the opportunity to interact (or not) with other hearing-impaired LGB peers.

(Information for and about this community is available on the Advocates for Youth web pages. Advocates for Youth. (2003). *Deaf GLBTQ youth*. Retrieved on December 1, 2004, from <http://www.youthresource.com/community/deaf/index.htm>)

Youth With Developmental Disabilities

A person who has a developmental disability who also has feelings of same-sex attraction or engages in same-sex behavior may face unique developmental tasks. There are many misconceptions about disabled people and their sexuality. Often, developmentally disabled people, including adolescents, are perceived as having no sexual feelings or needs. School health and mental health professionals who are interacting with developmentally disabled adolescents and believe the adolescents may be experiencing same-sex feelings or behaviors are encouraged to consider effective ways of supporting them and providing intervention strategies.

For more information, see Kempton, W. (1998). *Socialization and sexuality, a comprehensive training guide for professionals helping people with disabilities that hinder learning*. Syracuse, NY: Program Development Associates.

American Psychological Association. (2004). *Lesbian, gay, and bisexual adolescents—Special populations*. Washington DC: Author. ©2004 by the American Psychological Association.