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Being An "Extraterrestrial:" The Need for Academic Emphasis on the Intersection of Race and Sexuality

Marvin D. Shelton Jr.
The College of William and Mary

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**Being An “Extraterrestrial:” The Need for Academic Emphasis on the Intersection of Race
and Sexuality?**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelors of Arts in **Africana Studies** from
The College of William and Mary

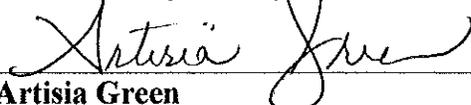
by

Marvin Shelton

Accepted for Highest Honors



Anne Charity Hudley, Director



Artisia Green



Joanne Braxton

Williamsburg, VA
May 4, 2015

Table of Contents

Abstract	4
1. Introduction	5
2. Literature review	14
2.1 Toward a queer of color (QOC) critique	14
2.1.1 <i>QOC critique as culturally responsive</i>	14
2.2 Need for a QOC critique	17
2.2.1 <i>Social and academic contexts for discrimination and isolation</i>	17
2.2.2 <i>Isolating and discriminatory curriculum</i>	21
2.3 Strategies and Spaces for a QOC critique	24
2.4 Statement of Purpose	27
3. Methodology	29
3.1 Reflexivity and narrative	29
3.2 Interviews	32
3.2.1 <i>Community-based model and phenomenological interviews</i>	32
3.2.2 <i>Interview questions</i>	34
3.2.3 <i>Participant qualifications and sampling</i>	35
3.2.4 <i>Specific of interviews</i>	38
3.2.5 <i>Ethical compliance</i>	39
3.3 Data analysis	40
4. Results	43
4.1 Struggles in reconciling dual identities	43
4.1.1 <i>In terms of race</i>	44

4.1.2 <i>In terms of sexuality</i>	45
4.1.3 <i>Race and sexuality as situational</i>	46
4.2 Discrimination and isolation in various contexts	49
4.2.1 <i>Predominately Black academic and social contexts</i>	49
4.2.2 <i>Predominately White academic and social contexts</i>	53
4.2.3 <i>Predominately LGBTQ academic and social contexts</i>	54
4.3 Varying degrees of curriculum and instruction around race and sexuality	55
4.3.1 <i>Curriculum and instruction around intersection of race and sexuality</i>	56
4.3.2 <i>Curriculum and instruction on race and sexuality</i>	62
5. Recommendations, conclusions, and future directions	69
5.1 Recognizing effect of representation	70
5.2 Curriculum plan for intersectionality	72
5.2.1 <i>Recommended scholarship and progressive incorporation</i>	72
5.2.2 <i>Pre-reading questionnaire and reflexive writing</i>	75
5.3 Integrating race and sexuality	79
5.4 Future Directions	81
Reference List	83
Appendices	90
Appendix 1. Sample of possible interview questions	90
Appendix 2. Sample consent form	93
Appendix 3. Recommended literature and scholarship	95
Appendix 4. Dr. Berstein syllabus on QOC course	97

Abstract

I investigate the ways in which collegiate humanities curriculum and instruction can include more literature, scholarship, and discussion around the intersection of race and sexuality. My goal is to help turn college humanities classrooms into intellectual safe spaces for LGBTQ Black males. An intellectual safe space, for the focus of this thesis, is one where LGBTQ Black males (and perhaps other marginalized identities as well) feel that both of their identities are equally valuable parts in the curriculum and that these dual identities (or multiple in some cases) are fully represented and affirmed in the books and articles that they read and study (Brokenbrough, 2014; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Mule, 2009). In order to assess the need for an inclusive, academic space for LGBTQ Black males, I present interviews with ten LGBTQ Black males about their social and academic experiences at the College of William and Mary, Hampton University, or Howard University. Additionally, I include literature on the discrimination and isolation that LGBTQ Black males face in various academic and social contexts because of their dual identities. The literature on inclusive pedagogy discusses how educators should privilege scholarship and instructional lenses that specifically address the experiences of LGBTQ students of color (Brokenbrough, 2013, 2014, 2015; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010). Through my interview responses and literature search, I present examples of culturally relevant/responsive literature and practices that educators can use in their curriculum and instruction to include intersected LGBTQ, Black voices and figures.

Chapter 1

Introduction

As a Black, Gay male growing up in the very rural, conservative county of Louisa, Virginia, I constantly struggled to understand where I fit into the different social and academic communities to which I belonged. My county was predominately White in that 79.6% of its population was composed of White individuals as reported in the United States Census Bureau records (United States Census Bureau, 2015). My family and the community that I was raised in, went to church with, and spent my hours outside of school with was, conversely, predominately Black. Everything about the way that I spoke, the way that I styled myself, and my opinions about the society around me up to the age of fourteen was informed by the Black family and community that surrounded me. Teachers and family members labeled me as an academically gifted Black child all throughout my primary and middle school years.

Unfortunately, my White and Black peers felt differently about my academic giftedness than my teachers and family did. The White peers in my primary and middle school years felt that I was not gifted enough—as I was in class with mostly White students all through primary and secondary years—because of my use of words like “ain’t” and “axe” in a manner that they deemed to be a show of my Blackness. I look back on my interactions with these students and I understand, according to Rickford and Rickford (2000), that my peers’ criticisms of my language was primarily their expression of White racist sentiments towards my use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE), a language variation from the standardized variety that my peers used. Rickford and Rickford (2000) have helped me understand that, though I felt embarrassed and ashamed because of my peers’ negative criticism, my language use is and was a part of the history and culture of Black Americans. AAVE is rich with its own lexicon, vocabulary, and

phonology as opposed to the racist assumption that it is some language of ignorance, deviance, and of a slang-nature that held no educational value (Rickford & Rickford, 2000). My Black peers viewed my academic giftedness and the fact that I was taking honors classes with majority white students as my attempt to be White, an opinion that carried throughout my high school years when I attempted to correct my supposedly *inferior* Black ways of speaking. Thus, I found myself trapped between two cultures, neither of which was capable or willing to see the other with fullness and compassion.

My primary and middle school academic experiences were consumed with my experience of feeling divided by a racial difference that was connected to language and to the cultural assumptions of the dominant culture about who education was actually for. I make this latter comment because it appeared, at that early stage, that a majority of Black individuals in my community felt academic success was distinctly a White quality. This opinion, I believe, resulted from the fact that a large majority of the students in honors and advanced placement courses were white. Thus, I felt racially divided. My being Black and academically gifted appeared to be conflicting features of my identity. Perry, Steele, and Hilliard III (2012) and Harper (2009) uphold my view of these feelings of racial division and academic isolation because they argue that these feelings result from the extra psychological competencies and energies that Black students are forced to expend because of solo status. Solo status occurs when an individual enters into a social or academic situation in which he or she is one or one of very few people of his or her identity group represented in the student, teaching, and administrative bodies (Sekaquaptewa & Thompson, 2002). Compounded by negative stereotypes surrounding my *assumed* intellectual inferiority (Pollak & Niemann, 1998) and the lack of representation of people of color in administrative and professional teaching positions (Villegas, Strom, & Lucas, 2012), the

negative and isolating effects of solo status worked to perpetuate my feelings of racial division and difference.

My social experiences, with both my White and Black peers as well as my predominately Black family and community, initially made me feel similarly racially divided and conflicted and, over time, increasingly divided because of my growing awareness of my sexuality. I mentioned above that my language, style, and opinions on society were informed by my Blackness until I was fourteen. I distinctly remember this moment to be the start of my sexual awakening, as I have coined the experience. Of course, I had known that I felt a certain attraction to other males as early as age six when I had little wives *and* little husbands when my friends and I would play house unlike the other boys around me. However, it was not until I was about fourteen, entering the pivotal moment of my life that was high school, that I discovered my sexual attraction was distinctly towards boys. With this discovery, my perceptions changed. I would hear the word “faggot” even more resoundingly than I had heard it in my primary or middle school years. I would pause even more when my pastor, a Black man who I had always considered a mentor, said things like, “[he] don’t wanna see no gay man in this pulpit, but he can be in this choir or on that piano.” These comments had always been a part of my social experiences with Black and White community members but, now that I was becoming the person that these negative remarks described, I felt the bite of these homophobic remarks on a personal level. Not only was I “Marvin, the smart Black kid who talked too Black” or “Marvin, the Black kid who is acting White,” but I was at risk of becoming “Marvin, the sissy” or “Marvin, the faggot.” Because I became more aware of my sexual identity, I began to experience the fears associated with stereotype threat, or the risk of confirming negative and discriminatory stereotypes linked to an individual’s identity and identity group as a whole (Steele & Aronson,

1995). By confirming the negative stereotypes associated with a sexual minority identity group, I risked further experiencing the potential isolating and dividing affects of discrimination and solo status, particularly homophobia (Solorzano & Ceja, 2000; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

It was isolating for me to feel inner conflict because of my skin color and racial background, but the added fear of being divided from my community because of sexuality caused me to hide this aspect of my identity. It was during my high school years, while hiding my sexuality and attempting to assimilate into a White identity, that I felt the most isolated from every individual around me. If my race, in conjunction with my academic giftedness, did not completely isolate me from Black and White individuals, then my sexuality did because I would either be teased because others perceived me as Gay, or I would internalize the homophobia and be at war with myself about the ways to hide it. In essence, my primary and secondary academic and social experiences were characterized by a constant war between my Black and Gay identities or with others about my two identities. I, a Black and Gay male child, was forced to expend extra-psychological energies in order to balance my rigorous academic work, continuously remain conscientious of how my racial and sexual identities were being judged as measures of my human worth and value; the struggle for a place of inclusion in social communities that essentially told me my sexuality tarnished my connection to them (Perry et al., 2012; Harper, 2009).

My mentors and classes that I took with them at William and Mary saved me. After I publicly acknowledged my sexuality in the fall semester of my Freshman year, I was still unhappy with my dual identities. My first semester of college, however, was positively astonishing. I took an introductory course in Africana Studies, and I was introduced to the valuable and highly intellectual history of my people. Reading Du Bois (2004) made me feel that

my Blackness had meaning. His theory on Black individuals' double conscious struggle to reconcile their Black and American identities enlightened me (Du Bois, 2004). In addition, I read Hughes (2010), who writes about the struggle of the Black artist as being the constant pouring out of racial individuality into the melting pot of American Whiteness in order to gain *success*. This work helped me understand that my inner racial divide is and was something that Black scholars have wrestled with for decades.

Under the instruction of one of my current mentors, Professor Artisia Green, a Black female director and dramaturge, I took a course on African American history in theater. This class included plays and critical articles from the Black Power Movement of the 1960s through contemporary times (LeRoi Jones, 1971; Nottage, 2010; Sanchez, 1968; Wolfe, 1987). The wide range of Black intellectuals and artists fascinated me. How these playwrights chose to approach issues of masculinity/femininity, civil rights, and discrimination in the Black community through a distinctly Black aesthetic was similarly intriguing (Ongiri, 2009). Again, Black history was transformed in my eyes from one in the margins of society and devalued to a highly intellectual and culturally valuable history. In the spring semester of my Freshman year, Professor Green encouraged me to use the final research paper assignment as a chance to explore what she explained to me was queer theory and how it intersected with my Black identity. Her encouragement was a result of my telling her about my coming out process. This independent research paper was a transformational moment in my intellectual development as a future QOC theorist as the first time that I fully acknowledged Blackness and Gayness as equal parts of my identity.

Through this assignment, I was introduced to the works of scholars like Johnson (2008) who collected interviews with one hundred Black Gay men in Southern areas about their social

experiences with the two identities. In addition, I discovered a playwright, McCraney (2010), who had created a fictional character, Marcus, a Black Gay boy coming to terms with his sexuality in a predominately Black community that expressed disdain toward perceived stereotypical, effeminate features of male homosexuality. For the first time, I heard the voices of a group of people who looked like me, shared similar experiences with sexuality as I did, and who were still struggling to come to terms with their dual identities just as I. This independent research assignment was the first of many in English and Africana Studies that dealt with issues surrounding my dual identity. My academic research allowed me to mitigate the negative affects of stereotype threat surrounding my dual identity and, thus, liberate my consciousness (Steele & Aronson, 1995). The characters that I read about and the scholars who had shared my experiences as a Black Gay male helped me carve out a space for intellectual inclusion devoid of the isolating effects of solo status and lack of representation of students and professors who shared my identities (Thompson & Sekaquaptewa, 2002; Villegas, Strom, & Lucas, 2012).

Why have I spent a large portion of this introduction sharing a bit of my life story and issues surrounding my identity? I have shared my story, first and foremost, because story and voice are central features of my honors thesis. Like several of the Black, Gay scholars and characters that I have researched for my thesis, I am utilizing my own experience and story of the struggles I faced as an individual with a racial and sexual minority background in order to investigate whether or not there are similar Black, Gay voices that have shared these isolating experiences (Johnson, 2008; Johnson, 2005; McCraney, 2010). Second, I have shared my story and experiences in order to show how, with the effective help of academic mentors and independent research assignments, I was able to carve out a scholarly space in which to explore and intellectualize my Black, Gay identity. I am using my honors thesis research to determine if

other Black, Gay individuals have had the same higher education experience that I have had. I am fortunate to have this opportunity, as it has not always been available. In determining whether or not otherGBTQ¹ Black males have shared my challenging early academic experiences and transformative higher education experiences, I will keep in mind how significant ideologies like culturally responsive and inclusive pedagogy have helped shape my positive higher education (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Mule , 2009; Gay, 2010). Ladson-Billings (2006) defines one of the major goals of culturally responsive and inclusive pedagogy as an attempt at closing the gap between minority students’ social experiences (including discrimination) and their academic experiences. Educators can utilize culturally relevant pedagogical practices to mitigate potentially isolating educational experiences for minority students. Educators can produce this experience when they add in curriculum and readings that are inclusive of minority voices (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Mule, 2009; Gay, 2010).

My honors thesis includes interviews with tenGBTQ Black males from William and Mary, Howard University, and Hampton University. These interviews act as additions to the stories of the real-life and fictional Black Gay men in the scholarship and literature that I have researched for my thesis and read in courses during my four years at William and Mary (Johnson, 2008; Johnson, 2005; McCraney, 2010). Simultaneously, these interviews are my way of addressing negative aspects of my higher education research experience on the Black Gay experience: the issue of academic space forGBTQ Black males. While I was able and fortunate enough to intellectualize and study my dual identity, these experiences were created through independent research assignments and not as part of the core curriculum of the classroom.

¹ I use the term “GBTQ” a majority of the time in this thesis rather than “LGBTQ” because, while my conceptual framework does consider the oppression that may arise with the intersection of gender to one’s identity, I did not fully extend this study to include LGBTQ, Black female perspectives. I use “LGBTQ” only when I consider the community as a whole.

Looking back on my higher education experiences while doing research for my thesis, I realize that, ironically, I have been able to find the value in my identities and to understand how they complement each other. I have found this value, however, through isolated, independent assignments.

Cress, Collier, & Reitenauer (2013) offer me an academic explanation for why my story, story in general, and my criticism about research on my dual identity being outside core curriculum are valuable aspects of my research. Cress et al. (2013) explain that “starting anywhere” in community-based or service learning experiences begins “with who you are and what you deeply care about...[and]...how you can apply both of those things to your work (p. 192). Essentially, Cress et al. (2013) encourage their readers to understand that research and scholarship in many areas of study, but specifically community-based and service learning experiences, should be constructed and informed by what inspires you and the change that you want to see in the world around you. They encourage their readers to talk about what is wrong with the world, and to right the wrongs that they see by utilizing both the academia and work with a specific community of individuals (Cress et al., 2013).

My experience of early racial and sexual isolation inspires me to reach out to other Black Gay males (and Black Gay individuals) to find and/or create an intellectually safe space in which they feel included, valued, and equal among peers. I want, if it is necessary, for individuals on predominately White and historically Black campuses to view higher education as an educational and social experience to explore, assess, and value their identities as equally critical to their life experiences. I will contribute to this goal by first analyzing whether other LGBTQ individuals experience similar oppression in their social and academic experiences through the interviews I share. Finally, I will build and offer a model, for LGBTQ Black males, of an inclusive humanities

curriculum that uses literature and research at its core to address and centralize issues surrounding the LGBTQ Black male experience within the academy. “Starting anywhere” (Cress et al., 2013, p. 192) for my honors thesis includes a heuristic inquiry of a platform for an inclusive space and culturally responsive pedagogy designed specifically for a dual (or multiple) identity group whose uplift will, because of our shared lived-experience, continue my identity value in the face of taxing racist and homophobic social and academic systems (Gray, 2014, p. 33).

Chapter 2

Literature review

2.1 Toward a queer of color (QOC) critique

Brokenbrough (2013) asserts that his scholarship on queer students of color should be viewed as “one additional step toward, and not the arrival of, a body of educational scholarship that recognizes and addresses the need to examine the pedagogical implications of queer of color epistemologies” (p. 434). Like him, I use my research as a way to make steps toward an inclusive, academic space that incorporates the voices of and fully represents LGBTQ Black male students. As I look for an intellectual space in academia that will help mitigate social discrimination for LGBTQ Black males, I have chosen to frame my solutions through the lens of a queer² of color critique (QOC). A QOC critique or analysis investigates the different ways that literature, scholarship, and instruction can be viewed through the lenses and knowledge bases of queer students of color (Brokenbrough, 2013, 2014, 2015; McCready, 2010; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010). Educators can utilize a QOC critique in K-12 and collegiate education as a way to establish “anti-oppressive equity and social justice” for students who face the social burden of being both a racial and sexual minority (McCready, 2013, p. 512). The literature on a queer of color critique focuses primarily on three questions: how does this educational lens specifically work as a culturally responsive mechanism for queer students of color, why is QOC analysis needed, and what particular strategies and spaces are best used to implement a QOC lens?

2.1.1 QOC critique as culturally responsive

A QOC critique works to mitigate the harassment, underperformance, and institutional/intellectual isolation and invisibility of queer students of color through culturally

² I use the words “queer” and “LGBTQ” interchangeably in my research as an umbrella term for desires and identities that are not exclusively heterosexual and hetero-normative.

responsive educational practices within academic spaces (Brokenbrough 2013, 2014, 2015; McCready, 2010; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010). Culturally responsive pedagogical/educational practices are initially established to bridge the gap between students' social and academic experiences. This goal is achieved through the implementation of curriculum and instruction that is equitable and inclusive for students from diverse minority backgrounds (Brokenbrough, 2014; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Mule, 2009). Mule (2009) asserts that culturally responsive teaching styles encourage educators to be “thoroughly conversant with their students' lives, not just in the context of the classroom or school, but also in their communities” (p. 77). When educators understand and articulate the social location and sociopolitical contexts in which their underrepresented students live and exist, they can contribute to the work of social justice by structuring their curriculum in a manner that is equitable and inclusive for students who are both oppressed and isolated because of their racial, gendered, sexual, class, and religious backgrounds (Brokenbrough, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Mule, 2009; Gay, 2010). Ladson-Billings (2006) explains that educators who teach under the assumption that society is equal, fair, and just “believe that their students are participating on a level playing field and simply have to learn to be better competitors than other students” (p. 30). The assumption that all students compete on a level playing field in the classroom, she argues, is naïve and gives inadequate consideration to the fact that *the ideal* of equality does not take into account present and historical social discrimination and disadvantages that underrepresented students bring to the classroom as extra-curricular burdens (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Thus, a culturally responsive pedagogical lens call on educators to “draw upon students' culturally specific modes of knowing and being when curriculum content and designing learning experiences” in order to redress isolating instruction and “enhance students' engagement and

comprehension” (Brokenbrough, 2014, p. 4). Educators who structure pedagogy through a culturally responsive lens can prepare their students, both those within and outside underrepresented communities, to develop strategies that contest sociopolitical disparities.

Culturally responsive pedagogical practices, then, lie at the heart of a QOC critique (Brokenbrough 2013, 2014, 2015; McCready, 2010; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010). Misawa (2010) explains that a QOC critique, or what he considers Queer Race Pedagogy, is “designed specifically for sexual minority students of color who have traditionally been ignored and overlooked by mainstream discourses in higher education” (p. 31). In essence, traditional modes of learning may not be entirely effective for queer students of color who must balance both discrimination from peers and potential isolation from curriculum that fails to wed the complexities of their multiple identities (Bailey, 2009; Blackburn & McCready, 2009; Brockenbrough, 2013, 2014, 2015; Decena, 2011; Diaz & Kosciw, 2009; Ferguson 2004; Johnson, 2008; McCready, 2010; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010; Patton, 2011). More is needed. Educators, then, might well look toward a QOC pedagogical critique in order to help mitigate social and academic barriers for queer students of color to “enhance [their] engagement and comprehension” in academic settings (Brokenbrough, 2014, p. 4).

A QOC critique works toward two different goals. First, it challenges dominant, deficit-narratives about racial and sexual minorities and the intersections around both identities by tracing the sources of marginalization (Brokenbrough, 2013, 2014, 2015; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010). Second, it creates methods/areas of resistant to address the intellectual and social needs of queer students of color (Brokenbrough, 2013, 2014, 2015; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010). Brokenbrough (2013) asserts that a QOC critique helps to “denaturalize the pathologization of queers of color by exposing the hegemonic social orders within which those

pathologies were produced” (p. 428). Educators can carry out this action when they locate literature and scholarship that act as counter-narratives toward negative sociocultural stereotypes as they design curriculum and instruction for their courses (Brokenbrough, 2013, 2014, 2015; Kumashiro, 2001; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010). When educators locate literature and scholarship that directly address the counter-narrative experiences of queer students of color, this action does not just make the curriculum and instruction more inclusive. It also helps engage “a range of stakeholders and allies interested in anti-oppressive approaches that interrupt that systems of domination that produce hegemonic modes of knowledge production” (McCready, 2013, p. 512). Essentially, educators can enhance the knowledge base of out-group individuals about queer students of color’s experiences while they work to mitigate isolation and discrimination for queer students of color through culturally responsive mechanisms (Brokenbrough, 2013, p. 429; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010).

2.2 Need for a QOC critique

2.2.1 Social and academic contexts for discrimination and isolation

It is essential to understand the various social and academic contexts in which queer individuals of color experience isolation and discrimination in order to recognize the need for educators to implement a QOC critique. I analyze these contexts for discrimination and isolation in order to demonstrate the lack of communal and academic spaces that LGBTQ Black males have to affirm and find value in both of their identities. The predominately Black church has received scholarly attention as a place where LGBTQ Black males experience discrimination and isolation around their dual identities (Dyson, 2004; Johnson, 2008; Stanford, 2013). Johnson (2008), specifically, offers distinct examples about this space through narrative experiences. He interviewed one hundred self-identified Black, Gay males in southern areas of the United States

and found that several of these individuals faced instances of homophobia within predominately Black churches (Johnson, 2008). He states that, “the current leadership of the black church has been more explicit about its stance on homosexuality by openly opposing gay marriage and supporting other antigay legislation” (p. 182-183). These homophobic ideologies, as Johnson (2008) explains, often had negative implications for his LGBTQ Black male participants because some of them could not “totally reconcile their spirituality and sexuality,” and they hoped that prayer and religious fervor would allow God to take away their homosexuality (Johnson, 2008, p. 184). Some of his participants were able to slightly alleviate some of the internalized homophobic tension they experienced through a psychological separation. This separation occurred when some of his participants equated their homosexuality to a simple sin that God would grant forgiveness for like drunkenness or adultery (Johnson, 2008). Even though his participants alleviated potential internalize homophobia through this psychological separation, they are still forced to equate their identities with perceived negative actions in order to produce some sense of positivity around their sexual orientation.

LGBTQ Black males also face prejudice in collegiate communities because of their dual identities (Goode-Cross & Good, 2009; Goode-Cross & Tager, 2011; Harper, Wardell, & McGuire, 2011; Henry, Fuerth, & Richards, 2012; Patton, 2011; Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012). Patton (2011) discusses the social discrimination and isolation that LGBTQ Black males experience at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU). Patton (2011) conducted six phenomenological interviews with self-identified LGBTQ Black males at the same HBCU in order to examine their social experiences as racial and sexual minorities. She discovered that her participants consistently did not feel comfortable disclosing their sexual orientation or identifying in terms of it because they perceived potential negative ramifications like stereotypes

or essentialist claims that their Black peers would make about this identity (Patton, 2011). In addition, she found that most of her participants considered the problems that they face because of their race to be more prevalent than those they face because of their sexual orientation (Patton, 2011). Therefore, her participants were less likely to be publicly visible about their sexuality in this predominately Black academic environment in order to avoid over and subtle discrimination from their racial community while they remain activists and leaders for racial equality (Patton, 2011). For these participants, their predominately Black academic community did not give them the space to fully exist as both of their identities; thus, they experienced isolation around their sexual orientation through a fear and tension to not expose it.

Goode-Cross and Tager (2011) and Strayhorn and Mullins (2012) examine predominately White collegiate academic communities as spaces where LGBTQ Black males also experience discrimination and isolation. The participants in both of these studies show that LGBTQ Black males can be potentially subjected to this discrimination and isolation in LGBTQ, Black, and White communities on these campuses (Goode-Cross & Tager, 2011; Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012). Goode-Cross and Tager (2011) interviewed eight participants who self-identified as Black and LGBTQ at a predominately White institution about their social experiences. With their research team, Goode-Cross and Tager (2011) found that their participants experienced racial isolation because they were often one or one of very few Black students in their predominately White classrooms and in the campus community in general. In addition, this racial isolation was extended to these participants' social interactions with the larger LGBTQ community on this campus because they reported that it was predominately White and segregated from the very small Black LGBTQ community (Goode-Cross & Tager, 2011). These participants reported that they experienced prejudice around their racial and sexual identities, but they explained that

racism was much more prevalent in their social interactions than homophobia (Goode-Cross & Tager, 2011). When they did experience homophobia, these individuals explain that their Black peers were more likely to hold and perpetuate these prejudice ideologies (Goode-Cross & Tager, 2011). Strayhorn and Mullins (2012) similarly found that their self-identified Black, Gay male interviewees faced harassment because of racism and homophobia, from White and Black peers primarily, on predominately White campuses. Their research focuses on these instances of discrimination in the residence halls of six different predominately White campuses (Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012). With interviews from twenty-nine Black, Gay males who explained that they were harassed with numerous racial and homophobic slurs in residence halls, Strayhorn and Mullins (2012) demonstrate how Black, Gay males are not even safe from discrimination in their living spaces on campus.

Lastly, the harassment that LGBTQ Black males experience can occur as early as a K-12 academic context (Blackburn & McCreay, 2009; Diaz & Kosciw, 2009). Diaz and Kosciw (2009) unmask the physical and verbal harassment that LGBTQ students of color face in their secondary experiences. They conducted an online survey with 2,130 queer students of color who were African American, Hispanic or Latino/a, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American or Alaska Native, and multiracial (Diaz & Kosciw, 2009). While some of these surveys were conducted with college students, a majority of these queer students of color attended public high school (Diaz & Kosciw, 2009). Some of the participants who were active in the survey were LGBTQ Black males; therefore, the results of this research is applicable to my own and they add to the larger body of scholarship about the various spaces in which LGBTQ Black males experience discrimination and isolation. Diaz & Kosciw (2009) found that queer students of color face

verbal and physical assaults from peers, and even educators, because of their dual identities that led to high rates of absenteeism and underperformance in schools.

2.2.2 Isolating and discriminatory curriculum

The harassment and academic underperformance of queer students of color is exacerbated by isolating and discriminatory curriculum and instruction in K-12 and collegiate academic environments (Bailey, 2009; Brockenbrough, 2013, 2014, 2015; Decena, 2011; Ferguson 2004; Marquez & Brokenbrough, 2013; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010). Ferguson (2004) examines the role of American sociology, for example, in constructing Black LGBTQ identities, specifically, as sexually deviant and degenerative in relation to normative economic and social structures. He argues that, “canonical sociology imagined African American culture as the site of polymorphous gender and sexual perversions and associated those perversions with moral failings typically” (Ferguson, 2004, p. 20). By this statement, Ferguson (2004) means that the literature and scholarship in fields like sociology has taken on more pathologized views of African American culture which link it to sexual deviance, sexually transmitted disease, or perceived inferiority of gender identity, particularly masculinity (Ferguson, 2004; Gilman, 1985; Hammonds, 1999; Moynihan, 1965; Ward, 2005). This link, in turn, is often used to justify academic, racist and heterosexist ideologies about African Americans (Ferguson, 2004). Moynihan (1965), for example, demonstrates these racist, pathologized ideologies when he equates high rates of Black poverty and perceived young, Black male effeminacy to a web of pathology where Black families have absent fathers and are headed by matriarchs. Ferguson (2004) argues that this demonization of African American racial and sexual difference has placed African American families, culture, and sexuality as sources of any social failings with regards to

capitalist ideologies in opposition to White, hetero-normative, and hegemonic family structures and cultural practices.

Bailey (2009) extends this discussion of the demonization of Black LGBTQ identities in academic fields as sexually deviant to incorporate the ways in which medical discourse around Black queer sexuality targets our lives as a presumed source of HIV/AIDS disease. He argues that there is a disproportionate amount of scholarship on the effect of HIV/AIDS disease on the Black community with regards to Black, queer individuals (Bailey, 2009). There is a lack of academic attention, he asserts, given to methods and modes for prevention of HIV/AIDS, however (Bailey, 2009). As an area of study “founded on the principle of creating theoretical and practical knowledge that can effect social change in the lives of everyday people,” Bailey (2009) explains that African American studies, or Black studies, should, but has not yet, fully extend its intellectual tenants to redress issues that pertain to Black [LGBTQ] sexual identities (p. 256). He cites Cohen (2004) when he makes this assertion. She similarly argues that the experiences of LGBTQ Black individuals are not fully present in African American Studies (Cohen, 2004). She uses examples like the underrepresentation of LGBTQ Black writers from the Harlem Renaissance and activists in the Civil Rights Movement who remain “hidden or silenced by those who would police the representation of such critical periods and events” (Cohen, 2004, p. 28). Bayard Rustin, a prominent Black, Gay civil rights activist, is a significant figure that Cohen (2004) argues is overlooked in African American Studies discussions and scholarship about the Civil Rights Movement.

Misawa (2010) asserts that curriculum and instruction around studies of race or sexuality ignores the multi-various forms of discrimination for the multiple identities of queers of color. Misawa (2010) purports that both queer theorists and critical race theorists, or individuals

challenging dominant, deficit narratives about sexual and racial minorities, fail to recognize the different forms of discrimination for queers of color because they do not realize that all forms of identity are relational and carry different positions of privilege, even within minority groups. He explains that this lack of acknowledgement can further marginalize and isolate these LGBTQ individuals of color from dominant narratives of *progress* (Misawa, 2010).

Marquez and Brokenbrough (2013) suggest that legal discourse and cases that involve discrimination on the bases of sexual orientation frequently leave out the racial identities of the students involved. They made this assertion after they viewed “10 lawsuits filed on behalf of students in California” schools that were caused by discrimination based on sexual orientation (Marquez & Brokenbrough, 2013, p. 468). While these suits explicitly mentioned discrimination based on sexual orientation, they did not divulge the race of the individuals who experienced the harassment, though the documents contains “several factors that suggest that half of these cases had lead plaintiffs who were students of color” (Marquez & Brokenbrough, 2013). Marquez and Brokenbrough (2013) assert that this absence of the “intersection of racism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression” in court cases and legal offers limited justice to these students because they do not consider the complexity of harassment from both racist and homophobic dimensions (p. 468). With regards to institutional attention given to experiences of queer students of color, there is either a virtual invisibility or an underrepresentation of their experiences as being related to denigrating factors like disease and sexual deviance.

A QOC critique, then, can help work towards a solution for a space, intellectually and socially, in which GBTQ Black males, and queer students of color by extension, can be free from the isolation and discrimination they face in the vast majority of social and academic spaces. Educators who utilize a QOC critique complete this goal because they fully consider the multiple

dimensions of oppression around intersected minority identities when they work towards social solutions (Brockenbrough, 2013, 2014, 2015; McCready, 2010; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010). In addition, a QOC critique can help mitigate the exclusion and pathologized descriptions of LGBTQ students of color in curricular discourse because educators will locate literature and scholarship that also considers these multiple positions of oppression (Brockenbrough, 2013, 2014, 2015; Kumashiro, 2001; McCready, 2010; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010)

2.3 Strategies and spaces for a QOC critique

A few scholars have moved beyond simple theories about the goals and features of QOC critique to actual implemented strategies and intellectual spaces that utilize this critique. As Misawa (2010) asserts, ““counterstorytelling”” acts as a way in which “sexual minorities of color [can] explore their life stories with a narrative approach that invites students to share their own stories with peers who may have similar experiences (p. 32). This action allows queer students of color to intellectualize their identities and build a learning-community where they can utilize their own cultural understandings of the world in order to think critically about knowledge production and feel safe (Misawa, 2010). Cruz (2013) produces this effect of counterstorytelling through a strategy in which students are able to story the self (p. 442).

When Cruz (2013) talks about the process of storying the self, she describes a method by which LGBTQ students of color use media, visual, and performance arts projects to study their own bodies in a process by which they confront various forms of oppression like racism, homophobia, sexism, classism, and violence (McCready, 2013). The process of storying the self is rooted in the black feminist critical framework of ““theories in the flesh”” in which individuals use the interrogation of their lived experiences as platforms for social change and the development of critically conscious methods of thought to combat essentialist and oppressive

views of sexual and racial experiences (Cruz, 2013; McCready, 2013). Cruz (2013) focuses her arguments of storying the self and the critical skills that develop from this strategy on a video poem by a queer student of color, Peter John Cord, who participates in a community-based, alternative education program for LGBTQ students within his high school.

Peter's video poem illustrates the story of his brother, Frankie, who grew up on the streets and dies from AIDS after he is forced into prostitution as a means of survival (Cruz, 2013). Cord's video poem project is conducted in a group with other LGBTQ students who help him perform and determine the structure of the video production (Cruz, 2013). As they determined who would perform the poem, collaborated over how the poem was delivered, and critiqued the performance for its authenticity, Cord and his partners began to construct a narrative that acted as "stand-in for the experiences of many young gay men of color" (Cruz, 2013, p. 449). Through a collaborative video project, these students learn how to use media and performance art as forums for discussion and analysis of the harsh realities of violence, discrimination, and all other matters of oppression that plague queer students of color (Cruz, 2013; McCready, 2013).

This video project acts as a way in which educators can challenge traditional notions of knowledge production and intelligence as well as to create an intellectual space for LGBTQ students of color. This project allows LGBTQ students of color "to create cultural productions of their lives, and then critically reading the web of emotions, ideas and oppressions that undergird their stories" as a student would with a traditional piece of literature or scholarship (McCready, 2013, p. 514). This video project also acts as a culturally responsive example of a QOC critique because it blends the academic and cultural experiences of LGBTQ students of color into a project that they create, that is centered on their experiences, and that both enhances their

practical skills of critical analysis and recognition of their value/position within intellectual spaces (Brokenbrough, 2014; Cruz, 2013; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006; McCready, 2013; Mule, 2009). The video/storytelling project also offers educators a creative forum by which they can begin to approach and explain difficult subject matter that involves the intersection of racial and sexual minority experiences like HIV/AIDs, gender-nonconformity, and essentialism (Cruz, 2013; McCready, 2013).

Kumashiro (2001) highlights a series of questions and concerns for educators to keep in mind when they structure curriculum and intellectual spaces that act strategies for implementing a QOC critique in pedagogies for no specific level of education. He says that educators must ask themselves:

When developing safe spaces, supportive programs, and resources, who is the Other that these safe spaces, etc. are for? If they target queers, do they ignore racism, and in the process, ignore queers of color? And do they ignore ways that racial difference can be read in not only racist but also sexist and queer ways, and thus, that definitions of *queer* must be culturally contextualized if the various oppressions of queers are to be addressed... When implementing progressive pedagogies, what differences are being affirmed? If they target racial difference and racism, do they ignore ways that conceptualizations of 'race' are already (hetero)sexualized, and thus, complicit with heterosexism... Who makes use of the safe spaces? Who feels affirmed by the progressive pedagogies (Kumashiro, 2001, p. 17).

When educators ask these questions, they can fulfill one of the two goals of QOC critique: challenging dominant, deficit-narratives about racial and sexual minorities and the intersections around both identities by tracing the sources of marginalization (Brokenbrough, 2013, 2014,

2015; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010). As the ask and consider these questions when they attempt to structure curriculum and intellectual safe spaces geared toward mitigating isolation for LGBTQ students of color, educators can analyze whether or not the curriculum or spaces are adequately addressing the fullness and complexities of an individuals multiple identities (Kumashiro, 2001). In addition, such questions help educators to avoid any unintentional reaffirmation of deficit-narratives around the intersection of race and sexuality in the literature and scholarship they choose to select (Kumashiro, 2001).

Kumashiro (2001) also encourages educators to make sure that the literature and scholarship that they present about the experiences of queer students of color is central in the space or curriculum. When he says that they should make the literature central within the space or curriculum, Kumashiro (2001) means that educators should integrate this wide and full range of material on queers of color “throughout the curriculum, instead of marginalized in only singular units once or twice a year” (p. 18). In essence, the material about queers of color should not be presented in a tokenized fashion, but as an equally valuable portion of the curriculum in order to show queer students of color that their place in academic spaces is just as valuable as the dominant members in that space. When educators place literature and scholarship from and about queer of color experiences into their curriculum and instruction, they also show how a QOC critique, or lens of knowing, can be equally valuable for enhancing and extending the ways that all students analyze and understand formations of power, privilege, and oppression in the world around them (Brokenbrough, 2013, p. 429; Cruz, 2013; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010).

2.4 Statement of purpose

My research adds to these existing strategies that attempt to create inclusive spaces for queer students of color through the utilization of a QOC critique (Cruz, 2013; Kumashiro, 2001;

McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010). I specifically focus on how to utilize a QOC critique in collegiate humanities academic settings and present interviews with ten GBTQ Black students in one predominately White and two predominately Black colleges who share the experiences of social discrimination and academic isolation that are outlined above (Bailey, 2009; Dyson, 2004; Ferguson 2004; Goode-Cross & Good, 2009; Goode-Cross & Tager, 2011; Harper, Wardell, & McGuire, 2011; Henry, Fuerth, & Richards, 2012; Johnson, 2008; Marquez & Brokenbrough; Patton, 2011; Stanford, 2013; Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012). These experiences are unique because they are distinct to colleges located in or around the state of Virginia.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Reflexivity and narrative

For my research methodology, I took on a reflexive approach in which I analyzed my own experiences as a GBTQ Black male and those of participants who share my dual identities. A reflexive approach to research can involve an examination of the self or other external factors through a process by which “personal experience is transformed into public, accountable knowledge” (Finlay, 2002, p. 211). The researcher essentially outlines the lived, personal experiences of his or her own life or those of other individuals in order to better understand cultural/emotional reactions to a world that is socially constructed (Finlay, 2002). In auto-ethnographic research, which is an autobiographical approach to ethnography where the researcher focuses on the “personal or self-narrative” as a way to increase understanding of a particular social phenomenon, reflexivity is especially utilized (Anderson, 2006, p. 373; Holt, 2003; Spry, 2001).

Anderson (2006) explains that, while traditional ethnographers have practiced a type of reflexivity in order to understand their relationship to their data, this reflexive thought usually focuses outward, “on understanding and making understandable to other a social world beyond themselves” (Anderson, 2006, p. 382). What this reflexivity lacks, then, is a personal connection to the story the researcher is telling through his work. For Anderson (2006), the analytical auto-ethnographer uses his or her experiences with and knowledge of other individuals in the socio-cultural community under study as a way to expand their own knowledge of self (Anderson, 2006).

The analytical auto-ethnographer interrogates the self and others who share his or her socio-cultural experiences in order to transform his or her own “beliefs, actions, and sense of self” (Anderson, 2006, p. 383). In addition to an observation on how the results of his or her research reflect his or her self, the researcher should place himself or herself, visibly, in the text through narratives of his own personal experience that he critiques and analyzes with other data (Anderson, 2006). These actions establish mutually beneficial and informative features for auto-ethnographic work in which the researcher is always engaged and active in the world of his written work.

Though analytical auto-ethnography does call for the researcher to interrogate and share his or her self and experiences, this self-reflexive practice can be misconstrued as self-absorption and self-centeredness in the work (Anderson, 2006). It is essential, then, that the researcher interview, observe, and investigate the lived experiences of other individuals within his or her community in order to avoid the potential that his work could be mistaken for an autobiography or narration (Anderson, 2006). The auto-ethnographer maintains a balance and interplay between his or her own experiences and his or her research data in order to create a work that informs audiences about a social phenomenon from multiple perspectives within a community (Anderson, 2006).

Though I did not spend as much time in my socio-cultural community of study as I deem necessary for a definitive ethnographic study, I reference the reflexive processes involved in auto-ethnography because they are key features of my research. I have utilized the features of self-reflexive practice and informative dialogue with individuals beyond myself in the community I study. My research is self-reflexive and mutually informative because of my constant consideration of what my own academic and social experiences as an LGBTQ Black

male student had or lacked at William and Mary, as well as those experiences of my participants, in order to inform my theoretical approaches and solutions to the social problem (Anderson, 2006). I shared a narration about the social discrimination and academic isolation that I faced in my experiences as a GBTQ Black male at start of this thesis. I opened with this narrative to frame my research within the context of my own experiences in order to demonstrate to readers that the results and solutions of my research are linked to the enhancement myself along with my participants. I am implicated as a community member; therefore, I share in any shortcomings of my research (Anderson, 2006). My research then, is imbued with a sense of responsibility toward enhancing the social and academic conditions of community and self through practical models and solutions that may be absent in a traditional ethnography that simply seeks to help an outside audience better understand a social condition (Anderson, 2006).

My reflexive practices of my own experiences and those experiences of other individuals who share my identities is more narrative-based and biographical because my analysis takes place through stories that are intended to produce emotional resonance with readers (Anderson, 2006; Finlay, 2002). Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000) explain that narratives are a means by which individuals can “recall what has happened, put experience into sequence, find possible explanations for it, and play with the chain events that shapes individual and social life” (p. 1). Researchers often utilize a narrative, biographical approach in order to understand the different and complex perspectives that produce meaning around a particular social phenomenon (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013; Gray, 2014). Research with a narrative-based approach can help the research discover how his or her own and his or her participants’ personal experiences, told through stories, can help develop social change in the world around them (Andrews et al., 2013). This social change is brought into fruition as research centers on the

thoughts and emotions in a participant or researcher's story and as these stories shed light on the potential negative effects that one's social position has on his or her experiences with a social system (Andrews et al., 2013).

I do focus on my own experiences at the start of my thesis; however, I also discuss the fact that this research centers on the experiences of LGBTQ Black male participants outside of my life. I wanted my research to speak toward more than my own autobiographical and narrative experiences; therefore, I include interviews about the social and academic experiences of LGBTQ Black males from William and Mary and some of Virginia's historically Black colleges and universities. These interviews function as dialogue beyond the self that informs, expounds upon, interrogates, and even transforms my lived narrative (Anderson, 2006). These interviews also operate as a method by which I can "reconstruct social events from the perspective of informants" whose voices are not always present in dialogues about their oppression (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000).

3.2 Interviews

3.2.1 Community-based model and phenomenological interviews

I follow a community-based model of research in my thesis, which means that my work is informed by the individual voices and experiences of LGBTQ Black male students from William and Mary and two historically Black universities in or around Virginia, Hampton University and Howard University (Cress, Collier, & Reitenauer, 2013). As Cress et al. (2013) purport, when a researcher attempts to ignite social change, it is essential that he include the experiences of the marginalized peoples that he or she works to make change for in order to avoid a one-size-fits-all solution to a perceived problem. When one includes the voices of the marginalized population that he or she purports to solve problems for in the body of his or her

research, he or she can recognize “that different societal forces operate differently in persons’ lives” (Cress et al., 2013, p. 88). In addition, the research can avoid “imposing biased solutions on others regardless of...differences” in lived experience (Cress et al., 2013, p. 88). The community partnerships the researcher forms with the individuals who may directly benefit from one’s research can maximize the strength of the solution to oppressive regimes by encompassing a variety of recommendations that cover a breadth of lived experiences (Cress et al., 2013).

To form this community partnership and maximize the strength of my solution, I have captured the lived experiences of LGBTQ Black males through ten phenomenological interviews (Gray, 2014). Gray (2014) explains, “phenomenology seeks to understand the world from the participant’s point of view” (p. 165). Phenomenology centers on the lived, human experience as a way of understanding social phenomenon, constructions, and motivation behind behaviors (Gray, 2014). Phenomenologists believe this fact because they argue, “social reality has a specific meaning and relevance structure for people who are living, thinking, and experiencing it” (Gray, 2014, p. 165). Phenomenology recognizes that the world is not made up of one legitimate or correct experience (Gray, 2014). It gives no measure of right or wrong to the experience. Rather, seeks to account for and document these experiences. I find that community-based models support phenomenology. Community-based research and phenomenology both agree with the idea that what social reality is and the beliefs within a social system vary from community to community and person to person (Cress et al., 2013; Gray, 2014). Therefore, it is necessary to capture each individual experience within a social system or context in order to understand the various viewpoints that structure it and, as Cress et al. (2013) explain, to create a solution for social problems within the system that equitably recognizes the specificity of human lives.

Gray (2014) argues that interviews are utilized in phenomenological research to document the lived experiences of individuals in a personal setting that gives them the opportunity clarify their meanings to questions as well as to have questions clarified for them immediately. Interviews are a rich data source because the researcher is able to capture nuances and variations from each individual experience (Gray, 2014). In addition, though the researcher knows the identity of the participant, the interview transcriptions can be presented anonymously through given pseudonyms; thus, an ethical system of research is maintained through the protection of participants' identities and narratives (Gray, 2014).

3.2.2 Interview questions

My interviews were semi-structured, which means that I had a pre-approved “list of issues and questions to be covered, but may not [have dealt] with all of them in each interview” (Gray, 2014, p. 385). I submitted my list of questions for approval through the student Internal Review Board at the College of William and Mary as the institution requires its students to do whenever human subjects are used for research purposes. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to probe respondents for clarification or to expand on their answers, and they offer an opportunity for the interviewer to discover “new pathways” to understand a particular phenomena that he or she may not have considered when entering into the interview (Gray, 2014, p. 386). Through this semi-structured process, participants played an active role in guiding the direction of the conversation, while my interview questions acted as prompts for them to recall their social and academic experiences as LGBTQ students of color (Gray, 2014). The interview questions focused specifically on participants' experiences with race and sexuality in academic and social settings, but there were opportunities given in which participants were able

to address other aspects of their identity (class, religion, gender, etc.) that might influence their daily lives or affect how they select courses.

The interviews were organized so that the questions at the start of the interview were of a less sensitive nature than later questions. For example, I would ask questions such as, “what is your age?” and “at what school are you a student?” before I would ask questions like, “would you say that you identify more in terms of your race or your sexuality, if at all?” I structured my interviews in this manner in order to ease participants into the process where they answered questions about very sensitive topics around race, sexuality, discrimination, and isolation.

3.2.3 Participant qualifications and sampling

Again, as my thesis research is a heuristic investigation into the social and academic experiences of LGBTQ Black males as they relate to my own experiences, I chose a population to study that was accessible to me and whose responses could potentially relay similarities to the lives of other individuals who share their dual identities. Gray (2014) argues that, when a researcher selects a sample of individuals to study, he must observe how his sample is representative of the whole population that he purports to study. By this statement, he means that the “sample’s main characteristics [must be] similar or identical to those of the population” (Gray, 2014, p. 146). I stipulated that individuals who participated in my research were to be self-identified as Black, LGBTQ, and male. I use the term *self-identified* because, as I mention above, community-based and phenomenological research models recognize that social realities, constructs, and beliefs vary from community to community and person to person (Cress et al., 2013; Gray, 2014). I wanted to respect the fact that identification, through the lens of these methodological approaches, is a social construction that varies from individual to individual (Cress et al., 2013; Gray, 2014). Therefore, I had each individual reaffirm, prompted by

interview questions, that he self-identified with the race, sexuality, and gender of the population on which my research focused.

I excluded LGBTQ Black female voices and the voices of the LGBTQ racial minorities from this thesis research for two main reasons. First, I wanted to limit my population size in order to maintain a rich, nuanced set of data of experiences and recommendations that can be applied to various LGBTQ Black males in various academic and social contexts (Gray, 2014). Second, I exclude LGBTQ Black females and other LGBTQ racial minority communities in an attempt to avoid misrepresentation of community experiences and the placement of gendered limitations on future solutions to issues surrounding identity for LGBTQ students of color. In accordance with a feature of analytical auto-ethnography, complete researcher membership into the socio-cultural community of study is essential. As an individual who witnesses and constructs the variation of beliefs, values, and actions in his community—or among individuals who shared his identities—he is fluent in his documentation, analysis, self-reflection on these changes (Anderson, 2006). As both a male and Black individual, I could potentially misrepresent or ignore overt and covert observations and experiences that self-identified female individuals and other racial minorities may consider vital to the narration of their communal identity and subsequent solutions to problems within their community.

The sampling frame of my population included LGBTQ Black males from William and Mary, Howard University, and Hampton University. Gray (2014) purports that is essential for a researcher to choose a sampling frame for which the results of the data can be generalizable, or “can be applied to other subjects, groups or conditions” (p. 150). My sampling frame observes the conditions of isolation, discrimination, and instructional practices for LGBTQ students of color in both a predominately White and historically Black college environments. As I stated

before, when I reflected on my own narrative experiences, I observed that my own social and academic experiences as an LGBTQ Black male varied when I was in both predominately White and historically Black environments (Anderson, 2006; Finlay, 2002). I, therefore, understood that I had to gather experiences from individuals who lived, worked, and learned in both predominately White and historically Black academic or community settings. I selected William and Mary, Howard University, and Hampton University through a purposive sampling process because they were accessible settings due to my proximity within Virginia (Gray, 2014). In addition, I purposefully selected these settings because they offer information rich and unique cases of LGBTQ Black males on predominately White and historically Black campuses in the state of Virginia that can be compared to or enhance the narratives of individuals with similar identities and in similar contexts nationally (Gray, 2014).

My participants, like the settings in which they lived and interacted, were chosen through a purposive sampling strategy. More specifically, I utilized the purposive method of criterion sampling selection to recruit participants. By criterion sampling, I mean that participants had to “meet some pre-determined criterion” in order to be interviewed (Gray, 2014, p. 221).

Participants had to be eighteen years of age, either a William and Mary student or a student at Hampton University or Howard University, and be self-identified as Black, LGBTQ, and male. In addition, I stipulated that these LGBTQ Black male individuals must be majors in humanities focused areas of study or have taken a number of humanities-based courses. I limited my participants to the humanities because I wanted nuanced and rich recommended instructional practices and scholarship that maximized their potential effectiveness in academic disciplines with curriculum and instruction in which both my participants and I were knowledgeable stakeholders (Anderson, 2006; Cress et al., 2013). I gathered participants through previous

relationship or by way of snowballing, or recommendation of participants by other participants and through other sources, at times (Gray, 2014).

When I initially turned in my student Internal Review Board form, I had selected only Howard University as a predominately Black academic and social setting. As the process continued, however, I found it hard to establish trust and rapport between participants from Howard and myself, even though we were connected through mutual friends. Therefore, I extended my investigations into the experiences of LGBTQ Black males in predominately Black academic and community settings to Hampton University, Norfolk State University, and Virginia Union University in an attempt to maintain an equal voice between participants from a predominately White and historically Black academic setting. I was, unfortunately, only able to interview one participant from Hampton University and none at Virginia Union or Norfolk State. I found LGBTQ Black male participants more easily at William and Mary, so I chose not to focus on other predominately White campuses in Virginia. The sample of participants at William and Mary was big enough to capture variations in LGBTQ Black male experiences in a predominately White community, but it was small enough to offer me information-rich narratives that I could highlight and pinpoint in my work (Gray, 2014).

3.2.4 Specifics of interviews

Participants were contacted by phone or email in order to schedule interview times. Interviews were conducted on the William and Mary, Hampton University, or Howard University campuses. When interviews took place at William and Mary and Mary, they were conducted in Blow Hall room 236, the graduate school apartments, and at places of convenience for participants (i.e. dorm rooms, other academic buildings, dining halls, etc.). The interview I conducted at Howard was done in an academic building on the campus, and the one from

Hampton was done in the campus library. Other interviews were conducted at places of convenience for participants such as apartments. Interviews lasted between thirty-five and seventy-five minutes. William and Mary students provided the interviews that were closer to the seventy-five minute time frame, a fact that seemed to be contributed to their familiarity with me.

I taped all interviews using either a Marantz recorder or an iPhone application. I took detailed notes when each interview happened because I wanted to refer to them later to locate “key quotations or passages that [could] be accessed [and analyzed] on the recording for transcription” in case not all my interviews were transcribed quickly enough (Gray, 2014, p. 398). The recordings were downloaded and saved onto my password-protected computer. My notes were typed and also stored on my computer. Participants were paid twenty-five dollars as compensation for an interview. The interview questions I asked pertained to my participants’ dual racial and sexual minority identities, their experiences with curriculum and instruction in their humanities courses, and their experiences with different racial and sexually oriented communities.

3.2.5 Ethical compliance

In order to maintain an ethical research process, I used a number of recognized strategies. First, as Gray (2014) recommends, I gained informed consent from my participants through consent forms. These consent forms informed them of the research process, for what their responses would be used, the reason I asked them to participate in the study particularly, the benefits of my work, and my methods of maintaining confidentiality. The confidentiality agreement stated that responses reported in my thesis paper would have no personal names attached to them. Rather, all participants were given or gave me a pseudonym that was used to reference their personal narratives. In order to uphold confidentiality, I not only use participants’

pseudonyms in formal presentations, but I also do not mention individuals' majors in these presentations. My participants' dual racial and sexual minority statuses are already distinct features of their identities that could narrow audience's assumptions about who they are without the added distinction of academic major. The academic major classification falls under my agreement to not expose any personal affiliations for individuals at their respective universities.

Lastly, my consent form relays to participants that their participation and recorded statements in my research are voluntary. I did not want my participants to feel that their relationship with me or any other individual would be compromised by their lack of participation in my research. Therefore, I informed them that participation was voluntary and that they could agree to not participate, participate and then stop at any time in the interview, or participate and have their responses changed or destroyed completely at any time in my research process. Participants read and electronically signed and dated consent forms before the start of each interview. Additionally, I asked each participant if he needed clarification for any information in the consent form in order to make sure that I had his full consent with no possibility of unintended coercion.

3.3 Data analysis

Interviews were transcribed and analyzed for emerging patterns and themes that capture “something important about the data in relation to [my] research question” (Gray, 2014, p. 609). I followed the rules that Gray (2014) outlines about transcription and note taking. He recommends that the researcher transcribe interviews as quickly as possible in order to capture and code for patterns and themes that informed my analysis of later interviews. For preliminary presentations of my data, I used detailed notes that I took during my interviews to locate key quotes and passages—for transcription purposes—that tied back to themes in earlier interviews

(Gray, 2014). I used thematic analysis as my method to analyze the data that I collected through these interviews. This method is used to identify and analyze “patterns (themes) within qualitative data...and is a form of pattern recognition within the data...” (Gray, 2014, p. 609). These patterns or themes tie capture “something important about the data in relation to the research question,” and it creates a patterned meaning in the data itself (Gray, 2014, p. 609). Whereas the themes in an inductive method of analysis emerge from the data itself, these patterns emerge from and tie back to the researcher’s theoretical framework and question (Gray, 2014). Thematic analysis, then, focuses on a detailed presentation of specific aspects of the data that are significant to the body of research as a whole (Gray, 2014). The themes that developed in my data analysis gave specific attention to my LGBTQ Black male participants’ experiences with the intersection of race and sexuality in various academic and social communities. The theoretical framework that I have adopted for my research is a QOC critique, which challenges educators to structure curriculum and instruction with equal and equitable consideration of intersected minority identities (Brokenbrough, 2013, 2014, 2015; Kumashiro, 2001; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010). Thus, the patterns that emerged from my data speak to the need for a QOC critique in collegiate academic environments.

Gray (2014) outlines six phases by which a researcher can practically approach a thematic analysis of data. As he suggests for the first two phases, I conducted a focused reading of each individual interview, and then I established initial codes, or categories, for participant responses that indicated possible patterns or themes (Gray, 2014). I then searched for themes from these initial codes that I gathered from each individual interview, and I reviewed these themes in order to group together repeated responses (Gray, 2014). I have particularly identified three overarching or main themes that emerged from repetition of subcategories: a perceived

struggle to reconcile dual sexual and racial minority identities for participants, a report of the various places and spaces for isolation or discrimination in participants academic and social experiences, and a lack of discussion around topic of the intersection of race and sexuality or race and sexuality in general. I do identify some subcategories that relate to each of these three main themes in the presentation of my results; however, I only present these smaller categories as a way of providing clarity for the larger themes. As Gray (2014) recommends, I constantly tie my themes and subcategories back to my research investigations/question and the literature I collected. Throughout the presentation section of my results, I use a descriptive method in which I count the number of individuals whose experiences relate to a particular theme or subcategory (Gray, 2014). I do this action in order to establish how often each of my participants described that they related to a particular pattern.

Chapter Four

Results

4.1 Struggles in reconciling dual identity

Though all of my participants self-identified as being Black,GBTQ, and male, they all explained that they either had not fully reconciled their dual identities personally or did not feel free to be fully “Black” and “GBTQ” in all social and academic contexts of their lives. I gave my participants the opportunity to reaffirm their self-identifications by asking them how they identified themselves in terms of race or ethnicity, sexuality, and gender at the beginning of the interview. Each participant responded that he was “Gay.” One participant, Raymond, explained that he preferred to think of his definition of “Gay,” however, as being “exclusively attracted to men” most of the time but not always excluding the possibilities of an attraction to the opposite sex. One participant, Patrick, described himself as both “Gay and Queer interchangeably” because, while he is attracted to men exclusively, he does not want to be labeled in terms of a binary sexuality like homosexual or heterosexual.

Even more, each participant responded that he identified himself as Black and/or African American with regards to race. Two participants, Patrick and Kemp, added that they also identified with other races and ethnicities because of their cultural backgrounds. Patrick explained that he is Mixed, African American, Puerto Rican, Italian, and Irish in addition to being Black, while Kemp explained that he identified as interracial, both Black and White. After re-establishing their self-identifications, I asked my participants if they would say that they identified themselves more in terms of their race or sexuality, if at all, since my research is focused specifically on observing these two aspects of my participants identity. The pattern that emerged was that my participants did perceive themselves as leaning in one direction of either

aspect of their identity. This pattern connects back to my theoretical framework about a QOC critique because it is essential for educators to understand that the perspectives of queer students of color can be constantly divided by a normative and binary world that often refuses to allow the multiple dimensions of their identities to exist in all academic and social contexts (McCready & Kumashiro, 2006).

4.1.1 In terms of race

Eight of ten participants acknowledged that they believed the rest of society is able to see their race first, while two of ten participants felt that their racial identity was called into question from situation to situation. Only four of ten participants, however, always placed race at the forefront of their self-identification. Raymond expresses this fact when he says that:

I honestly feel like my sexuality is really—you know, I feel like it's jus—it's not even that deep. I feel like it's important cause it is a part of my make-up. But, I honestly don't feel that it's that prevalent to my identity because sexuality is solely...what you do at that time and, I mean, most people don't—well—a lot of people don't put their sexuality right when you walking down the street, but, you know, with that said...being Black, I mean, you can always see that quickly...But that's something that I hold close to me. So I definitely do identify with race primarily and first and foremost.

Marc, similarly, believes that race is the most important factor to his self-identification because, like Raymond, he feels that his being Black is something people can easily determine by looking at him. He also feels that his being black holds specific historical and cultural roots:

I feel the baggage or the history of my race run deeper than my self-identified sexuality...I identify myself more with my race because I have to understand that the world will identify me first, and most importantly, by my race...so to maneuver in this

world I have to understand first that what people are gonna judge—cause that’s what they see before I even speak is my race, so that comes with, you know, prejudgments, pre-prejudices, preconceived thoughts, you know, whether they be positive or negative...And then sexuality and other things unfold as I begin to speak and as they see my mannerisms. For these two participants, as well as Martin and Samuel, race overshadows sexuality, generally, because of how they feel other individuals will interpret and/or discriminate against their bodies based on skin color. Patton (2011) similarly found that several of her LGBTQ African American male participants, whom she interviewed in a historically black academic and social setting, always privileged their racial identity over their sexual identity because they recognized that “the needs of the African American community,” in terms of discrimination and cultural mobility, were more prevalent in their lives (p. 93). Additionally, her participants, like Raymond and Marc, did not see their sexual identities as being as ubiquitous or salient as their racial identities were in their everyday lives and interactions (Patton, 2011). Goode-Cross and Tager (2011) also found that the LGBTQ African American students at a predominately White university, whom they interviewed, reported feeling more deeply connected to their racial backgrounds. They felt this way because they felt protected within the more heterosexual, African American community from the prevalent issues that racism brought about for them.

4.1.2 In terms of sexuality

Three of ten participants that I interviewed identified more in terms of their sexuality because they believed that identifying in this manner made them feel connected to a movement. These individuals argue that they feel LGBTQ people are highly oppressed in American society and that there is a fear among LGBTQ persons about being visible and accepting about their

sexualities. Because of these beliefs, my participants appear to want to be leaders and advocates for openness and acceptance. Trent explains that:

I feel like people can see that I'm a person of color...I feel like because there are more social barriers attached to sexuality, LGBT people, Gays especially, we are sort of the minority on deck now. So I feel like that is that group that I associate with and identify with the most because...I just feel like its harder to be Gay, but that's not something I want to neglect or denounce...people know the history, well at least some people do, of Blacks in America, you know what I mean, but no one is really talking, you know, Gays and things like that...by identifying as Gay, openly, its sort of being a part of some sort of movement and progression in the twenty-first century, which I think is crucial.

Though Trent fully accepts both of his identities, he feels that his Black identity should take a back seat to his sexual orientation because of the possible positive effect that his being openly GBTQ would have on other LGBTQ individuals' perceptions of being publicly visible. Thus, he privileges one identity over the other for personal/political reasons (McCready & Kumashiro, 2006).

4.1.3 Race and sexuality as situational

Three of ten participants felt that they lean more towards openly expressing their racial or sexual minority identities depending on the group of individuals they are around at any moment. Beau, for example, explains that he identifies more in terms of his race at times:

...just because that's the first thing people see. Like if I walk into a group of White people, that's probably the first thought I'd have in my head is that "I'm the only Black person here," not necessarily "I'm the only Gay person here"...cause like truthfully I don't know that.

He goes on to explain that:

...and it also depends on the environment though because like if I were going into my group of—like if I were going into a group of people who were doing theater, like I may identify more with my race because I don't know like the span of sexualities in that room. But if I was at like a frat party, then I would—may identify more with my sexuality because I know there are probably less LGBTQ representation in that kind of an environment, so that would be the first thing that would come to like the forefront of my mind is like, “oh my god. I'm the only Gay person here.”

Isaiah similarly purports that he identifies more in terms of his race, but this identification can change when he is at his historically Black college:

In the world probably race [in terms of self-identification]. As it relates to college, because I'm at an HBCU, it's sexuality because my blackness—not to say my blackness is irrelevant, but its not, you know, it doesn't differentiate me...I feel like I deal with race issues more often than I deal with sexuality issues [in the larger world].

These two individuals are alluding to the fact that, when a person is both GBTQ and Black, there can be a situational divide between the two identities that makes him move away from expressing both his identities openly and equally. For Beau and Isaiah, their situational self-identification depends on their positional minority status within dominant group contexts.

Patrick explains that he must always work to express a distinct aspect of his identity in various social and academic contexts. Patrick, unlike Beau and Isaiah, tends to lean toward tracing those aspects of his racial and sexual identity that relate to rather than against the dominant group members in a particular context. Patrick explains that when he is around individuals who are participating in similar research on race and African Diasporic identity, then

he feels that his sexual identity does not surface. When he is outside of groups that are either participating in research on race or of his same racial and/or ethnic backgrounds, then he feels that his sexuality becomes more prevalent. As he puts it:

My identity gets kind of called into question, or called into attention in certain moments and contexts...I always feel like an ambassador of myself and to myself almost.

As Misawa (2010) explains, “Gay People of Color are torn between their racial identity and their sexual identity in today’s society as they move between social groups that focus more on race or more on sexual orientation” (p. 27). His statement derives from the fact that LGBTQ individuals of color often find themselves in racially-centered communities that pay little to no attention on sexuality or in mainstream LGBTQ communities that give little to no attention on race (Misawa, 2010). McCready and Kumashiro (2006), in line with Misawa (2010), argue that marginalized LGBTQ individuals of color within racial and sexual minority groups upset the often normative constructs of identity politics with their dual identities because they could be viewed as drawing attention away from one-dimensional goals. They cite Bayard Rustin, a prominent Civil Rights activist, as an example of this perceived imbalance toward normative constructs:

...He [Rustin] refused to be silent about his homosexuality. Even though he organized the 1963 March on Washington, brought Gandhi’s protest techniques to the civil rights movement, and helped mold Martin Luther King Jr. into an international symbol of peace and nonviolence, he was silenced, threatened, arrested, beaten, imprisoned, and fired from important leadership positions largely because he was openly gay at a time when the leadership of the civil rights movement was concerned about how his reputation as a gay man...might embarrass and ultimately compromise the unity of the movement (McCready & Kumashiro, 2006, p. 134).

It is from this quote and the arguments that Misawa (2010) makes above that Beau, Isaiah, and Patrick's situational identity shifts can be understood. These participants underscore the fact that an LGBTQ Black male's dual identities, as they exist in a society that depends on normative and binary constructs even with regards to seemingly progressive identity politics, can often force him to divide his attention between his identities to suit representation needs or to downplay one identity to avoid isolation.

4.2 Discrimination and isolation in various contexts

As I discovered from in my literature review, LGBTQ Black males, and queer students of color in general, face verbal harassment and academic exclusion in a number of settings that lead to negative outcomes like academic underperformance or feelings of isolation (Goode-Cross & Good, 2009; Goode-Cross & Tager, 2011; Harper, Wardell, & McGuire, 2011; Henry, Fuerth, & Richards, 2012; Johnson, 2008; Patton, 2011; Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012). Similarly, all of my participants reported that they felt some level of isolation or discrimination in various academic and social contexts. Specifically, these emotions were most prevalent in their interactions with Black, White, and LGBTQ academic and social communities. This theme connects back to my overall conceptual framework because part of the need for a QOC critique derives from its ability to challenge the discrimination and isolation that LGBTQ students of color face through representation and affirmation in the academy (Brokenbrough, 2013, 2014, 2015; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010).

4.2.1 Predominately Black social and academic settings

For four participants who attend William and Mary, individuals who have also attended predominately White public and private high schools, their feelings of isolation and exclusion in predominately Black settings have taken place mostly in social contexts (church, Black Greek

life events on campus, Black Student Organization events, etc.). Raymond explains that he feels very “different” in predominately Black community settings when he is “amongst like a very large like heterosexual group cause I don’t know if anyone understands me or if—sometimes I have paranoia [that] people are judging me and are uncomfortable,” suggesting that his sexuality marginalizes him. Trent similarly expresses feelings of isolation in predominately Black, specifically heterosexual and male, community settings such as Black Greek life events and Black student groups in general because:

...you just hear people saying things that’s offensive and degrading to, you know, people in the LGBT community. Particularly Gay males, I feel, get a bad rep...for example I was at a cook-out maybe my Junior year or my Senior year, and I remember...someone I know, well-enough, who’s also a fraternity brother to one of my best friends, he was saying some offensive things about Gay guys...what he said was graphic and it was offensive...and I think I’ve heard enough stuff like that said, by Black males especially, to the point where I’m like “okay I’m turned off...” And I don’t like to generalize, but I do feel that when I’m in a group of predominately Black people I feel isolated because of my sexuality definitely.

Additionally he explains that, like some other participants:

[most Black individuals in his experiences say]...I either talk like a girl or that I don’t talk Black...what’s talking like a boy? What’s talking Black?...Just like we come in various shades people, guess what, we have different personalities and different demeanors...I don’t understand why so many Black people, especially, they want to compartmentalize, they want to put everybody in a box.

For Trent, it appears as if his sexuality, paired with homophobic stereotypes about his voice or speech, has worked to isolate him from the Black community because his identity does not seem to align with all of the features of what he considers to be a “compartmentalized” Blackness.

For the two participants who attend Hampton (91% Black student body) and Howard (93% Black student body), their feelings of isolation in predominately Black settings have been prevalent in academic and, for Isaiah only, equally so in social spaces as these colleges/universities are predominately Black institutions (Education Portal, 2014; Forbes, 2014). Isaiah explains:

In every aspect [he feels isolated]. In, you know, the classroom, completely. I’m like one of the only, you know, people who are representative of my community [LGBTQ community]. And sometimes you feel that pressure. Um in the dorm setting...you have people that are kind of—assume like “oh he’s Gay, so he’s gonna look at me like [sexually].”

Marc also explains that he feels isolated in predominately Black academic settings because:

my sexuality may influence my opinion and these [opposing] ideas in the [class] discussion...I do find myself being the one who has the opposite or opposing view for various topics.

This academic isolation in predominately Black settings is, Marc explains, simply coincidental, as his opinions are informed by his sexuality, making him feel isolated, but he does not ever feel directly attacked because of his sexuality. In fact, Marc reports feeling most comfortable in Black community settings, having some of his most fulfilling moments in his barbershop interactions with other Black men.

Raymond, Trent, Isaiah, and Marc's responses help readers to understand the fullness of the academic and social experiences of LGBTQ students of color at various levels and within various contexts. When educators observe and attempt to mitigate instances of isolation and discrimination for queer students of color, they must be cognizant of the places and spaces, whether social, academic, or both, that these instances are prevalent (Brokenbrough, 2013, 2014, 2015; McCready, 2013; Misawa; 2010). This fact is especially significant when dealing with different educational environments like predominately White and historically Black colleges. Strayhorn and Mullins (2012), help demonstrate the significance of comparing and analyzing the experiences of LGBTQ students of color under multiple conditions with their study of the social discrimination that Black, Gay male students faced in residence hall communities at six predominately White institutions at which they conducted research. Strayhorn and Mullins (2012) and their research team interviewed twenty-nine Black, Gay male participants at these six predominately White institutions.

Our research uses very similar sampling strategies and research methodologies. They used a purposive sampling strategy (Gray, 2014) in which they worked with presidents of the LGBTQ organizations at each of these institutions as a way of gathering participants who met the qualifications for their research: being self-identified as Black, Gay, and male (Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012). These scholars used narrative interviews as their primary research methodology for collecting and analyzing data like myself (Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012). They found that Black, Gay males face homophobic and racist harassment within the residence halls from both White peers and Black peers, with these participants reporting that their White peers were inclined to harass and discriminate against them because of both their sexual and racial minority identities (Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012).

For my own research, I opened up my questions enough to allow my participants to examine the places and spaces in which they experienced isolation or discrimination rather than limiting it to one social venue. One goal of a queer of color critique is to work toward a solution for mitigating social discrimination and isolation with maximum strength and grasp on the fullness of the queer of color experience at the intersections of identity (Brokenbrough, 2013, 2014, 2015; Ferguson, 2004 Kumashiro, 2001; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010). Therefore, I gave my participants freedom to provide me with a variety of contexts and sources which they experienced discrimination and isolation in both predominately White and historically Black institutions through questions that were not limited to particular academic and social places or spaces. My goal was to capture the multiple sources of oppression around the topic of racial and sexual minority identities in order to develop a more nuanced strategy for combating these various oppressive forces (Brokenbrough, 2013, 2014, 2015; Ferguson, 2004 Kumashiro, 2001; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010).

4.2.2 Predominately White social and academic settings

Six of eight participants at William and Mary and my one participant at Hampton University explained that they have mostly felt isolated in academic spaces because of the White community. These individuals profess that, aside from Isaiah's historically Black college experience, they have always been one or one of very few Black individuals in their high school and college courses. For most of these individuals, their being one or one of very few Black students in their academic courses has been isolating because, as Raymond explains:

It can kind of be overwhelming if you don't see yourself in a room full of thirty people. Or see someone who is not like you or is someone who could have been from your community or someone who may or may not have had a very similar background and

upbringing as you...the professor doesn't resemble me or my fellow students don't...Sometimes I feel like I have to be the representative of uh, you know, Black people in that moment.

Trent and Kemp both express never having felt isolation in predominately White academic or community settings. Trent feels that his predominately White background (schools and neighborhood) had made it normal for White people to be a majority, causing him to never think of himself as being racially isolated; whereas, Kemp, being a biracial student who equally identifies as Black and White, feels that he has not really had the same isolating experiences with White individuals because, while he has been in predominately White classes and has been frequently asked to label his racial identity, these factors "didn't really affect my academics and getting the [class] work done."

4.2.3 Predominately LGBTQ social and academic settings

Four of all ten participants expressed that they felt some level of isolation within the LGBTQ community because of race, class, or body type with regards to what they considered to be mainstream definitions of homosexuality. When I asked Enrique if he ever felt isolated in a predominately LGBTQ academic or community setting, he responded:

Yes, cause I feel that mainstream gay, especially in DC, is White...For instance, like Gay people have all these like terms like 'bear and like otter.' But if you're Black, you're just Black. It's like, that makes no sense. Like, I mean, I don't want any of the labels cause they're ridiculous, but like it doesn't make sense to me that Black people are just grouped under one term. Are we not different?...I think it is racist that um and prejudice that like they have all these—or like the LGBT community has all these like terms and like labels, but then when it comes to Black people they kind of group them into one

group. And I see the Black community as a diverse and like interesting group, and I don't think that, that is something that a lot of like Gay people understand.

Even more, when I asked Beau to describe a homosexual individual to me in his opinion, he responded:

The homosexual people that I have been most exposed to, whether it be in real life or the media, have been middle class, white male, maybe like skinnier or well-built, you know, goes to the gym...maybe can pass for straight if they need to, but is obviously gay...

and further explaining that:

The [Gay] object of affection [in his experiences with movies, books, television] was 'tall, fit, not too feminine'...I think that is just the quote-on-quote ideal in the Gay community, and I think that is what I think of when I think of a Gay male.

These two participants, along with Marc and Samuel, allude to a type of racial division that puts White, LGBTQ individuals in a seemingly superior and sexually desirable position to their Blackness. McCready and Kumashiro (2006) similarly agree that there is, at times, a racial disparity in mainstream perceptions and definitions of LGBTQ identity.

4.3 Varying degrees of curriculum and instruction around race and sexuality

As I mentioned in my literature review section, the academic and social isolation or discrimination that LGBTQ Black males face can be exacerbated because of curriculum and instruction that either ignores their dual minority experiences in the curriculum or paints their experiences in a denigrated or pathologized manner (Bailey, 2009; Blackburn & McCready, 2009; Brockenbrough, 2013, 2014, 2015; Decena, 2011; Ferguson 2004; Marquez & Brokenbrough, 2013; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010). From my interviews, I found that these scholarly observations were partially true for my participants. All ten participants reported that

there were various academic and social spaces in which they felt discriminated against or isolated because of their interactions with LGBTQ, Black, and White individuals, respectively. None of my participants ever felt that they were discriminated against because of curriculum and instruction in their courses. Rather, my participants' responses centered on whether or not they felt underrepresented or included in the curriculum and instruction based on their dual identities. At times, my participants' negative emotions with regards to underrepresentation paralleled their experiences of isolation as dual racial and sexual minorities in various academic and social spaces.

The analysis of my participants' responses below supports the arguments scholars like Decena (2011), who talks about either about the Eurocentric elements of curriculum and instruction, or Ferguson (2004), who discusses the pathologized narratives of racial and sexual minorities. My analysis adds to this scholarship, however, because it offers specific examples on how LGBTQ male students of color feel disconnected or underrepresented. My participants also site specific examples of the complete lack or inclusion of curriculum and instruction on the intersection of race and sexuality as well as the varying degrees of curriculum and instruction on race and sexuality separately.

4.3.1 Curriculum and instruction around the intersection of race and sexuality

Only four of my ten participants stated explicitly that they studied the intersection of race and sexuality in their collegiate courses or readings. For two of these individuals, though, this study was limited to either a single unit within a single class or choice assignment within the course. Raymond recalls that he read individual pieces of literature on the intersection of racial and sexual minority identities in their courses. Raymond explains that most of the courses he

took dealt with singular identity issues or distinct topics that did not intersect factors of personal identity. He says that:

But um I say one thing that I recall from a play. It's an author, um Black playwright, excuse me, Tarell Alvin McCraney. And um his work deals with the Black experience and also it deals with a lot of homosexual themes, traits, and characteristics that happen in his plays. Well so, I read some of his works in the class. But um that's the extent that I can recall.

Raymond recalls that he can only remember one course where he read about the intersection of race with sexual orientation or themes around it. The exploration of the intersection of dual racial and sexual identities was limited to plays by a single playwright and, therefore, single experience.

Trent's academic experiences with the study of the intersection of race and sexuality came in the form of an individual research assignment in his major-required senior seminar.

Trent explains:

my capstone, my senior year, where we talked about um, you know, uh people of color who are Gay, right. So I told you that I did that project on the double marginalization. And these were immigrants, so some of them, you know, were of European background. But some weren't. Some were brown, you know. Some were uh, you know, Latino, but also Gay and now in Williamsburg, Virginia. What does that mean for you? So yeah, and so we would speak openly about that in class, like talking about my project. And they would ask questions. You know my classmates would ask questions. My professor would ask questions. My professors would even use that [his project] in examples when teaching in class. So yeah there were times when you talked about that intersection.

Trent sites this senior capstone independent research project, where he interviewed a small number of LGBTQ immigrants of color who had come to Williamsburg, and a brief discussion of the intersection of Black and Lesbian identities in the nineteenth century in another course as the only times in which the intersection of race and sexuality were apart of his academic experience. Like Raymond, Trent's experiences with intersectionality, when one is a racial and sexual minority, in curriculum and instruction were limited to single assignments and scholarship in courses that focused on singular features of minority identity.

Kumashiro (2001) encourages educators to be aware of whether or not the literature and scholarship that they present about the experiences of LGBTQ students of color is central in the space or curriculum. By this statement, he means that educators should integrate this wide and full range of materials on LGBTQ individuals of color "throughout the curriculum, instead of marginalized in only singular units once or twice a year" (p. 18). The material about LGBTQ individuals of color should not be presented in a tokenized fashion, but as an equal portion of the curriculum as scholarship on about Eurocentric or heterosexual communities. Again, when educators place literature and scholarship from and about the experiences of LGBTQ individuals of color into their curriculum and instruction, they demonstrate how a QOC critique, or lens of knowledge, can be an equally valuable method to enhance and extend the ways that all students analyze and understand formations of power, privilege, and oppression in the world around them (Brokenbrough, 2013; Cruz, 2013; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010). Trent and Raymond's professors offered them all space to perform individual research around the topic of intersectionality or to read a single play about the topic. This scholarship and research project appeared in a tokenized fashion as single units of study or apart from the central focus of the curriculum as a whole.

Samuel's experiences with curriculum and instruction on the intersection of race and sexuality were more in line with what Kumashiro (2001) explains is an affective model of analysis when an educator attempts to incorporate scholarship and instruction on intersectionality. Samuel discusses this link within the context of his historical memoirs class that he took to satisfy his freshman seminar requirement at William and Mary. In this class, he recalls:

the main focus was on race. But she definitely, my professor, um made sure that we considered consistently other identities um that intersect with race that sort of impact how um you experience life. So like we definitely talked about how um being male impacts your experience as a Black man, or how being Gay impacts your experience as like an Asian woman or something. So there was like definitely intentional incorporation of the ideas of intersectionality that she brought up again and again.

In a series of questions that Kumashiro (2001) says an educator should consider when he or she attempts to structure curriculum and intellectual spaces that are inclusive of the experiences of LGBTQ individuals of color, he includes:

do they ignore ways that racial difference can be read in not only racist but also sexist and queer ways, and thus, that definitions of *queer* must be culturally contextualized if the various oppressions of queers are to be addressed...When implementing progressive pedagogies, what differences are being affirmed? If they target racial difference and racism, do they ignore ways that conceptualizations of 'race' are already (hetero)sexualized, and thus, complicit with heterosexism...(p. 17).

When an educator asks these questions and considers them, he or she more fully trace the multiple and intersecting sources of marginalization for individuals with dual racial and sexual

minority identities, and he or she can challenge deficit, dominant narratives around these identities ((Brockenbrough, 2013, 2014, 2015; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010). Samuel's professor, in this instance, clearly worked toward a pedagogy that utilized a QOC critique because she always considered the multiple dimensions of oppression that could arise with regards to the intersection of race and sexuality. Samuel's collegiate academic experiences, thus far, have contained this one course in which the topic of intersectionality, was discussed openly and equally in relation to the scholarship in the course. I make this comment because I want educators, after they read my research, to consider how Samuel's single course experience with pedagogy that equally included perspectives of LGBTQ individuals of color can be extended to an even greater number of humanities courses.

As a graduate student, Patrick has had a greater opportunity to study the intersection of race and sexuality. Most of his studies around the topic are done through books and articles that he has selected for his particular research and teaching interests. He explains that his studies on intersectionality have helped him understand how many minority groups and minority bodies share in a similar oppression that arises when one has a dual racial and sexual minority status. For example, he discusses how he has learned to use the word queer to describe bodies that are marked by difference and are marginalized within particular social systems. Therefore, he demonstrates how racial minorities, Black individuals specifically, share a type of queer identity that is link to marginalization rather than to sexuality. Though Patrick explains that he has had more opportunities to read about intersectionality, he finds that there has been a racial disparity in the authors of the scholarship in the courses he has taken on sexuality and generally:

I guess my contention is that, for all of the focus on some of these critical periods and the critical intersecting identities that come up in some of these classes, the canon is still very

largely written by White people, White, Northern-European, culturally-centered types, or Northern-Atlantic, I'll say, to include the U.S. too... So the history of sexuality class that I had, very little attention was paid to people of color and like really sitting with the differences of subjectivity between LGBTQ people of color and White LGBTQ people. I feel like that was another thing that was, to me, a very glaring omission: that we spent the majority of that semester talking about—without referencing race, right. We were constructing this in the normal LGBTQ, but it's always an ideal type of a White person. Patrick's course on sexuality made the topic of intersectionality invisible in the curriculum. Thus, the professor failed to grasp the fullness and complexities of multiple minority identities and dimensions of oppression through the articles and books assigned, a factor with which Kumashiro (2001) suggests educators should be concerned.

Patrick explains that, when his interest in these works on the intersection of race and sexuality, or just race in general, would arise, then he would have to personally investigate in order to find materials that addressed his interests. While Patrick considers this personal investigation into topics of his own interest a more normalized venture at the graduate level, he speaks about the undergraduate experience when he says that:

It's not fair to make a student be a teacher, right, or to put almost like the responsibility [on] the student, who's trying to learn. They have to then perform in some kind of educative way for other people in the class...

What Patrick means here is that he believes it is the responsibility of the professor, especially at the undergraduate level, to alleviate the student's personal investigation around studies of their identities and to mitigate definitions of privilege and access when class discussion turns to complex issues of identity. In eight of my ten interviews, Patrick included, I discovered that

participants blamed their study or lack of study around the topic of intersectionality on their levels of personal investigation into the subject through venues like independent research assignments or independently read books, plays, or novels. The students who did not personally investigate this subject, considered their own motivation as the primary source for their lack of information around the topic of intersectionality rather than their professor's failure to include curriculum and instruction around this area of study.

For the other six participants in my research, the intersection of race and sexual orientation was mostly an invisible factor in their collegiate academic experiences. This invisibility stems from the various ways in which race and sexuality were discussed separately in these individuals' experiences. In order to understand how my participants' experiences have been devoid of the study of intersectionality, it is essential that I highlight the nature of their curriculum and instruction with regards to race and sexuality as separate topics.

4.3.2 Curriculum and instruction on race and sexuality

Six of ten participants reported that they never studied the intersection of race and sexuality in any capacity in their collegiate academic experiences. For the four participants said that they did study intersectionality in some manner, but this study was not equally present in the curriculum and instruction. This lack of curricular attention around intersectionality parallels the fact that the majority of the curriculum and instruction in my participants' academic experiences was predominately Eurocentric or heterosexual. This unequal curricular attention around topics of race and sexuality led my participants to feel unrepresented or disconnected at times.

Six participants explained that their curriculum was predominately Eurocentric and that the topic of race was discussed once or very few times throughout their academic experiences. These six individuals recall that the topic of race in the majority of their courses, however, was

not present. Isaiah says that, even though he attends a historically Black college, the curriculum he has had “was Eurocentric still.” He remembers that in one of his humanities introductory courses the professor went into great detail about African art and its historical significance:

[we] talked about when uh—in humanities, like a lot of times Europeans would go into um like African, you know—where they [Africans] held there monuments at, they [Europeans] would like break off the nose and things and like take certain pieces to kind of like destroy the Afrocentrism, so they couldn’t say the Africans made this.

Isaiah says that when this discussion of racially specific art arose in this course, it was handled well, but he explains that the topic of race, overall, was not discussed enough in this course or any other courses.

Martin similarly could only recall one course in which the topic of race was discussed with regards to the Civil Rights Movement. Martin says that this was “like the only class where we kind of like touched one race, but it was in like the context of like court cases.” The topic of race in this course was limited to a single unit of study. Martin explicitly states that he felt disconnected because of the lack of curricular attention given to race, and even sexuality, in his experiences:

Um the literature, I guess, was a little bit disconnecting because it wasn’t talking about anything of like sexuality issues, or like race issues, so like it’s not anything that I can like directly relate to. So in my mind its just like ‘Oh. This happened in history. Like this was a struggle between these classes of people or things like that.’

It is important that I underscore that Martin felt disconnected from the curriculum and instruction in his experiences because Delpit (2002) explains that students who cannot see their “cultural legacies” in the material that they study are “more likely to view themselves as inadequate” and

alienated from the instructional goals of school (p. 32). While Martin simply feels disconnected from the material he studies, this sense of disconnect could turn into internalized feelings of inadequacy for students who share his racial and sexual identities.

Beau adds to the experiences above when he discusses the lack of diverse racial representation among the scholars and scholarship that he studied. Beau explains that a majority of the plays he read in his theater courses were written by “White male authors,” though he did take one class that focused on a single Black playwright, August Wilson. Whenever his professors introduced plays written by Black playwrights and centered on issues of Black identity, these plays were usually presented as:

that one token play, or that one token book that’s by a Black author...Um nothing that I could truthfully identify with personally. When it was like maybe a Black play, I wanted to say I could identify with it on an African American level, you know. And a lot of the time, I kind of could. But it was just always in the back of my [mind] like, “oh this is *the* Black play of the semester,” you know.

Beau, here, explains that he has been given little opportunity to connect and identify with the curriculum he studies because the material is predominately Eurocentric and the scholars who produce it are predominately White. This lack of racial representation in the authors and scholarship in Beau’s courses led him to feel “so far removed from the experiences that [he] learn about in school, and [that he is] just like scraping to find some way to relate.”

Enrique, Trent, and Samuel also recall that the majority of the curriculum in their courses was Eurocentric. Additionally, the topic of race, for them, was presented without complexity or depth. When I make this statement, I mean that these participants felt the way that Black individuals, particularly, were portrayed in their discussions were dishonest and stereotypical.

Enrique says that there were only two courses in his academic experiences in which the topic of race was covered honestly and in depth. He explains that one course “was great because we got to discuss all the—like all these ways to be Black, which was like interesting and exciting for me.” In the other course, a Black literature course, Enrique explains that the pieces of literature he read “were the one’s that I felt like understood me and where I was coming from” with regards to his racial identity. In the majority of his courses Enrique, like Trent, perceived that professors and students approached the topic of race with a large amount of fear and created an atmosphere that did not permit honest and open discussion around the topic. Enrique equates the lack of discussion on race in his experiences to a double standard for Black students where they:

...are asked always like um to read stories outside of their um experience. Then a lot of professors will kind of not like study African American stuff or like stuff of any other culture because they don’t feel like they have the ability to like—or the like skills they need to really understand it. So it’s like, “wait, you’re expecting me to get all this information about Shakespeare, but you won’t sit and like discuss like *A Raisin in the Sun* with me because you’re afraid that like you won’t get it, or you’ll miss something, or you’ll be offensive?”

Samuel explains that only his Freshman Seminar, the same course that intersected race and sexual identity, gave him a single opportunity to discuss race in a complicated and non-stereotypical manner. He claims that race and issues around race were discussed:

...in a way that sort of presents Black people as being like really pathologized and, you know, dependent on welfare, and living in really resource-starved areas, and things like that...[In] like my Freshman Seminar, again, race was definitely complicated a lot more. Um we definitely talked about how your privilege depends not on your race but

different things like your gender identity, and sexuality, and things like that...[it has] been given depth and not so much just given like a on-the-surface sort of presentation. Samuel explains further that the more stereotypical and pathologized representations of Black individuals in his academic experiences and coursework leave him feeling disconnected from the scholarship and discussion at times. He says that he can relate to the pain and struggle of Black individuals who are “dependent on welfare” and “living in really resource-starved areas” because he is Black and the color of his skin connects him to these conditions of Black life. He feels, however, that he can only relate on a surface level since the classes he is in present Black people in “an almost stereotypical” manner. He does not share the negative features which are used to characterize black people in these classroom experiences. Moreover, both Samuel and Enrique state explicitly that they felt represented or disconnected in their courses based on whether or not these courses had honest and central discussion and scholarship around the topic of race. I make this comment in order to demonstrate that students who are both Black and LGBTQ can feel disengaged from and underrepresented by curriculum that leaves out even one part of their identities.

Nine of ten participants, including the individuals above, explained that sexuality was not equally represented in their curriculum and instruction. Isaiah, particularly, says that sexuality was never a part of the curriculum and instruction in any form. Marc and Raymond both explain that race was given equal representation in their experiences; however, they say that curriculum and instruction around sexuality was barely visible in their courses. Marc said that he could not remember a time in which sexuality was the central focus of a class or even discussed at all. Other than one play that touched on sexuality, he recalls, “everything else is a distant memory of a conversation or of a lecture” about sexuality that was tangential and never central to

the curriculum. Raymond recalls one class where he discussed sexuality as a more complex and central factor in the curriculum:

...we were focusing on like the LGBT social movement, social change era, which is still going on now and it's been going on for years. And we watched a series of documentaries in class, one being called like uh "Small Gay Bar." Other things, like we had several readings on like LGBT work.

This course, as in Enrique and Samuel's experiences with race, was the only one where sexuality was discussed with complexity and depth. The topic of sexuality for the majority of Raymond's experiences was limited to surface-level discussions that arose through brief analysis:

Um I guess it was discussed just as far as um—it was more so done just for people to acknowledge it. Um it was never, I guess, done so in-depthly to like really dissect it in way. But it was just saying like—there were conversations saying why these conversations need to happen and to understand these people and how everyone should deserve these rights... In a sense, it was done just to be like, "let's just talk about it and let's just acknowledge that it does exist." Cause I don't think I ever been in a class where someone really um, you know, going—you know, trying to break it down.

Raymond's experiences with intersectionality were limited to his reading a single play about it. Marc never discussed or read scholarship on the intersection of race and sexuality. It is important for educators interested in utilizing a QOC critique to consider how the unequal consideration given to sexuality in their experiences has led professors to also overlook the complexities around intersected racial and sexual minority identities (Brokenbrough, 2013, 2014, 2015; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010).

Kemp adds that he feels the scholarship in his experiences has been predominately heterosexual:

Um I think that this has always been one of my things growing up and in college as well...I just find more often than not that it [literature] targets heterosexual couples, or heterosexual norms, or typical issues that they face. And I think that, as we are progressing as a country, we are getting more transparency on LGBTQ issues and that there are more stories that are directed towards that.

Kemp is optimistic about the fact that there is more scholarship that is geared toward LGBTQ issues; however, this scholarship has not been present in the majority of the curriculum in his academic experiences. Rather, he has found independent research opportunities in which he explores sexuality in more detail. These opportunities came when Kemp participated as a research assistant in a psychology lab with a professor whose scholarship analyzed heterosexual students reactions to homosexual students on the William and Mary campus.

Chapter 5

Recommendations, conclusions, and future directions

From my participants' interview responses, I have concluded that individuals who are both Black and LGBTQ face particular social and academic burdens because of their dual (or multiple) identities. These social burdens appeared when my participants expressed their view that they did not feel free to identify as both Black and LGBTQ in all contexts of their lives. They also appeared in the form of social isolation and discrimination in various Black, White, and LGBTQ communal spaces because of my participants' dual identities. This isolation, at times, also derived from their being the only racial or sexual minority in their classes, which made them feel a sense of pressure to represent their identity group. My participants agree that they were not given an adequate amount of academic space to attempt to mitigate these social burdens because the curriculum and instruction was often predominately Eurocentric and heterosexual. Several participants explained that they felt that race and sexuality were not discussed honestly and in-depth when the topics did appear in their courses. Even more, only four participants were given the opportunity to address the topic of intersectionality in their academic experiences; however, the topic was only covered minimally.

Much of the scholarship that I discovered on LGBTQ Black males focuses on this isolation and discrimination. Johnson (2008), for example, underscores the discrimination that LGBTQ Black males face, at times, as a result of homophobic ideologies within the Black church. Strayhorn and Mullins (2012) conducted interviews with twenty-nine LGBTQ Black males between six predominately White institutions and found that LGBTQ Black males face homophobic and racist harassment within the residence halls from both White peers and Black peers. These findings resonated as true in my participants' experiences because seven of the

eight participants who I interviewed from William and Mary also said that they face homophobia and/or racism from their White and Black peers on campus. My participants add that venues with student organizations like campus Greek life and classrooms are examples of places where they face overt harassment.

Fewer scholars, however, actually turned toward education and academic spaces as a solution for mitigating discrimination and isolation. Brockenbrough (2013), for instance, utilizes what he calls a Queer of Color critique to “denaturalize the pathologization of queers of color by exposing the hegemonic social orders within which those pathologies were produced” (p. 428). What he means by this statement is that a QOC critique works to challenge discrimination and isolation around intersected racial and sexual minority identities through pedagogical methods that consider and address the social forces that create them (Brockenbrough, 2013).

Misawa (2010), as well, explains that a QOC critique is “designed specifically for sexual minority students of color who have traditionally been ignored and overlooked by mainstream discourses in higher education” (p. 31). In essence, there are scholars who are working to mitigate the same isolation and discrimination that my participants face because of their dual identities by working to structure academic spaces as areas for positive affirmation of these identities (Brockenbrough, 2013, 2014, 2015; Cruz, 2013; Kumashiro, 2001; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010). I add to this attempt at affirmation of dual sexual and racial identities and mitigation of discrimination and isolation through recommendations on educational practices and literature that are based on my participants’ responses and suggested strategies from scholars who focus on this topic.

5.1 Recognizing effect of representation

One key recommendation that I make based on my participants' responses is that professors should recognize the positive effect that including scholarship and discussion the intersection of race and sexuality in academic spaces can have on LGBTQ Black individuals. Marc explains that it can be very difficult to approach a conversation in social situations about intersectionality at historically Black campuses like his own because most of the Black individuals in his experiences strictly comply with heterosexual gender roles. He says, however, that academic spaces are the best places to begin the conversation because these settings give "it a certain respect, as certain intellectual quality or curiosity, which will manifest in daily life." He expounds upon this argument when he says:

I don't know, it's like if your professor told you that the sky was blue and then your friend told you that the sky was blue, you're most likely to believe your professor because you already have an established perception of their skill-set and what they know. So you're more gullible, or likely to be inclined to believe, or to take hold of what someone else who was your elder who was more established than you, whether it be financially, socially, intellectually—you're more inclined to take their ideologies and run with them.

There is a great benefit when an educator includes curriculum and instruction on intersectionality because he or she, according to Marc, has the power to impact his or her students' opinions about the topic and to give the topic a type of respect. Marc believes that, once the topic of intersectionality is given academic respect, there is the potential for a positive impact on how people interact with and treat individuals who are both LGBTQ and Black. Marc's belief in the positive impact that academic inclusion of curriculum on intersectionality could have for all students mirrors that of McCready (2013). McCready (2013) believes that, when educators

utilize a QOC critique and incorporate scholarship and discussion on intersectionality, they can engage “a range of stakeholders and allies interested in anti-oppressive approaches that interrupt that systems of domination that produce hegemonic modes of knowledge production” (McCready, 2013, p. 512).

All ten of my participants explained that they did not feel free to be fully Black and LGBTQ in all environments. Essentially, they perceived a type of struggle to reconcile their dual identities in all aspects of their lives. Samuel explained that this struggle was somewhat alleviated for him at an early age because he found positive affirmation and representation of his dual identities in books and television shows:

I’ve just always pushed myself to look for representations of Black, Gay men because I kind of thought—I kind of knew that I wasn’t going to find it in the media. So like reading books by like Joseph Beam, Essex Hemphill, or like James Earl Hardy, or watching certain T.V. shows like *Noah’s Arch* or something, that sort of helped me to like reaffirm myself and not feel so like yeah about being Black and Gay.

Samuel demonstrates how representation of LGBTQ Black male individuals in his own experiences positively impacted his own life and helped him find a way to exist “in those two spaces together [both Black and LGBTQ].” Samuel had to personally investigate in order to discover these representations. If educators included the works that Samuel found through his own investigation in their curriculum, then they could potentially produce the same feeling of affirmation for the LGBTQ Black male individuals in their courses.

5.2. Curriculum plan for intersectionality

5.2.1 Recommended scholarship and progressive incorporation

Like Samuel and Marc, all of my participants said that they recognized the significance of scholarship that is inclusive of LGBTQ, Black male experiences and characters for purposes of representation, affirmation, or engagement. I include some of the literature and scholarship that they recommended be incorporated into curriculum and instruction to make it more inclusive of LGBTQ, Black male experiences below³. I add recommended literature and scholarship that helped me affirm my dual identities in my collegiate experiences as well as a link and description of a syllabus from a professor at Harvard University who taught a class on the experiences of queer individuals of color (Bernstein, 2012⁴). This scholarship and literature is suited for collegiate humanities courses, specifically, because of more mature language use and descriptions in some of the pieces. I recommend that K-12 educators become more aware of these materials also in order to draw upon the theories and experiences in these works to better understand the complexities of LGBTQ, Black student experiences.

I understand that educators need a tangible curricular plan in order to incorporate the literature and scholarship that I present below and some of the works in the Berstein (2012) syllabus. In order for me to develop this curricular plan, I look toward an African American theater history course I took my freshman year at William and Mary to demonstrate how an educator could fully utilize a QOC critique through a curriculum that equitably includes LGBTQ Black male perspectives (Kumashiro, 2001; Misawa, 2010). The course was dedicated to presenting plays and articles written by a variety of Black playwrights and scholars about experiences within the Black community. The professor of this course worked hard to and, I believe, was phenomenal at incorporating plays that focused on the minority identities and cultural backgrounds that were predominant among the students in her class. She was only able

³ See Appendix 3

⁴ See Appendix 4

to incorporate one play about a character that was a Black, Gay male (McCraney, 2010).

Though she did not intend to, this professor appeared to present the topic of intersectionality in a tokenized fashion (Kumashiro, 2001). I have explained above in my literature review and results section that to present scholarship in a tokenized fashion means that educators include only one or two works about a topic in a single course (Kumashiro, 2001).

My recommendation to educators who want to know how to include scholarship on intersectionality is that they disperse four or five of these works throughout a course during a given semester. While four or five works may seem like a lot of material to include for one or very few individuals who are Black and LGBTQ in a course, these works need not all be equally substantial in length or depth. For example, in my African American theater course, the professor might build up to a discussion on the full-length play on intersectionality. As it was, the class moved from discussing plays in the Black Arts/Power eras up to the contemporary time period. The literature and scholarship on intersectionality might have followed this progression. My professor could have, for example, begun her integration process by having the class read an essay, excerpt, or poem by Beam (1986) on the experiences of Black, Gay men in conjunction with a play from the Black Arts/Power eras. We would talk about the essay, excerpt, or poem with regards to the intersection of race and sexuality; however, this introductory discussion should center more on how Beam's (1986) short work is influenced by elements of the Black Arts/Power movement such the construction of black masculinity.

In this arrangement, the first piece of scholarship on intersectionality would serve as a way to get students to consider race and sexuality from the start of the course. Next, my professor could have waited a few weeks and then had the class read a chapter from Munoz (1999) on the significance of drag performance for transgendered males of color as well as from

Pharr (2001) about the identity issues that Black, Gay men face in the twenty-first century. At this point, our discussions could have centered either on questions about the differences in discrimination for LGBTQ, Black male and heterosexual, Black males or the distinct manners in which LGBTQ Black males express themselves. Once the class was familiar and potentially comfortable with the topic of intersectionality because they had read three materials on it throughout the semester, my professor, lastly, could have us read the play by McCraney (2010) about the Black, Gay character Marcus. If the materials in this course had been dispersed in this manner, then the students would have been introduced to theories, essays, and poems about intersectionality before they ever had to grapple with a full-length play about it. Additionally, this progressive incorporation of texts would have maintained a balance between works about LGBTQ, Black male issues and other topics about the Black community and Black history.

5.2.2 Pre-reading questionnaire and reflexive writing

Kenney (2010) offers a design of a curriculum plan for educators to approach discussion on and assess the value of LGBTQ texts in a course that could also work for educators who want to include texts embodying intersectionality. This plan keeps in mind the significance of representation that Marc and Samuel discuss in relation to the topic of intersectionality. Kenney (2010) believes that adding queer-inclusive scholarship into curriculum and instruction can help students who identify as sexual minorities relate more to the topic of study in a course. When students who are sexual minorities feel that they can relate to the topics and texts of study in class, “they see intrinsic value in it” because the characters and issues being studied connect to their lived experiences (Kenney, 2010). Queer-inclusive texts, Kenney (2010) explains, like Marc, can be equally significant to students who don’t share this particular sexual identity

because “it helps [them] develop empathy for others, including people very different from them” (p. 67).

Kenney (2010) demonstrates this effect that queer-inclusive scholarship can have on a class when she tells the story of how she paired a reading of a LGBTQ short story with a pre-reading questionnaire and reflexive writing assignments that gave her an idea of the perspectives on homosexuality among her students. Kenney (2010) found it difficult to discuss LGBTQ scholarship, at first, because she perceived that her being openly LGBTQ would make her appear as “the gay teacher who teaches *only* gay stuff” (p. 65). In order to overcome this difficulty and to assess her student’s feelings about LGBTQ scholarship, she prepared a lesson where she had her students answer a “prereading questionnaire to find out what attitudes students bring with them to school” (p. 67). The questionnaire was anonymous, so Kenney (2010) did not know the name of any student who responded; therefore, she was able to ensure students that they would not be retaliated against because of their answers. The questions from the pre-reading assignment were:

(1) What are your beliefs about homosexuality? (2) Who or what has influenced those beliefs? (3) Do you know any LGBTQ people? (4) Have you read any books or seen any TV shows or movies containing LGBTQ characters? and (5) If you are straight, how would you react if someone mistook you for gay? If you are gay or bisexual, how would you react if someone mistook you for straight? (Kenney, 2010, p. 72).

She explains that most of her students responded with ambivalent attitudes toward several of these questions.

The majority of her students, for example, reported that they would not care if an individual were homosexual as long as that person did not make sexual advances toward them or

did not impact their lives in any other way. She explains that these responses demonstrated that her students perceived something to be wrong with homosexuality, but they had not completely understood how to articulate these feelings (Kenney, 2010). As only one student self-identified as “bi-curious,” it was essential for Kenney (2010) to capture the opinions of the heterosexual students in her course in order to help this majority navigate this sensitive discussion of sexuality (p. 68). In addition, a majority of her heterosexual students described that they would be offended or uncomfortable if they were mistaken as homosexual. These students offered simple explanations to their offense such as “because I know I’m not” or no explanation at all (p. 69). Kenney (2010) explains that these ambivalent and unresolved responses were good for her to collect as an educator because they helped her see that her students struggled with internal conflicts around the topic of homosexuality that derived from their having been able to avoid the topic in their social and academic experiences. She realized that she had the opportunity to introduce and inform these particular students about LGBTQ issues in a space where it was mandatory for them to work out these feelings in subsequent reflexive writing assignments and discussion.

I mention this pre-reading questionnaire and reflexive writing assignment because I recommend that humanities educators who are interested in incorporating scholarship and discussion on intersectionality utilize them as a ways to understand and assess students’ perspectives about and levels of comfort with discussing the topic (Kenney, 2010). This questionnaire is particularly important for educators because it is a way for them to discover which students identify as and face issues as LGBTQ, Black students without having to single them out in class discussion, which may cause them to feel negative pressures to represent their race or sexuality (Thompson & Sekaquaptewa, 2002). The questionnaire should be submitted

anonymously in order to ensure students that their responses will only be used to assess difficulties with or interests in material on intersectionality. This assessment should not stop educators from incorporating scholarship on intersectionality. Rather, it should be viewed as a guide for them to begin to understand how they may navigate discussion questions or comments about this scholarship while they try to remain open to a variety of student opinions. I recommend that educators make modifications to the questionnaire that Kenney (2010) presents.

The questions about intersectionality that I recommend would read:

- (1) Have you been introduced to intersectionality in your social or academic lives?
- (2) Have you read about or met individuals who are both racial and sexual minorities?
- (3) If you have not read about or met someone who is a racial and sexual minority, then have you seen these individuals depicted in movies or television?
- (4) Describe your reactions to these real life or fictional individuals.
- (5) Would you find it difficult or interesting to learn more about people who are racial and sexual minorities?
- (6) What would you find difficult or interesting about the topic?

When an educator asks these questions to students before reading material about intersectionality, he or she jumpstarts a process where he or she help students who are and are not LGBTQ and Black to at least think about struggles over this topic before reading about them (Kenney, 2010). In line with community-based models of education, educators can also give their students the opporuntity to reflect on how their social experiences might affect the ways that they approach and comprehend materials around sensitive topics like race and sexuality (Cress et al., 2013). With regards to a QOC critique, this questionnaire offers educators the chance to determine a method for discussing and incorporating scholarship on intersectionality

that potentially considers the voices of LGBTQ Black males, who their curriculum changes are for (Brokenbrough, 2013, 2014, 2015; McCready, 2013; Misawa, 2010).

I also recommend that educators continue to have students complete reflexive writing assignments throughout the semester as they read literature and scholarship about intersectionality beyond reflecting on their feelings in a questionnaire (Kenney, 2010). Kenney (2010) had her students respond in this style to the LGBTQ literature on issues like the persecution of gay and lesbian individuals who lived during the Holocaust. From these reflexive assignments, Kenney (2010) was able to see her predominately heterosexual student body develop empathy for the LGBTQ individuals as they read about experiences of harassment and persecution. Even a student who said that reading about two males having sexual intercourse was “nasty” expressed that he felt sad about the persecution and physical violence that LGBTQ individuals have faced historically (Kenney, 2010, p. 70). These reflexive assignments can help humanities educators track the potential development of empathy from students who are not LGBTQ and Black toward the issues that people who are LGBTQ and Black face. These assignments also keep the educator informed on how his or her methods for incorporating scholarship on intersectionality may be ineffective for both LGBTQ students of color and/or students who do not share these intersected identities from these students words. The pre-reading questionnaire and subsequent reflexive writing assignments act as mutually beneficial methods for educators and students, especially LGBTQ Black males, to reflect on representation and inclusivity in relation to curriculum on intersectionality (Cress et al., 2013; Kenney, 2010). Marc’s professors, for example, could utilize the questionnaire and reflexive writing assignments as way to begin conversations in his theater courses before and while they read

plays about LGBTQ Black individuals, a conversation that he says has been difficult to begin in his social experiences.

5.3 Integrating race and sexuality

Another recommendation that I gathered from my participants' responses is that they appreciate and feel that they can relate to material more when professors make parallels to race and sexuality with what they are studying in class. As my participants are both racial and sexual minorities, they feel that they can connect to material that deals with issues around homosexuality or Blackness. While many of them would like to see the intersection of race and sexuality integrated into the scholarship of their classes, they say that they understand it is difficult to cover this topic in courses where it may not apply. Therefore, they suggest that professors at least attempt to bring race and sexuality into the discussion in some manner. Martin says that he understands his classics courses are mostly focused on more historical events, but:

it like maybe would have been a little bit more outstanding if there was like a reading about like someone who struggled with their sexuality like in the past or something like that who—which isn't necessarily like talked about a lot.

The Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network [GLSEN] offers examples of what the integration of sexuality would look like in a variety of humanities course discussions and assignments (GLSEN, 2014). Under the section for educator resources on this website, there are recommendations on how educators can draw parallels between sexuality and the curriculum in history courses. The website recommends that educators talk about and choose readings on activist Bayard Rustin and how his sexual identity affected his role in the Civil Rights Movement if they study this era (GLSEN, 2014). These educators could use such the work of McCreedy and Kumashiro (2006) in order to help articulate the verbal and physical harassment that he faced

because of his sexuality. This particular recommendation also ties back to ways in which intersectionality can be brought into curriculum and instruction because it deals with an instance in which an individual is both LGBTQ and Black.

If a class focused on earlier time periods, then the website recommends that educators acknowledge the minority sexual identities of historical figures from these eras (GLSEN, 2014). The website offers examples like Francis Bacon, who created the scientific method, as an LGBTQ individual who made significant contributions during the Scientific Revolution (GLSEN, 2014). I would add to this recommendation by saying that the acknowledgement should not come in the form of a simple statement such as, “Francis Bacon was also LGBTQ.” Rather, it should be acknowledged in a form that underscores the positive implications of his contribution as a sexual minority during a period in which his sexuality was silenced. This fact allows for LGBTQ students of color to see positive representations of individuals who are apart of the LGBTQ community and who have had an active role in constructing the world around them (Delpit, 2002).

These recommendations might also be applied to situations in which educators draw parallels between race and course curriculum. This application could come in the form of a Eurocentric, classics course on the work of Shakespeare (1995) where educators can ask students questions about the African—referred to as a Moor identity throughout the plays—identity of a character like Aaron. I would recommend that educators center their discussion of race on how Aaron’s skin color is referenced in countless metaphors and images throughout the play in order to emphasize his role as a villain (Shakespeare, 1995). This discussion could open up a predominately Eurocentric curriculum to complex analysis on how racial minorities can be painted in denigrated manners in scholarship (Ferguson, 2004). At the same time, this discussion

could help LGBTQ Black male students, specifically, develop a critical mind toward other literature and scholarship that structures their racial identities in negative or pathologized depictions (Ferguson, 2004).

5.4 Future directions

My work on this thesis has prepared me to meet my future research goals. I have been accepted to and will attend the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education in the Education, Culture, and Society program. This program will equip me with the methodological and theoretical skills necessary to continue to advocate for LGBTQ students of color in K-12 and collegiate academic environments. Through this thesis research experience, I have gained a number of qualitative methodological skills, already, such as how to conduct ethical research, collect data through narrative interviews, prepare specific styles of interviews, transcribe and code interviews, gather high quality literature for a specific topic, work with community members in partnership, and practice presenting data in a number of class and colloquium forums. In addition, I have learned about and adopted a theoretical framework for my future research in the form of a QOC critique. I will continue to carry this framework with me, especially as I plan to be a future educator, and to always consider how I can make my curriculum and instruction inclusive of underrepresented races, sexualities, genders, classes, religions, and ethnic groups (Kumashiro, 2001; Misawa, 2010).

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Sample of possible interview questions

1. At what school are you a student?
2. What year are you at this school? Are you an undergraduate, graduate, or alumni student at either of these schools?
3. What is/was your major?
4. What humanities and/or language arts courses have you taken/did you take at your school?
5. What is your age?
6. Do you publicly acknowledge your sexuality? Is this factor important to your self-identification?
7. How do you identify yourself in relation to race and ethnicity?
8. How do you identify yourself in relation to gender?
9. How do you identify yourself in relation to sexuality?
10. Describe the race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and gender of your friend group.
11. Would you say that you identify yourself more in terms of your race or your sexuality?
12. What factors make you identify yourself more in terms of your race or your sexuality?
13. What other factors do you feel contribute to how you identify yourself? Do these factors affect your academic studies in anyway? Do you select courses based on these factors?
14. Are you familiar with the term solo status (If not then I will explain that it is when one enters into a social situation in which he or she is a sole representative of his or her social group, subjecting him or her to negative stereotypes and scrutiny by the dominate group in the social setting and making him or her feel isolated from the group)? If you are familiar with the term, then what does it mean to you?
15. Have you ever experienced solo status? In what situation did you experience it?
16. Have you ever experienced solo status in an academic setting?
17. Do you feel isolated in a predominantly Black academic or community setting?
18. Do you feel isolated in a predominantly White academic or community setting? In what ways?
19. Do you feel isolated in a predominantly LGBTQ academic or community setting? In what ways?
20. What literature, novels, poems, plays, or scholarly articles did you read in your humanities courses? Would you consider this literature diverse in relation to its topics, themes, or characters?
21. What critical frameworks, time periods, political movements, or major themes were discussed in your humanities classrooms or appeared in the literature in these classes? Would you say that the critical frameworks, time periods, political movements, or major themes were diverse in their nature? If not, then what did you feel the curriculum lacked?
22. Did you ever feel that a particular subject, piece of literature, play, article, novel, poem, or theme incorporated into the curriculum of your class related to your own experiences or identity?
23. How were race and complex issues surrounding race discussed in your humanities classes?
24. Was the topic of race, in your humanities classroom experiences, ever discussed in

- relation to other topics of personal identity like gender, sexuality, ethnicity, or religion? If yes, then in what ways did the professors of the classes discuss this intersection? Did he or she incorporate the discussion into the curriculum? Was the intersection of race with these other topics appear as “choice” options in independent research assignments?
25. How were sexuality and complex issues surrounding sexuality discussed in your humanities classes?
 26. Was the topics of sexuality, in your humanities classroom experiences, ever discussed in relation to other topics of personal identity like gender, sexuality, ethnicity, or religion? If yes, then in what ways did the professors of the classes discuss this intersection?
 27. Did you ever feel disconnected from the literature, poems, plays, scholarly articles, novels, or topics of study that were a part of the curriculum or discussions in your humanities courses? Why did you feel disconnected?
 28. What do you feel was diverse about the subjects and literature you studied in your humanities courses? What was not diverse about the subjects and literature?
 29. Even when topics of diversity were discussed in your humanities courses, did you feel that they were diverse enough or that they covered a substantial amount of subtopics in relation to diverse communities?
 30. How might a professors’ all-encompassing definitions, ideologies, and/or lectures about a particular racial, ethnic, sexually oriented, or gender group make you feel?
 31. What was disconcerting about the professor’s presentation of each social group?
 32. Is the contemporary literature in humanities courses incorporating more complex discussions of subtopics in relations to race, sexuality, gender, and ethnicity? If so, then what examples of literature, characters, or topics can you offer me in relation to this question, and what about this literature is more complex? If not, then why do you feel this way?
 33. Do you feel that there are distinct issues that arise with the intersection of race and sexuality? If so, then describe what particular issues are relevant to your experiences or others? If not, then why do you feel there are no issues that arise?
 34. Who is a homosexual person to you? Describe him or her to me in your opinion. What race is he or she? What does he or she look like? What social class is he or she from? What gender is he or she?
 35. You have described who a homosexual person is in your opinion. Why did you describe him or her in this manner (look, gender, race, ethnicity, social class, etc.)?
 36. What factors contributed to this description of a homosexual person?
 37. Do you feel that anything you have read in your academic courses or humanities courses contributed to this description? If so, then why? If not, then what factors did contribute to this description?
 38. What descriptions have your heard other individuals make in relation to describing a homosexual individual?
 39. Do you believe that literature or perceptions in your humanities courses or in humanities courses in general led you or other students to draw conclusions about a homosexual individual? If so, then what particular literature or topics of discussion led you or others to draw these conclusions?
 40. In your opinion, should humanities courses place more emphasis on studying and incorporating literature around the intersection of race and sexuality? Should this emphasis also apply when discussing issues of sexuality in relation to other subtopics

- such as religion, gender, femininity, masculinity, and ethnicity? If not, then why?
41. Do you feel that the humanities courses you have taken already adequately address issues that surround that intersection of sexuality with these other subtopics? Why? How do they address the issues surrounding the intersection?
 42. Could presenting only one racial, gendered, or ethnic perspective in relation to sexuality cause homosexual or heterosexual individuals to draw generalized conclusions about the LGBTQ community's cultural practices and values as a whole?
 43. What literature would you recommend incorporating into humanities curriculum in order to create uniquely diverse figures that address issues surrounding the intersection of race and sexuality?
 44. Follow-up interview?

Appendix 2. Sample consent form

I. PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH STUDY:

This study is being conducted in order to examine various factors that contribute to academic and career success for students and alumni of The College of William and Mary, Howard University, or Hampton University.

II. WHAT WILL BE DONE:

You will be asked to provide some information about your academic and research experiences at W&M, Howard, or Hampton. You will be asked to provide answers to open-ended questions about your overall academic achievement in humanities courses and how your academic achievement has been affected, negatively or positively, by factors of race and sexuality. Your participation in this study should take about an hour.

III. POSSIBLE BENEFITS:

The results from this research will be synthesized into a model that will be tailored to inform students, professors, and scholars at W&M about issues surrounding the intersection of race and sexuality. Interviews with LGBTQ Black male students from Howard and Hampton will act as a model of comparison to W&M level of discussion surrounding this subject. This information may also potentially increase the amount of students who do research at The College of William and Mary and also promote true integration of ideas into the College's plans for undergraduate research. The results will increase the understanding of what curricular factors, pedagogies, and other structures within higher education foster comprehensive academic participation among underrepresented groups. The results may also be used for articles, books, and/or presentations. Pseudonyms will be substituted in any publications or presentations for identifying information as to not compromise the identity of the participants. Your answers will be used to aid faculty at W&M and to engage a broader diversity of students and propose revisions to the current undergraduate teaching and research model.

IV. POSSIBLE RISKS:

There are no risks associated with this study besides what you would experience in everyday life.

V. CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS:

All information collected for this study will remain confidential. Completed interviews will remain on a password-protected computer. In addition, interview responses will not have personal names or affiliations on them and participants will be referred to by pseudonyms in order to protect their confidentiality. Interviews will be audio or video taped with permission, and the audiotapes and all other information will be kept confidential and secure. Participation is voluntary and questions may be omitted. Pseudonyms will be substituted in any publications or presentations for identifying information as to not compromise the identity of the participants. By signing this form and consenting to participate in this research study, you are indicating your agreement that all information collected from this survey may be used by current and future researchers in such a fashion that your personal identity will be protected. Such use will include sharing anonymous information with other researchers and teachers for checking the accuracy of study findings and for future approved research that has the potential for improving human knowledge.

VI. ESTIMATED DURATION OF PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study and the study itself will take place between May of 2014 until May of 2015.

VII. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Each participant will received a stipend of twenty-five dollars for his time.

VIII. VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION WITH RIGHT OF REFUSAL:

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You are free to choose not to answer particular questions in the survey. You are free to withdraw your consent for participation in this study at any time.

IX. Review of Study:

This study is entitled "Being an 'Extraterrestrial': The Need for Academic Emphasis on the Intersection of Race and Sexuality?" and is conducted by Marvin Shelton. The purpose of the study has been explained to me. I understand that I will be asked to answer several questions about my experiences at the College of William and Mary. My participation in this study should take a total of about an hour. I understand that my responses will be confidential and that my name will not be associated with any results of this study. I know that I may refuse to answer any question asked and that I may discontinue participation at any time.

Potential risks resulting from my participation in this project have been described to me. I am aware that I may report dissatisfaction with any aspect of this study to Dr. Ray McCoy, Ph.D., the Chair of the Protection of Human Subjects Committee by telephone ([757-221-2783](tel:757-221-2783)) or email (rwmcco@wm.edu). I am aware that I must be at least 18 years of age to participate. My digital signature below signifies my voluntary participation in this project and that I have printed out a copy of this consent form for my records.

For more information about the project, please contact Marvin Shelton at mdshelton@email.wm.edu or 540-205-0516.

I have read and understand the above information and voluntarily agree to participate in the research project aforementioned. I have received given a copy of this consent form.

By typing my signature below, I agree that I have read and agree to the consent form above.

Appendix 3. Recommended literature and scholarship

Fiction:

Baldwin, J. (1968). *Tell me how long the train's been gone*. New York: Dial.

Hardy, J. (1994). *B-boy blues: A seriously sexy, fiercely funny, Black-on-Black love story*.

Boston: Alyson.

Hardy, J. (1997). *If only for one nite*. Los Angeles: Alyson Books.

Hardy, J. (2002). *Love the one you're with: A novel*. New York: Amistad.

Hardy, J. (2005). *A house is not a home: A B-boy blues novel*. New York: Amistad.

Harris, E. (1994). *Invisible life: A novel*. New York: Anchor Books.

Harris, E. (1995). *Just as I am: A novel*. New York: Anchor Books.

Hemphill, E. (1991). *Brother to brother: New writings by Black gay men*. Boston: Alyson

Publications.

McCraney, T. (2012). *Choir boy*. London: Faber & Faber.

McCraney, T. A. (2010). *Marcus; or the secret of sweet*. New York, NY: Theatre

Communications Group, Inc.

Non-Fiction:

Alexander, B. (2006). *Performing Black masculinity: Race, culture, and queer identity*. Lanham,

MD: AltaMira Press.

Alexander, B. (2012). *The performative sustainability of race: Reflections on Black culture and*

the politics of identity. New York: Peter Lang.

Baldwin, J. (1955). *Notes of a native son*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Beam, J. (1986). *In the life: A Black gay anthology*. Boston: Alyson Publications.

Carbado, D. (1999). *Black men on race, gender, and sexuality a critical reader*. New York: New

- York University Press.
- Carbado, D. (2002). *Black like us: A century of lesbian, gay, and bisexual African American fiction*. San Francisco: Cleis Press.
- Johnson, E. (2005). *Black queer studies: A critical anthology*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Johnson, E. P. (2008). *Sweet tea: Black Gay men of the south*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.
- McBride, D. (2005). *Why I hate Abercrombie & Fitch essays on race and sexuality*. New York: New York University.
- McCready, L. T., & Kumashiro, K. K. (2006). Race, sexuality, and education. In H.R. Milner & E.W. Ross (Eds.), *Race, ethnicity, and education: Racial identity in education* (131-144). Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- Mock, J. (2014). *Redefining realness: My path to womanhood, identity, love & so much more*. New York: Atria Books.
- Munoz, J. (1999). *Disidentifications: Queers of color and the performance of politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Pharr, R. (2001). *Black gay man: Essays*. New York: New York University Press.
- Staples, R. (2006). *Exploring black sexuality*. Lanham [Md.]: Rowman & Littlefield.

Appendix 4. Dr. Bernstein syllabus on QOC course

Bernstein, R. (2012). Queer of color theory [Syllabus]. Department of African and African American Studies, Harvard University, Boston, MA.

Link: http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/robinbernstein/files/aaas_183xqofct.pdf

- This syllabus does not simply focused on literature and scholarship for GBTQ Black males like I do. Rather this professor encapsulates a large number of performance pieces, poems, novels, articles, and books that capture the experiences of LGBTQ males and females of color from various backgrounds and communities. His course explores gender and class as possible identities for intersection along with race and sexuality.