Standing in the intersection: using Photovoice to understand the lived experience of black gay college students attending predominantly white postsecondary institutions.

Erica Caton

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STANDING IN THE INTERSECTION:
USING PHOTOVOICE TO UNDERSTAND THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF BLACK
GAY COLLEGE STUDENTS ATTENDING PREDOMINANTLY WHITE
POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

By

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B.A., Lehman College, CUNY, 1994
MSW, Hunter College, CUNY, 1997

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty
of the Raymond A. Kent School of Social Work of the University of Louisville
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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University of Louisville
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A Dissertation Approved on

November 9, 2015

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my cousin, Kamilo and the students at U of L and UK who so graciously gave their time and hearts to this project.

You showed me the meaning of courage.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express my deepest thanks to Dr. Thomas R. Lawson, my professor and chair. Your patience during Doc Prep and ARDA were invaluable. Surpassed only by the support, you extended in the form of not-so-gentle nudges just when I needed them most.

To Dr. Ruth Huber, the late Dr. Blaine Hudson, Dr. Cynthia Conley and the late James Elmer Caton III, their kindness and generous financial support was instrumental in my being able to pursue and achieve this goal.

To the members of my dissertation committee Dr. Tomarra Adams, Dr. Shannon Bell, Dr. Armon Perry and Dr. Emma Sterrett, your time, expertise and guidance were greatly appreciated.

Many thanks to everyone in my U of L Kent School of Social Work and College of Arts & Sciences families.

There is no way to express the gratitude and love I have for my family and friends. You have laughed, cried, hugged, tough loved, and talked me down off the ledge more times than you will ever know.

I love you, Mom!

Finally, to my husband Mark, you proofed hundreds of pages, made me countless cups of hot tea and cheered me on with perfectly inspiring and tender words. Thank you for supporting me in this and everything.
ABSTRACT

STANDING IN THE INTERSECTION:
USING PHOTOVOICE TO UNDERSTAND THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF BLACK GAY COLLEGE STUDENTS ATTENDING PREDOMINANTLY WHITE POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

Erica Caton
November 9, 2015

The intersection of multiple oppressed identities is characterized by the compounded effects of victimization, intimidation and continued marginalization by dominant culture groups in society. Despite a growing body of knowledge about the individual experiences of racial and sexual minorities, there remains a lack of understanding of the unique life experiences of individuals with intersecting oppressed identities, specifically Black gay youth. Failure or inability to recognize, understand and take action in response to the needs of Black gay youth in college, perpetuates a culture of oppression that compromises the physical and mental well-being, and the academic success of these students. Engaging Black gay college students in a Photovoice project affords said students the opportunity to document their everyday experiences in photographic images, tell the stories of their lives, and identify the strengths and needs of their community for campus policy makers, educators, practitioners and researchers. While it represents a trusted approach in understanding the lived experiences of marginalized and oppressed people, Wang and Burris’ (1994) participatory action research method Photovoice is underutilized as a means of understanding the lived
experience of Black gay college students. This dissertation study utilized a modified Photovoice project as well as other qualitative and quantitative research methods to explore the lived experience of Black gay college students, the meaning they attribute to said experiences and subsequent role performance. The students in this study demonstrated a keen awareness of the complexity and compounded effects of their identities and resilience in the face of harassment and repeated microaggressions while identifying and employing multiple pathways to personal, academic and professional success.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

We must emancipate all of humanity.

–Carl Dix

Introduction

One afternoon, when my cousin was only sixteen years old, after a few moments of small talk, she turned to me and said, “I think I like boys and girls.” Shaken but determined to remain calm, I listened to her talk about feeling attracted to girls and speculating what it might mean. I was tongue-tied and struggling to respond, unsure how I felt about what she had just revealed. After what felt like forever, some words finally fell from my mouth. I assured her she was fine, encouraged her to relax and have fun, and everything would work itself out over time. Two years later, everything did, in fact, work out. My cousin confirmed she was no longer confused about her sexuality; she was not the least bit interested in boys, and definitely attracted to girls. As news of her same-sex attraction made its way through our family, there was a variety of reactions from different family members.

Every year our large extended family gets together for Thanksgiving dinner. The first Thanksgiving after my cousin had officially come out, she was sitting across the room from me, and between bites of turkey and mashed potatoes, I heard some family members discussing my cousin’s “friend,” a young woman she had brought with her to the family dinner.
They were having what I am sure they felt was a thoughtful discussion on the potential causes for my cousin’s sexual confusion. Theirs were all the stereotypical arguments. My cousin’s mother died when she was five years old, so maybe it was because she had no female role model, maybe she was hanging out with the wrong crowd, maybe some boy had broken her heart, or worse still maybe she had been molested. I could not believe how narrow their views were. Further, they seemed to think nothing about having this ‘explanatory’ discussion within earshot of my cousin. I wanted to stand up and point out the ridiculousness and insensitivity of their statements but instead, I said and did nothing. I ate my dinner, occasionally locking eyes with my cousin while shaking my head disapprovingly at their conversation in an attempt to show solidarity with her. Many years later, I would come to understand how really important and influential those moments were.

This study is inspired by cultural, health and social responsibilities to understand the experiences and identify the needs of individuals with both racial and sexual minority identities. Extant literature has yet to explore fully or present direct accounts of the experiences of Black lesbian or gay (BLG) identified community members, which raises the following research questions: What is the lived experience of BLG college students? What meaning do BLG college students attribute to these situations? What roles do BLG college students enact as a result? In short, the purpose of this study is to explore the experiences, decision-making and role performance of BLG college students at two predominantly White universities in Kentucky.

The background and impetus for this study, as well as the theoretical underpinnings and methods used to explore the above questions and the study’s findings,
are included herein. Chapter 1 includes an overview of the deficiencies in our current understanding of life at the intersection of race and sexual orientation and a review of what is currently known about the lived experiences of individuals who identify as either Black or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ). Additionally, because a key contextual factor of this study is the university environment, the chapter also includes a brief survey of the process and experience of transitioning from school age youth to college student, culminating in the presentation of the researcher’s positionality within the study.

Chapter 2 consists of two sections, in the first, a discussion of the three theories that form the foundation of this dissertation study, Crenshaw’s (1989) theory of identity intersectionality, role theory; and Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) theory of student identity development. The second half of the chapter includes an examination of the unique cultural and contextual factors that influence attitudes and perpetuate sexual prejudice within Black communities and the relationship between BLG community members and their heterosexual peers.

The study’s research design and methods are presented in Chapter 3. As a qualitative study utilizing Photovoice, Wang and Burris’ (1994) participatory action research technique, study participants were asked to take part in an iterative process of capturing images, creating photostories and participating in exploratory discussions (i.e. critical reflection) to reveal the meaning behind the images. Images, photostories, participant interviews and pre and posttest quantitative measures were used to identify BLG college student challenges, strengths and needs (Vaughan, 2014; Wang & Burris, 1994, 1997; Wang 1999).
Results of the data collection process and study findings, discussed in Chapter 4, reveal BLG college students are proactive in their enlistment of a variety of personal and professional supports and skills in order to build and maintain their overall emotional well-being in the face of antigay stereotypes, expectations, and acts. Chapter 5 discusses the study’s limitations including the challenges of recruiting members of hidden populations such as sexual minorities. Implications for social work practice and postsecondary education are examined to close the chapter and complete the dissertation.

**The Problem**

The existing body of research on Blacks in the United States (US) is less likely to include issues of sexuality or sexual orientation, and the ongoing research centered on sexual minorities is less likely to consider the intersections of race or ethnicity (Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2007; Christmas, 2013; Jones & McEwen, 2000). Recent attention to the socio-political plight and legal rights of Black and LGBTQ communities, as a result of situations like the Michael Brown shooting in Ferguson, Missouri, which sparked the Black Lives Matter Movement and the Supreme Court same-sex marriage ruling in June of 2015, highlights the need for research that considers the intersection and compounded oppression of individuals who identify as both Black and also lesbian and gay.

Researchers have typically directed their explorations of the nature and development of identity by focusing their investigations on individual facets of human identity. For example, investigating the nature of racial identity development (e.g. Cross, 1978; Helms, 1990) as a stand-alone process, separate from one’s gender or sexual identity development, (e.g. Cass, 1979; D’Augelli, 1994) without the natural and unavoidable process of different identities influencing and acting on each other (Abes, et
This approach has resulted in a lesser developed understanding of what it means to be an individual with intersecting (multiple) identities, specifically those who identify as Black and also lesbian or gay identities.

Separately and collectively, identities influence an individual’s self-concept, their decision-making and actions. A consequence of our inadequate understanding of how identities interact and influence role performance is easily observable in disease prevention and education. The number of new HIV cases among Blacks continues to rise (Centers for Disease Control [CDC], 2015). While practitioners, educators, and researchers struggle to understand why intervention strategies that appear to have decreased the number of new HIV cases among White lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) communities are less effective in decreasing the number of new HIV cases in Black LGBTQ communities (CDC, 2015; Harris, 2009). Similarly, there are increasing rates of other sexually transmitted infections, gaps in the rates of chronic disease and other health disparities widening as well (CDC, 2011, 2014a, 2015; Michigan Project for Informed Public Policy, 2014).

With poor health outcomes and disparities in educational attainment across K-12 and postsecondary education, where Black students consistently score lower on standardized tests and graduate from college at lower rates than their White peers, there is ample evidence to support the need for additional information and a deeper understanding of the experiences, decision-making and role performance of young people who identify as Black and also lesbian or gay (Lynch & Engle, 2010; Wilson & Harper, 2013).
College enrollment marks a significant period of transition for every young person. In addition to leaving home, meeting new people, living in a new place, taking on college coursework and developing new study habits, many students will begin or accelerate exploration of their sexual identity while in college and in doing so, Black lesbian and gay (BLG) college students may face challenges that are different from their heterosexual and White gay peers (Evans & D’Augelli, 1996). What are the experiences of BLG college students? How do BLG college students understand and act on their distinct experiences? What influence does the college environment have on student decision-making and role performance? If we know more about the experiences, decision-making process and role performance of college age BLG youth, we may enhance our understanding of their needs and by extension potentially develop more effective health and education prevention and intervention strategies to assist BLG young people develop and achieve their personal and professional goals.

The breadth and depth of knowledge about BLG college students has yet to be fully explored. Much of what we know about the BLG experience is discussed in juxtaposition to the White LGBTQ experience, without specific regard for the influence of White racism or Black heterosexism (Gibbs & Jones, 2013; Hill, 2013). *Say it Loud, I’m Black and I’m Proud*, a study by the Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) was an early attempt at a comprehensive report on the BLG experience (Battle, Cohen, Warren, Fergerson & Audam, 2002; Hill, 2013). Survey’s

---

1The commonly held definition of a traditional undergraduate student is one who enrolls in college immediately after graduation from high school… younger than age 20 (Center for Institutional Effectiveness, Kennesaw State University, 2004; University of Louisville, 2015).
respondents were attendees of Black PRIDE events in Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Washington D.C., and averaged 34 years old. The value of the NGLTF study is irrefutable; their research addressed a significant gap in the literature by calling attention to and creating a space for the discussion of BLG identities.

Unfortunately, as with many things, the NGLTF report is aging, now more than ten years old, and principally quantitative, there is certainly a need and the room for new and different research in this area. Because the NGLTF study drew its data from the experiences of older BLG persons in major urban centers, it did not reflect the disparate experiences, decisions and roles of BLG youth (i.e., ages 14-21) in small towns and rural areas. Generally, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth in small towns and rural areas of the South and Midwest will experience increased bullying and verbal harassment from their non-LGBTQ peers compared to the levels of harassment of their LGBTQ peers in large urban cities (Palmer, Kosciw & Bartkiewicz, 2012).

Additionally, despite evidence of the positive effects on self-image and acceptance, small town and rural area LGBTQ youth have far less access to LGBTQ-related resources (e.g., inclusive curricula, supportive educators, pride events, anti-bullying/harassment policies, and Gay-Straight Alliances) (Palmer et. al, 2012). Specifically, LGBTQ youth of color report experiencing both racial and sexual harassment frequently, with more than half of Black LGBTQ youth reporting harassment because of their race and over 30% reporting physical abuse by their peers because of their sexual orientation (Diaz & Kosciw, 2009).
The lives of BLG youth are multifaceted and complex, especially for those who live in small towns and rural areas of the South and the Midwest (Lang, 2014; Littlejohn, 2012; Palmer, Kosciw & Bartkiewicz, 2009, 2012; Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States [SIECUS], n.d.). There is a deficit of BLG youth voices in the existing body of research on intersecting identities and less prevalent are contemporary explorations of the experiences of BLG youth in the college context (Christmas, 2013; Gibbs & Jones, 2013; Hill, 2013). An exploration of the experiences of young people requires both innovation and timeliness. Today, the speed at which information is communicated and trends change has been transformed by readily available internet enabled devices and social media (Ransford, 2010). Indeed, new research can benefit greatly from incorporating web-based activities and interventions when exploring nearly any topic related to young people (Ransford, 2010; Voisin, Bird, Shiu & Krieger, 2013). Therefore, BLG college students are expertly positioned and best suited to communicate and deliver unmediated accounts of their experiences, decision-making and role performance (Freire, 1995; Wang and Burris, 1994; 1999).
In the above diagram, the inner intersecting circles represent two different social identities. Black represents the racial identity and gay and lesbian represents the sexual orientation of students within the university. The striped area represents those individuals who identify as both Black and gay or Black and lesbian. For pragmatic and theoretical reasons, such as population accessibility, sample size, physical and emotional safety and within group differences, Black bisexual and transgender college students were not included in this study (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005; Dugan & Yurman, 2011; Renn, 2007).

Transgender persons “live as a member of a gender other than that expected based on anatomical sex, where sexual orientation varies and is not dependent on gender” (Green & Peterson, 2003, p. 9). A bisexual person is “emotionally, physically, and or sexually attracted to males/men and females/women. This attraction does not have to be equally split between genders and there may be a preference for one gender over others”
(Green & Peterson, 2003, p. 2). Without question, the narratives of Black bisexual and transgender persons are both complex and important. Transgender and bisexual persons of all races and ethnicities experience prejudice and discrimination from heterosexuals as well as other members of the different sexual minority groups (Bettinger, 2010; Renn, 2007). Certainly additional research is needed; however, an exploration of Black bisexual and transgender lives is beyond the scope of this study.

Additionally, one should note regardless of the growing body of sexual minority research and the increasing presence of Black and LGBTQ community members in the media, a great deal of confusion remains concerning what are both respectful and inclusive racial and sexual minority identifiers. That said all references and identifiers that relate to sexual identity are taken herein from Green and Peterson’s (2003) LGBTQI Terminology, a list of commonly used terms that have been analyzed theoretically and pragmatically for cultural sensitivity, common usage, and general appropriateness. A copy of the LGBTQI Terminology list is included in Appendix A. Additionally, when referring to people of African descent born in the United States, this discussion uses the term Black, instead of African American, as Black is the more widely used identifier in the literature. Per the publication manual of the American Psychological Association (2010), the names of racial groups (e.g. Black, White) are capitalized here. Finally, to maintain the integrity of student voices and the published work used for the development of this research study, the language/terminology used by students and the authors of published works remains the same, even when different from the format or style specifically chosen for this review. Where necessary, additional context is included to improve clarity and accessibility to thoughts and behaviors.
This study offers educators, practitioners, and researchers a starting point from which they may further enhance or begin to develop their understanding of BLG student experiences, decision-making and role performance within the university setting. It also contributes to the current, yet limited body of knowledge on this largely hidden and consequently, underserved population. The remainder of this chapter looks at the distinct experiences of Blacks, LGBTQ community members and college students in the United States. The information presented is not meant to be an exhaustive review of unarguably complex narratives, such a review is beyond the scope of this study; however, the main objective in presenting their narratives is to provide some context within which further discussion of BLG college student experiences can take place.

**Being Black**

Our understanding of the Black experience comes from a robust body of knowledge cultivated by historians and researchers over many years. Regardless of the passage of time, numerous legislative acts, including the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 and growing economic and political power, the Black experience in the US remains a harrowing story. Haunted by the ghosts of slavery and the commodification of their person, two hundred years later, Blacks in the US continue to experience the effects of what was a demoralizing and devastating level of victimization to both the people and their culture.

During the period of Black enslavement in the US, Blacks captured in Africa were torn from their families, sold into bondage and forcibly held in servitude. Any manner of slave protest was met with the severest of consequences, including death. Educators, politicians, and members, of the scientific community portrayed Blacks as intellectually
inferior and inherently violent, consequently reinforcing racist attitudes and suborning violence against them (Butchart, 2010; Patrick, 2014). The fight to end the practice of slavery in the United States was a long and bloody one. By the time the abolitionist movement, the Civil War, and other socio-political protests put an end to the business of slavery, Blacks had already suffered innumerable human indignities. The end of slavery was a serious threat to the highly favored White power structure. In an effort to maintain the country’s system of White privilege and as retaliation for the end of slavery, Whites enacted laws (i.e., Jim Crow) and used lynching, rape, and brutal assaults on many now free Blacks to further intimidate and control them (Patrick, 2014; Synnott, 1979).

In the face of laws restricting their movements, challenging their right to marry, own property and participate in the political process, Blacks struggled to make a life for themselves; it became increasingly problematic and unsafe, especially, for Blacks in the south, where the institution of slavery had been most prevalent (O’Connell, 2012; Patrick, 2014). The unrelenting victimization of Blacks and the wholesale denial of their basic human rights launched a fierce campaign for the protections afforded them under the U.S. Constitution and the 14th Amendment. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960’s would bring about other significant change in the lives of Black people. As such, there is clear evidence of our nation’s growth in the personal and professional achievements of Blacks; however, there remain deep-seated, long-term effects of the victimization and oppression playing out in the current health and welfare of Blacks.

Black Youth

In 1988, Ann Brunswick and several of her colleagues published the book, *Young, Black and Male in America: An Endangered Species*. Some twenty-five years later,
multiple shooting deaths and other fatal incidents of police brutality against Blacks have left media figures, politicians, social commentators and Black intellectuals echoing Brunswick’s worst fears. What appears as a lack of empathy for and fear of young Black males is particularly troubling; however, for all Black youth danger lurks around every corner (Miller & Taylor, 2012). Starting at birth, Black babies face higher infant mortality rates; in 2008, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) reported the mortality rates for Black babies were double that of infants born to Hispanic, White non-Hispanic, Asian, and Pacific Islander mothers (NIH, 2014). Researchers believe that a lack of prenatal care, because of limited access to health services, insurance, and prenatal education contributes to higher infant mortality rates in the Black community (NIH, 2014).

Within the first three months of birth, Black infants have a higher rate of placement in foster care, almost three times that of White infants, thus contributing to the overrepresentation of Black children in foster care (Wulczyn & Lery, 2007). Black children account for only 15% of the total juvenile population in the United States, yet 37% of the children in foster care are Black (Wulczyn & Lery, 2007). Researchers surmise that these disproportionate numbers are a byproduct of institutional and individual racism on the part of state officials entrusted to strengthen familial relationships (Wulczyn & Lery, 2007).

Black youth disproportionately experience race-based discrimination in school. Twenty-four hour media coverage of school shootings has resulted in school officials’ enacting zero-tolerance policies to curtail irresponsible and potentially violent student behavior (Advancement Project, 2011). Regardless of the expressed purpose of these
policies, they may be playing too integral a role in the growing problem of discipline disparities and the overuse of suspension and expulsion by school officials. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) reported that 35% of Black children grades 7-12 are suspended or expelled at some point in their school careers compared to 15% of Whites (2015). An investigation conducted by the Discipline Disparities: Research to Practice Collaborative (DDRPC) confirms attitudes, and discriminatory practices based on race do influence some of the disciplinary actions taken by school officials (Carter, Fine & Russell, 2014).

For example, in Indiana, officials from DDRPC found Blacks were disproportionately suspended and expelled at higher rates and noted there were greater racial disparities in schools where principals favored the use of suspension and expulsion over other forms of discipline (St. George, 2014). In Kentucky’s two largest school systems, Jefferson (Louisville) and Fayette (Lexington) County Public Schools, the suspension rate for Black students is nearly double the rate of suspension of White students, and both school systems disproportionately use law enforcement and the court system to address school discipline problems (Kentucky Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2011; Warren, 2011). Not surprising, the younger a person is when he or she first comes in contact with the legal system, the greater the likelihood (67%) of that person having lifelong interactions with the criminal justice system (Aizer & Doyle, 2013). The overuse of suspension, expulsion and law enforcement intervention is also not unique to Indiana or Kentucky; it is indicative of a much larger issue, the failure of our educational system to educate Black youth.
Despite the passage of *Brown vs. Board of Education*, Black youth continue to suffer educational inequities. According to the *Nation’s Report Card*, in 2013, 62% of Black twelfth graders measured below basic skills level in mathematics assessments with 31% measuring basic and less than 10% measuring as proficient (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2014). The results of the reading assessment are equally troublesome; across the disciplines, Black youth have the highest percentages of below basic performers (NCES, 2014). In addition to questions about the quality and integrity of Black student’s K-12 educational experience, is the realization that Black students are less prepared for college than their White peers, and the ensuing result may have long-term adverse effects on their overall quality of life.

*Black Adults*

Racism is invasive, having found its way and attached itself to every part of Black lives. Racism influences how we view others and our beliefs about their value to society. Racial discrimination also contributes to many of the negative health outcomes for Black women. Black women die from cancer, heart disease, and childbirth at disproportionate rates to White women (NIH, 2014). Even for breast cancer where Black women have a lower incidence rate, White women with breast cancer have a higher survival rate (NIH, 2014). Researchers believe it is because Black women have not been able to benefit from the advances in breast cancer research such as new early detection prevention strategies (Black Women’s Health Imperative, 2015).

In a study conducted by Cozier et al., nearly 50% Black women reported higher rates of obesity (2014). Researchers now project that if these trends continue, by 2020 that number will be closer to 70% (Cozier et al., 2014). Obesity is also a risk factor for
several chronic and potentially fatal health conditions (e.g. diabetes and cardiovascular disease). With so much information about the effects of obesity and the importance of healthy lifestyle choices readily available, what then prevents Black women from taking better care of themselves? Cozier et al., hypothesize racism may adversely affect certain biological processes that contribute to Black women being more prone to obesity (2014). They explain that chronic exposure to stress, as a result of daily micro-aggressions perpetrated against Black women, disrupts the body’s natural chemical processes resulting in Black women accumulating more excess body fat (Cozier et al., 2014). Obesity and its related chronic illnesses thus increase the negative health outcomes for Black women and by extension detrimental effects on Black communities.

Black men face equally perilous situations. Deficiencies in educational attainment, high unemployment, and a negative self-image make Black males easy targets for discriminatory practices (Belle, 2014; Estrada-Martinez, Caldwell, Schulz, Diez-Roux & Pedraza, 2011). Notions of the Black male brute propagated by slaveholders and the destructive caricatures of Black males in contemporary media feed racist stereotypes of Black males young and old (Hooks, 2004). Hetero-normative gender roles teach men they should be the protectors and providers of their family’s basic needs (e.g. food, clothing, shelter). For Black males whose unemployment rates are nearly double that of their White counterparts, the inability to meet fundamental societal expectations profoundly affects the emotional health and self-image of Black males (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Consequently, negative self-image encourages self-destructive behaviors for which Black males are disproportionally punished (Cooper, 2013; Manago, 2012).
The overrepresentation of Black males in the criminal justice system may be one of the purest illustrations of the existence of racism in our country. The United States Bureau of Justice estimates that Black males make up more than 40% of the incarcerated male population while Black males make up only 13.6% of the total US population (Alexander, 2012; Patrick, 2014). Repeated interactions with the criminal justice system “naturalizes” Black male criminality and falsely legitimizes increased racial profiling. In addition to the negative impact on the family as a result of absent fathers, lost wages, and greater financial burdens, living under the constant scrutiny of the criminal justice system may manifest as internalized anger and depression, perpetuating the cycle of Black male disenfranchisement and imprisonment (Cooper, 2013).

The passage of time has not healed the wounds of slavery. Present-day oppression in the form of high mortality rates, low wages, unemployment, substandard educational opportunities, disproportionate incarceration, discrimination in schools, limited access to healthcare and life-saving medical advances are just a few of the obstacles Black communities still struggle to overcome. While their story is unique, Black people have not been the only victims of discrimination and violence against their person in our nation’s history.

**Being LGBTQ**

Members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) communities also suffer the pangs of intolerance, acts of severe physical and emotional violence, and the deprivation of equal rights and protections afforded to heterosexual persons (Herek, 1991). The basis for the continued victimization of LGBTQ people was set in motion a long time ago. Theorists point to three overarching explanations for the
intense sexual prejudice and heterosexism in our culture. First, in the 19th century, our culture was driven by a system of beliefs regarding sex and gender, historically based on the male dominated notion of biological sex set on a binary of male and female and strictly adhered to gender roles or ways of being (Eaklor, 2008). In the early days of our nation, society was in a constant state of flux, specifically defined gender roles helped socialize men and women into behaviors appropriate for their genders and set sanctions for those who stepped outside of what was deemed appropriate by the majority (Eaklor, 2008; Herek, 1991).

Second, the introduction of sexology as a scientific discipline and the subsequent labeling of heterosexual and homosexual dichotomy with a specific emphasis on sexual behavior gave rise to the idea of a “gender invert” (Eaklor, 2008, p. 38). Individuals’ engaging in homosexual acts embodied those dangers already implied in crossing the gender lines (Eaklor, 2008). Men engaging in sex acts with other men especially playing the woman’s role, and women seeking equal rights and protections that were the same as men were gender inverts; this definition became the determining factor for punishment or cure (Eaklor, 2008). Further, theorists postulated in the 19th-century homosexuality was just “un-American” (Eaklor, 2008, p. 20). Though clearly modeled after its European beginnings and with ideas deeply rooted in Judeo-Christian beliefs, our country’s founders were determined to create a better nation (Eaklor, 2008). The desire to be great combined with certain pre-existing ideas about gender meant any deviation from appropriately assigned gender roles would be an intolerable blight on the new nation thus weaving sexual prejudice into the fabric of our culture (Eaklor, 2008). As such, what is life like for LGBTQ persons in the US today?
To date, twenty-one states have laws that prohibit employment discrimination based on sexual orientation (Hasenbush, Flores, Kastanis, & Gates, 2014). A Gallup poll found that 58% of Americans say gay and lesbian relations are morally acceptable, a rate that has been increasing for several years (Riffkin, 2014). At the time of this writing, same-sex couples had the freedom to marry in thirty-seven states (Freedom to Marry, 2015). Later, in June 2015, the Supreme Court ruled in Obergefell v. Hodges that same-sex couples have the right to marry across every state. Amid seemingly growing acceptance, marriage equality and other legal protections have not made life easier for LGBTQ persons. LGBTQ persons routinely find themselves the targets of negative attitudes and physical acts of violence. Being LGBTQ means it is highly likely that everyday occurrences of institutional and individual hostility will be directed toward your person. Whether one chooses to live openly or not protecting oneself from the prejudice of others can be a source of great pain and frustration for members of the LGBTQ community.

_LGBTQ Youth_

LGBTQ youth live under the constant very real threat of rejection by family, loss of close friendships, and community support (Balaji et al., 2012; Gastic, 2012; Rasmussen, 2004). Sadly, parental rejection too often leads to LGBTQ youth becoming part of the homeless youth population, where there are disproportionate numbers of LGBTQ youth. According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, almost 40% of homeless youth receiving services from community-based agencies identify as LGBTQ (Williams Institute, 2012).
Relentless and pervasive antigay rhetoric imprints on the LGBTQ psyche contributing to the development of a negative self-image and internalized homophobia (Balaji et al., 2012; Dudley, 2013). LGBTQ youth are “5.9 times more likely to report high levels of depression; 3.4 times more likely to use illegal drugs and 3.4 times more likely to have risky sex” compared to their non-LGBTQ peers, this is clear evidence indeed of the damage done to the emotional well-being and self-image of LGBTQ youth (CDC, 2011, para. 4).

In April 2015, the same day young people across the nation were participating in a Day of Silence to walk in solidarity with LGBTQ youth; a group of students in Pittsburgh, PA used social media to organize an Anti-Gay Day at their high school (Norman, 2014). The group reportedly hung signs that displayed antigay slurs and a “lynch list” with the names of students at their school who were LGBTQ student allies and supporters (Norman, 2014). Given such incidents, the prevalence of antigay activity on social media is not a surprise. A study conducted by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network found rural gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students were 40% more likely to experience cyberbullying than their non-LGBTQ peers were (Palmer, Kosciw & Bartkiewicz, 2012).

Circumstances such as these make school a very scary place for most LGBTQ youth. The threat of bullying and violence causes young people to fear even the appearance of behaving in any way other than heterosexual. This fear is surpassed only by the terror of other students’ finding out a student is, in fact, LGBTQ (Almedia, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar & Azrael, 2009; Gastic, 2012; Pearson, Muller & Wilkinson, 2007). The challenge of keeping one’s sexual orientation secret takes vast energy away
from the concentration these students need to perform academically and engage socially (Dudley, 2013; Gastic, 2012). An unsupportive school environment contributes to a greater likelihood that LGBTQ youth will leave school or worse, engage in injurious and too often fatally self-destructive behavior (Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer & Boesen, 2014).

The statistics below are evidence of the pain that many LGBTQ youth can endure as they come to terms with their sexuality:

- Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are 4 times more likely, and questioning youth are 3 times more likely, to attempt suicide than their straight peers.
- Suicide attempts by lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth and questioning youth are 4 to 6 times more likely to result in injury, poisoning or overdose that requires treatment from a doctor or nurse than their straight peers.
- Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth who come from highly rejecting families are 8.4 times as likely to have attempted suicide than their lesbian, gay and bisexual peers who reported no or low levels of family rejection.
- Each episode of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender victimization, such as physical or verbal harassment or abuse, increases the likelihood of self-harming behavior by 2.5 times on average. (The Trevor Project, 2015, para. 1)

LGBTQ Adults

Adult LGBTQ persons find that the world of work, intimate relationships, and family bring about an entirely new set of challenges. The LGBT Divide: A Data Portrait of LGBT People in the Midwestern Mountain and Southern States identifies twenty-nine states, most in the South and Midwest, where LGBTQ community members have no legal protection against employment discrimination (Hasenbush et al., 2014). This lack of legal protection is particularly problematic for LGBTQ persons in these regions of the country where LGBTQ adults are also less likely to have advanced education or health insurance and more likely to experience food insecurity and earn lower wages. These situations contribute to an already long list of health and welfare disparities that exist in many LGBTQ communities (Hasenbush et al., 2014).
LGBTQ adults experience disproportionate rates of preventable disease and substance misuse, as well as higher rates of engaging in high-risk health behaviors (CDC, 2013, 2014). In 2014, more than any other region in the country, the largest number of new HIV infections occurred among gay men in the Southern region of the United States (Hasenbush et al., 2014). Overall, gay men have the highest risk of exposure to HIV, especially as they age (CDC, 2015). Unfortunately, the stigma of being gay, along with other social and economic factors that affect the LGBTQ community, can increase risk-taking behaviors and acts as barriers to receiving HIV and other medical treatment/prevention services (CDC, 2015). Even more distressing is the rate of underinsured and uninsured members of LGBTQ communities. Across the country LGBTQ, persons are 45% less likely, when compared to heterosexual peers, to have enough money to pay for healthcare or healthcare insurance; this exacerbates the problem of accessing and receiving needed medical treatment (Hasenbush et al., 2014).

LGBTQ persons are the victims of intense social stigma, sexual prejudice, and discrimination. Discrimination based on sexual orientation is systemic in nature and institutionalized through the actions or inactions of government, business, education and the legal system. At the time of this writing, Indiana and Arkansas enacted state-level challenges to LGBTQ civil rights and equality using the Federal Religious Freedom Act of 1993, to enact policies protecting business owners who might deny service to LGBTQ persons as a matter of religious principle. In the face of public outcry against such legislation and discriminatory practices, twenty-one states have similar religious freedom legislation in place.
Within months of the Supreme Court ruling same-sex marriage a legal right in the United States, in Kentucky, a Rowan County, County Clerk, refused to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples as a matter of religious freedom. The County Clerk was jailed after ignoring a local judge’s ruling requiring her to begin issuing the licenses while the clerk has since been released from jail; the case is still being debated. In California Attorney Matthew McLaughlin filed a voter initiative called the Sodomite Suppression Act. Under this law, the State of California could deny services, protections, and even kill individuals who are engaging in non-heterosexual activity (McLaughlin, 2015). Certainly, McLaughlin’s filing is an extreme example of antigay sentiment and sexual discrimination; however, it does demonstrate a profoundly disturbing strain of homophobia that still exists and the potential dangers individuals who identify as LGBTQ may face becomes painfully clear.

**Being a College Student**

A young person’s time in college represents an opportunity to grow and increase his or her personal and professional capabilities. The university and the campus environment encourages students to explore, think critically and engage with the world around them. College is for some students the first time they have thought critically about who they are, what is important to them and how they want to live (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; D’Augelli & Evans, 1996; Montgomery & Cote, 2003). A fair number of young people face these challenges head on and thrive in the university setting while; others struggle to find their place in the same environment. In the United States, it takes on average six years for a young person to complete a four-year degree (Institute of Education Sciences, 2012). During this period, the young person will encounter a variety
of situations and make numerous decisions as they go about their transition to college student.

As a student waves good-bye to high school, that individual is often unaware of the deep significance the separation from family, peers, and community represents. Students must separate from their former associations (e.g. family, friends, etc.) and undergo a period of transition, during which they will start to interact in new ways with members of their campus community (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006; Tinto, 1993). Students who are unable to disconnect from their community of origin and its values may find themselves struggling to adopt the values and behaviors the university expects, thus making the transition to college student and the college experience a proverbial minefield of potential disasters.

While there is no all-encompassing college student experience, all students must go through a period of adjustment, marked by the integration of the student into the new environment (Kuh et al., 2006; Tinto, 1993). Academic integration occurs when students find they are performing satisfactorily in the classroom and academic endeavors as a whole (Tinto, 1993). Social integration includes the student and the institution being a good fit. How well the institution and all members of the campus community connect with the student’s values, beliefs, background, and aspirations (Tinto, 1993). Academic and social integration will foster a stronger commitment to the institution; therefore, failure to integrate decreases the likelihood of success (Kuh et al., 2006; Tinto, 1993).

During the first year of college, students are asked to participate in and complete countless developmental, academic, and co-curricular tasks: Visit with advisors, participate in campus activities, attend scholarship meetings, consider education abroad,
hold a job, share a room with a stranger and make healthy decisions about meals. Also, they learn they should refrain from high risk physical and sexual behaviors, make friends, try new subjects, play sports, join clubs, date, study, write papers, work in groups, and attend Calculus, Chemistry and Philosophy courses that may be larger than most of their high school graduating classes. Institutions tell students that all these activities are integral to their success, and if the student manages their time well and makes good decisions, then success is imminent.

In addition to figuring out how to handle all of the requests and demands on their time, for some students getting used to, the type of school, its location in relation to the student’s hometown, the hidden cost of attendance, seeking out academic and social resources, and the rules, regulations, rights and responsibilities of the university can make the student feel like he or she has moved to a foreign country where they do not speak the language. There are logistical and other real world issues to traverse as well, such as learning to manage money, handling and understanding credit and debt, understanding the financial aid process, and precise scholarship guidelines. Adhering to parking rules, school policies, behaving appropriately in class and residence halls, and learning proper email and social media etiquette can add a level of anxiety for students who may already feel less confident in their ability to take care of the business of college. Despite the “universal challenges” of college with support and resources, a student can successfully integrate into the life of the university (Mullendore & Hatch, 2000). However, in some cases compounding external and internal forces can be especially detrimental to the integration process of some students, provoking them to officially (or unofficially)
withdraw thereby avoiding further frustration and a perceived inability to succeed (Harper, 2012; Wilkins, 2014; Chace, 2015).

Given the plights of Black and LGBTQ communities are the by-products of their inimitable place in history and society; although different, running through the intricately woven patterns of their daily life experiences are threads of marginalization and oppression. BLG college students by virtue of their racial and sexual identities contend with the historical and present day manifestations of racism and sexual prejudice and at the same time negotiate college and campus life. As such, entering college requires a delicate balancing of identities for BLG college students as they attempt to integrate and engage in the life of the university.

This chapter closes with an exploration of the researcher’s positionality within and intention for this research. Despite professional training and our best efforts at self-reflection, still we may not be fully aware of the influence culture, identity and context have on what and how we choose to conduct research. Unarguably, issues of race and sexual orientation are deeply embedded in our country’s culture, the socialization process, responsible for teaching us societal expectations is largely racist, heteronormative and sexist (Bettinger, 2010). Reflecting on my identity as a Black, heterosexual female– cultural and personal experiences inspired my decision to conduct research on sexual minorities.
I am a Black Heterosexual Woman… Why LGBTQ research?

I cannot afford the luxury of fighting one form of oppression only. I cannot believe that freedom from intolerance is the right of only one particular group. And I cannot afford to choose between the front upon which I must battle these forces of discrimination, wherever they appear to destroy me. And when they appear to destroy me, it will not be long before they appear to destroy you. (Lorde, 1983)

The passage above is an excerpt from *There Is No Hierarchy of Oppressions* by noted author Audre Lorde. I discovered Lorde’s essay while conducting research for a class project. As I read her essay, old feelings of confusion and regret surfaced – my stumped reaction at that moment when my cousin first came out and later the reluctance I felt during Thanksgiving dinner at my aunt’s house. Lorde’s essay seem to communicate perfectly the work that I needed to do. Was I simply afraid of confronting my aunts or was it possible growing up in a Black community played a part in my decision to act on my cousin’s behalf or not? Was I harboring antigay beliefs? Was I blindly following cultural norms? Lorde’s essay helped me begin to see my reactions as a product of my experiences as a Black heterosexual female; and the reactions of my family as a product of a wide range of societal and cultural assumptions about race, sexuality, and gender. Dissatisfaction with the answers to my questions encouraged me to shift gears, focus my attention on building an understanding of the experiences of BLG college students, and ultimately, face my discomfort and lack of self-awareness.

I grew up in New York City (NYC). By almost any definition, NYC is an exceptionally diverse and progressive metropolis. I had friends from all over the world; some of my neighbors spoke Spanish, others French and various African dialects. The old woman downstairs, a hold out from before the neighborhood was integrated, spoke Russian. In addition to the different languages, there was a cornucopia of food smells
emanating from the different apartments and all manner of religious customs practiced by the all of the different people in my neighborhood.

As a teen, despite our cultural differences and language barriers my friends and I spent the bulk of our time talking about the latest dances, music, fashion and neighborhood goings on. We rarely if at all talked about sex or sexuality beyond the evils of teenage pregnancy. No one ever asked if anyone found themselves attracted to other girls instead of boys and no one ever volunteered the information if they were. Heterosexuality was assumed.

Except when reflecting on my early experiences with antigay attitudes, there were always whispers and jokes about boys who jumped rope or girls who played sports. On the playground, I learned the dangers of being different and very soon the childish comments and jokes became grown-up acts of bullying and antigay behaviors. In high school boys exhibiting stereotypical female mannerisms and girls who were not feminine, enough endured daily harassment and brutal psychological attacks. Once someone accused a person of being gay, kids would ridicule that person, and there would be horrible consequences in the neighborhood and school for the individual.

Kids that might have once been friends now joined in on the name-calling and other insults. While others simply avoided associating with the accused out of fear of being labeled gay. In my neighborhood being gay or even an accusation of being gay was dangerous. For the most part being (or at least performing) heterosexual meant you did not have to think about or suffer the isolation and pain of your gay or gay accused friends and neighbors. Reflecting on my childhood memories- there is no way anyone in my
neighborhood would have ever thought about or discussed heterosexual privilege, especially not in the face of dealing with the burdens of racism.

After college, if you had asked me what I thought the single most important issue our society needs to deal with, without a doubt my answer would have been –Racism. My first year of college I went to a small, liberal arts school in North Carolina. Before college, Pennsylvania was the farthest north and New Jersey the farthest south I had ever traveled. My high school of 4,000 was in midtown Manhattan. The total enrollment at Chowan College was just shy of 1,500 students. Murfreesboro, North Carolina was a twenty-hour bus ride from NYC, a college town with maybe three stoplights. There were many firsts that year, the first time I saw confederate flags on trucks, tee shirts and baseball caps, the first time I received insulting service in a restaurant and the first time I questioned whether a teacher was treating me different because I was Black.

At the end of the year, I transferred and changed my major to Sociology. The courses in my new major helped me to understand how racism was behind many of the social and cultural challenges in my neighborhood. For example, the lack of affordable, safe and clean housing, high unemployment, poor physical and mental health practices, disproportionate rates of violent crime, high incarceration rates, low educational attainment, and higher rates of substance use and abuse are but a few. I believed there was a hierarchy of oppression, with racism as the most pressing and important societal ill, at the top of the list.

In graduate school, my thoughts on racism were sidetracked by conversations around violence against women and girls and several personal and professional experiences sent me head first into discussions of sexism and the role it plays in directing
women’s physical and mental health, personal safety, body image and professional identity. As a Black woman my role in society is particularly precarious because society has definite ideas about how should perform my identities and clearly defined consequences for stepping outside those expectations. There are equally painful experiences waiting for Black women who, as if a part of some cruel prank, follow society’s expectations only to find there is little or no peace, respect or reward for doing so.

In spite of the consequences (name-calling and questions about my sexuality, loss of friends and romantic relationships, familial rejections and other sacrifices), I pursued unpopular pathways, defied societal expectations and exposed the assumptions society has about poor Black girls from the ghetto, raised by single, uneducated mothers. Where I was able, I pushed against sexist ideology and encouraged other women and girls to do the same. I believed by doing so in some small way I was striking a blow against sexism, opening doors and shoring myself up for future career moves. It was easy to see the effects of racism and sexism in society and my responsibility as a woman of color, less evident was the oppression of others.

Certainly, racism, sexism, and sexual prejudice pose significant challenges to our society’s chances of achieving social justice for all marginalized people. In the face of old ideas and experiences, I was encouraged to explore my earliest ideas about race, gender, and sexual orientation. By doing so, I now understand why my attention and energy should be directed toward exposing all privilege and oppression. Not on individual categories or types of prejudice and discrimination.
It is my hope that newly learned perspectives on identity intersection and the compounding nature of racism, sexism, and heterosexism; will aid in the development of a deeper understanding of the unique challenges Black gay and lesbian students encounter as they move through college. Whereby myself and others can use the information gleaned from this study to facilitate the discussions that are necessary to bring about change on college and university campuses. My cousin’s courageousness, Lorde’s essay and a desire to develop my role as an LGBTQ ally in my personal and professional life inspired me to conduct sexual minority research. Having outlined the purpose of this study, shared an overview of the historical and contemporary experiences of Black and LGBTQ communities and the typical college transition experience, followed by a discussion of the researcher’s positionality within the study, the stage is set for a discussion of the theoretical frameworks guiding this study.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Once we can show our cause is a vigilant protest of homophobia, by acknowledging the union between black liberation struggle and gay liberation struggle, we strengthen our solidarity, enhance the scope and power of our allegiances and further our resistance.

–bell hooks

Intersectionality

In 1989, Crenshaw penned what has now become the seminal work on intersectionality: “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” Heralded as one of the first to draw attention to the problem of multiple identities, Crenshaw called out feminist and antiracist theorists for their participation in the misguided exclusion of Black women’s narratives (Bedolla, 2007; Crenshaw, 1989).

Black women’s lives are an example of the converging and simultaneous interacting of social identities—not additive or hierarchal but as interrelated or “mutually constitutive” parts of their human identity (Bedolla, 2007). Intersectionality describes the phenomenon of social identities acting on each other (i.e. intersecting), resulting in a distinct set of experiences, specifically individuals with multiple oppressed social identities (Crenshaw, 1989).

Crenshaw’s follow-up work, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color”, responded to critics by offering additional support for her earlier claims.
She clarified her intention was not to offer a theory of identity, but rather to focus on the interaction of “race and gender and highlighting the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed” (Crenshaw, 1993, p. 1245). In this article, Crenshaw also outlined how Black women’s race and gender intersect to shape structural, political, and representational aspects of the lives of individuals with multiple identities (Crenshaw, 1993; Davis, 2008). Structural intersectionality positions itself at the location of the intersection, meaning certain experiences will be qualitatively different as a result (Crenshaw, 1993; Davis, 2008). Political intersectionality points to ways individuals leading feminist and antiracist discourse, theory, and policy development have ironically helped to marginalize issues particularly important to Black women. Finally, representational intersectionality focuses on cultural constructions of individuals with multiple identities (e.g. Black women), where representations of said individuals in popular culture can become another site of disempowerment (Crenshaw, 1993; Davis, 2008).

Crenshaw’s personal experience in the academy, as well as her work as a Black feminist and legal theorist, stirred interest in identity politics and inspired her critique of anti-discrimination doctrine and feminist and antiracist politics. Crenshaw’s interest in these areas emerged as she tried to understand how the legal system responded to issues involving both race and sex discrimination—more specifically, the court’s response to suits brought by Black women (Thomas, 2004). According to Crenshaw, one way to make real the problem of multiple identities was to investigate how the legal system understood and acted upon Black female experiences (1989). She assembled evidence to support her ideas from several labor discrimination suits brought by Black women (1989).
and described the Black female experience as a “collision of multiple forms of exclusion” (Thomas, 2004, Interview, para. 5). Black women, by virtue of their race and gender, face compounded forms of discrimination, structural obstacles, and oppression (Crenshaw, 1989, 1993; Davis, 2008). Crenshaw’s examination revealed that courts had no structure to address claims of discrimination based on the simultaneous effects of multiple identities (Crenshaw, 1989; Thomas, 2004).

Crenshaw positioned three landmark court cases at the center of her critique: *Moore vs. Hughes Helicopters, Payne vs. Travenol,* and *DeGraffenreid vs. General Motors* (1989). In *DeGraffenreid vs. General Motors,* one of the more famous cases, five Black women brought suit alleging the employer’s seniority system perpetuated the effects of past discrimination. Despite General Motors not hiring Black women until after 1964, all of the Black women hired after 1970 lost their jobs in a seniority-based layoff (Crenshaw, 1989). Because General Motors had hired female employees (White females) for a number of years prior to the Civil Rights Acts of 1964, the court saw no grounds for sex discrimination that the seniority system would have violated (Crenshaw, 1989). Therefore, the court refused to consider a sex discrimination claim and, consequently, the race discrimination complaint was dismissed as well (Crenshaw, 1989). The court ruled in favor of General Motors, citing that Black women were not a special class to be protected from discrimination; the plaintiffs were allowed to bring “action for race discrimination, sex discrimination or alternatively either, but not a combination of both” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 59).

The court suggested that the plaintiffs join an existing racial discrimination case against General Motors; however, doing so would defeat the purpose of their suit as
theirs was not purely a race discrimination claim, but a specific action brought on behalf of Black women alleging both race and sex discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989). “Addressing one problematic dimension of identity” would not lessen the burden for Black women (Ferguson, Carr & Snitman, 2014, p. 53). Black women’s needs would not be met if the legal system and other socio-political institutions insisted on filtering Black female experiences “through a single-axis analysis” incapable of wholly capturing their experience (Crenshaw, 1989, 1993, p. 57).

As long as the courts and feminist and antiracist politics failed to recognize the problems associated with multiple marginalized identities, Black women would remain invisible and not receive full protection from discrimination (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989). Crenshaw criticized social theorists engaged in identity research and the development of feminist and antiracist doctrine for what she felt was their failure to consider intersecting identities (1989). Their inaction “erased” the Black female experience and unknowingly thwarted the efforts of Black women seeking protection from the legal system (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 57).

Crenshaw (1989) explained that Black women experience discrimination in ways similar to White women and Black men, but they also face “double discrimination” in the combined effects of race and sex discrimination (p. 63). The scope of antidiscrimination politics was too narrow, resulting in the further marginalization of those whose experiences did not fit existing paradigms (Crenshaw, 1989, 1993). Feminist worldviews evolved from White female experiences; they in no way represented historical or contemporary Black female experiences in the United States. Antiracist worldviews presume to speak for all Blacks, yet the interplay of patriarchy and racism within the
Black community often conflates the Black male agenda with the struggle for Black liberation (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989, 1993). Embracing the complexity of multiple identities and compounded discrimination requires a restructuring of normative views reinforcing the status quo by maintaining a political structure that categorizes oppressions as stand alone, disconnected issues (Crenshaw, 1989).

Today, some 30 years later, Crenshaw’s ideas are experiencing a resurgence. Researchers and educators in psychology, education, sociology, economics, criminology, geography and political science are exploring and teaching about the impact of intersecting identities and marginalization across a myriad of topics (Cole, 2009; Murphy, Acosta & Kennedy-Lewis, 2013; Navarro, 2010; Raya, 2014). A brief review of the literature published within the last year revealed that an intersectional lens has been applied to a wide variety of social issues, such as migration and immigration, poverty, school bullying, labor relations, issues of privilege, oppression and equity, community organizing and transformation, intimate partner violence, and chronic disease prevention and intervention. Most recently, the study of intersectionality or mutually constitutive identities has gone global, as evidenced by the prevalence of published works set in European British and Latin American contexts (Bernardino-Costa, 2014; Grineski, Hernandez & Ramos, 2013; Lepinard, 2014; Mirza, 2013).

Moving Beyond the Black Female Experience

Nonetheless, Crenshaw’s ideas inspired others, including noted scholar Patricia Hill Collins, who sought to expand the social discourse on privilege, oppression, and social inequality. Collins argued, since identities intersect, then oppressions also intersect, and one cannot analyze a single layer of oppression without regard for the
interrelatedness of other forms of oppression; rather, they must be analyzed simultaneously (Collins, 2000; DeBlaere, Brewster, Sarkees & Moradi, 2010). Collins’ work focused on the societal costs of multiple identities, pulling back the curtain on the powerlessness cultivated by discrimination and the cost to individuals and society (2000). Beyond the focus of Crenshaw’s original argument, an intersectional perspective challenges us to explore other forms of identity intersection (Bedolla, 2007; Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989, 1993).

The compounded discrimination and oppression of gay and lesbian people of color is yet another area where more work is needed to understand the disparate experiences of individuals who identify as both a racial and sexual minority. Despite increased attention to intersecting identities and oppressions, sexual identity research about Black sexual minorities continues to emphasize comparisons to and deviations from dominant group norms (Fine, 2012; Moore, 2012; Renn, 2007). These practices do not take into account the effects of structural, political, and representational contexts on Black gay and lesbian (BLG) persons and inadvertently perpetuates a system of discrimination and oppression (Crenshaw, 1993; Ferguson, Carr & Snitman, 2014; Parks, Hughes & Matthews, 2004).

Empirical evidence supports the influence of historical context on the age of awareness, self-labeling, identity management, disclosure, and public visibility of gay and lesbian persons. Nonetheless, BLG sexual identity development processes are in large part drawn from White gay and lesbian sexual experience, which is markedly different from the BLG experience (Parks, Hughes & Matthews, 2004).
Extant research supports the existence of distinct cultural influences on the lives of BLG persons affecting sexual identity development and, by extension, one’s lifelong intra- and interpersonal relationships. For example, in a study conducted by Parks, Hughes and Matthews, they found lesbian women of color (Black and Latino) were more likely to be out to their families than to non-family members; the opposite was true for their White counterparts (2004). Some speculate that a fear of isolation and need for community support against racism kept women of color from readily divulging their sexual orientation to individuals outside their family (Park, Hughes & Matthews, 2004; Wilson & Harper, 2013).

Black and White gay and lesbian persons can expect to endure similar obstacles—namely, culturally sanctioned negative attitudes about and actions toward individuals who express same gender attractions and the effects of heteronormative policies and practices. However, BLG persons will simultaneously experience and find themselves forced to cope with the effects of White racism as well (Ferguson, Carr & Snitman, 2014; Fine, 2011; Wilson & Harper, 2013). BLG persons suffer isolation, hostility, and marginalization at the hands of White gay and lesbian communities for being Black and from Black communities for being gay or lesbian (Chambers, 2012; Graham, 2012; Greene, 2009).

Challenges to Intersectionality

Along with intersectionality’s mass appeal and broad application came a great deal of criticism. Described as theory, concept, approach, and perspective, its vagueness is a point of contention among many social scientists. It lacks the language, structure, and methodology to rise to the level of theory when compared to battle-tested identity
development or social learning theories (Davis, 2008; McBride, Hebson & Holgate, 2014; McCall, 2005; Nash 2008).

Researchers in political science and psychology appear slower than their colleagues in other social science disciplines to embrace Crenshaw’s ideas. Researchers in these fields were unclear whether an “intersectional analysis” should focus on identity sans the influence of social structures and questioned its appropriateness as a “grand theory” bringing together lived experience and social structures (Davis, 2008; Haslanger, 2014; May, 2014; McCall, 2005). For political science, with less interest in individual identity development, this new way of understanding identity has offered very little in the way of interpreting collective identity or group behavior (Bedolla, 2007). Furthermore, categorical identities are less informative when compared to quantifiable relational aspects of group identity and stigma (i.e., collective identity), which have no constraints on the number or variation of group memberships (Bedolla, 2007).

Crenshaw’s goal was to reveal the unique circumstances and discrimination Black women encounter, yet her ideas fail to offer strategies that might trigger political praxis or critical consciousness to change the sociopolitical landscape for Black women (Freire, 1995; Townsend-Bell, 2011). Crenshaw selected Black women to highlight their stories and bring attention to the complexity of life with multiple identities; her presentation of Black women in this manner reduces Black women to a monolithic lot and ignores the diversity of experience across all Black females (McBride, Hebson & Holgate, 2014; Nash, 2008). In addition, given her focus on Black women in the US, researchers and policy makers in other parts of the world have questioned whether Crenshaw’s ideas are
universally applicable, given the cultural and historical past of the United States (McBride, Hebson & Holgate, 2014; Simien & Hancock, 2011).

Intersectionality may suffer from the same charge of exclusion levied against feminist/antiracist doctrine if it fails to hone its conceptual language by including a broader definition of inclusion and a more diverse portrait of other intersections. At the same time, Crenshaw has been accused of inciting an “Oppression Olympics,” where different marginalized groups compete to establish themselves as the definitive representative of marginalization and disenfranchisement, thereby contributing to the divisiveness within and between marginalized communities (Burchill, 2014).

Finally, Crenshaw’s work investigated instances of discrimination to call attention to the problem of multiple identities for Black women and to highlight the need for additional discourse around their experiences within feminist and antiracist doctrine. Her work did not explore how intersecting identities influence individual decision-making or social role performance. This study seeks to advance Crenshaw’s work by exploring the intersection of race and sexual orientation, specifically Black and gay or lesbian persons, and the influence multiple marginalized identities have on decision making and role performance within the context of postsecondary education.

**Role Theory**

An individual is never just human, nor are we just a girl or a boy, Black or White. Individuals carry with them an assemblage of social identities. Social identity refers specifically to those aspects of the self that characterize an individual’s connection to groups of persons with shared features (e.g., race, sex, gender, age, occupation) wherein the sum of these connections form one’s human identity (Deaux, 2001). These identities
have a profound influence on an individual’s behavior, including how that individual organizes and processes information and develops ideas about his or her place in the world (Carell, 2008; Deaux, 2001; Lopata, 1995). Parents, family, school, church and community are charged with teaching us the social identity groups to which we belong and demonstrate the attitudes and behaviors we ought to adopt given cultural contexts and societal expectations (Linton, 1945; Turner, 2001). As we explore the influence of intersecting or multiple identities on role performance, included here is a review of role theory and its connection to social identities.

Role theory explains the relationship between self and society by looking at the actions of individuals in relation to societal goals and expectations and what happens when individuals fail to adhere or attempt to redefine the roles associated with their social identities (Carell, 2008; Turner, 2001). The theory consists of two traditions: structural and interactionist. Structural theorists view society as a complex system of structures and processes to which individuals are responsible for restraint of their individual desires for the maintenance of societal stability through their strict adherence to societal goals and expectations (Carell, 2008; Linton, 1945; Lopata, 1995). Within this system, appropriately socialized individuals play the roles associated with their status/identity. Role conflict ensues when an individual’s roles pull in competing directions. In rare moments when individuals find themselves without the “energy” or “resources” (i.e., role overload) to play out all of the roles in their role set (e.g., teacher’s role set = student, other teachers, principal, school board, parents, etc.), they risk ostracization and/or being labeled as “sick” or “deviant” (Carell, 2008; Linton, 1945; Merton, 1957).
Meanwhile, interactionists have argued that structural theorists fail to consider the interconnectedness of relationships. Interactionists define social roles as patterns of interdependent social relationships between the individual and social groups, where individuals perform roles acted on by others within various contexts and make adjustments to their roles as they receive feedback in a process called role taking (Carello, 2008; Lopata, 1995; Merton, 1938, 1957; Znaniecki, 1965). Individuals operate within a complex system of exchange where there is always a degree of uncertainty and discretion, requiring more than simple role-play; thus, individuals must creatively make or take roles to achieve societal goals and meet community expectations (Carello, 2008; Turner, 2001). The process of role taking becomes more complex as individuals transition between roles and interact with others in varied social spaces (Lopata, 2008; Turner, 2001).

Role transitions require individuals give up and take on new roles; however, even when faced with an opportunity to move to a status or role perceived to be more advantageous, the individual may reject the shift, and the process becomes more complicated. The individual must make behavior and attitude shifts, adopt and find acceptance in his or her new role, and say goodbye to the old (Biddle, 1986; Turner, 2001). Leaving behind comfortable, functional, and or successful roles will have a consequence for the individual; whether this consequence is positive, negative, or indifferent depends on the individual and his or her processing of the transition (Biddle, 1986; Deaux, 2001; Turner, 2001).

Consider a young person’s shift from high school to college. The high school student is joining a new and, in some cases, very different and conflicting environment.
In this new environment, the young person is expected to adopt a new identity and student roles. The student is socialized into the culture of the campus community by way of learning the goals and expectations the institution has for its students. A student’s inability to adopt the new role as a college student and/or find equilibrium between it and previous roles may result in inter/intra-role conflict, where the former high school student role violates the expectations or values of the new college student role (Biddle, 1986; Turner, 2001). Given the relationship between social identity, social roles and the objective of this study (to understand BLG college student role performance), we must understand how college student identity unfolds and influences student role performance.

A brief overview of Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) student development theory explains the process and, by reviewing it, we can uncover potential points of conflict for BLG college students as they go about developing their college student identity in the midst of performing their student role.

**Student Development Theory**

Chickering’s theory of student development is recognized as the preeminent theory on college student identity and is widely used by faculty and administrators at colleges and universities across the country and beyond. Heavily influenced by Erikson’s work on identity formation, his goal was to examine the identity development process of young people in postsecondary education (Chickering, 1969; Kodama, McEwen, Liang & Lee, 2002). So popular were his ideas that others were inspired to develop race, sex, career, sexual orientation, and faith-based student development theories. Chickering’s theory, based on traditional college-age students, differed from existing identity theories as it moved away from linear and stepwise processes by employing the concept of vectors.
to denote direction, magnitude, and interaction (Chickering, 1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010).

Chickering’s seven vectors included competence, managing emotions, autonomy, identity, freeing interpersonal relationships, purpose, and integrity. An early version of Chickering’s theory was criticized for its failure to offer clearly defined and consistently applicable developmental “stages” (Knefelkamp, Widick & Parker, 1978; Gable, 1980). The theory was seen as incomplete, with muddy conceptualizations and little guidance or explanation as to how attitudes and behaviors change (Knefelkamp, Widick & Parker, 1978; Gable, 1980). In response, Chickering and Reisser co-authored a revised version of the theory in 1993. The theory maintained its seven-vector framework while addressing both theoretical and practice concerns.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) clarified student identity as the student’s concept of the self as “autonomous, independent people with carefully articulated opinions, beliefs, talents, skills, and ethics” (Long, 2012, p. 43). Identity development is the primary job of the college student, marked by their movement (i.e., negotiation of experiences, societal expectations, and roles) through seven vectors or tasks (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Kodama, McEwen, Liang & Lee, 2002; Long, 2012). Students progress through the first four vectors during their first and second years of college, providing a foundation for the fifth, which leads to the resolution of vectors six and seven during years three and four (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Long, 2012). Each vector builds on the one before it, evoking feelings, emotions, and decisions by the student (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; University of San Diego, 2010). In addition, movement through and completion of the vectors is a personalized process; students not only move at their own
pace, but they might also move back and forth between vectors as they re-examine situations (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Long, 2012). The chart below summarizes each of Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) seven vectors of student development theory:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>Developing Competence</td>
<td>Intellectual: building skill in using one’s mind, mastering content, acquiring the tools necessary to comprehend, analyze and synthesize information and perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Emotions</td>
<td>Managing Emotions</td>
<td>Learns healthy outlets for releasing fear and frustration and clearing oneself of unanswered trauma by allowing emotions to come into awareness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Moving Through Autonomy</td>
<td>Develops self-sufficiency - the recognition of one’s need to see and take responsibility for oneself as an individual who is a part of a community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freeing Interpersonal Relationships</td>
<td>Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships</td>
<td>Appreciating difference and building a capacity for intimacy, balancing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Purpose        Developing Purpose  Becoming intentional about goals, interests, and options in relation to vocational, personal, and interpersonal commitments.

Integrity      Developing Integrity  Humanizes values; moves away from automatic application of uncompromising beliefs to a more relative view. Connects rules and their purpose. Personalizes values and beliefs while respecting other points of view. Matches personal values with socially responsible behavior.

The revised theory solidified its position as one of the seminal works on student identity development. The theory defines the process of development and the student role; however, it does not address the influence of culturally specific situations experienced by students of different genders, races, and sexual identities (Long, 2012; University of San Diego, 2010). Black and LGBTQ students’ racial and sexual identity
compound the challenge of developing a healthy student identity. For example, Chickering’s theory asserts that students will make their way toward the development of mature interpersonal relationships (vector four) by acquiring a capacity for intimacy (1969, 1993). Intimacy requires one having a sense or feeling of trust, safety, openness, and honesty (Gordon, 2004). For Black and LGBTQ students to develop a capacity for intimacy, they may find themselves confronted with revealing parts of their person society has labeled objectionable, resulting in frustration, unsatisfying relationships, and—in some cases—deep personal trauma.

In light of this and other challenges, Black and LGBTQ college students may adopt neutralizing behaviors to help them overcome obstacles to healthy identity development and long-term personal and professional success. An exploration of the existing research on Black and LGBTQ college student role performance should provide an illustration of the ways these students adapt to the college environment. This leads to the next logical step—understanding the BLG college student experience, bringing the study’s primary focus into view.

**Black Youth in College**

Black enrollment in 4-year institutions is growing (The Education Trust, 2014; Yeado, 2013). After the dramatic increases in college enrollment within the ten or so years following the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the numbers of Black students enrolling in college languished (Teddlie & Freeman, 2002). Stalled progress prompted governmental agencies, community-based organizations, and postsecondary institutions to develop nationwide campaigns and campus-based programs to encourage high school completion and college enrollment of Black students (Teddlie & Freeman, 2002). Researchers offer
several reasons for the previous lag and current growth in college enrollment among Blacks.

One of the most cited and, in this author’s opinion, one of the more significant reasons enrollment numbers are growing is a reconnection to an earlier idea: that a college education leads to economic and social mobility as well as individual and group acceptance (Anderson, 1988; Perna, 2000; Synnott, 1979). Unfortunately, increases in enrollment have not translated into higher numbers of Black college graduates. There is an alarming disparity between the graduation rates of Black and White students at nearly all of our nation’s four-year colleges and universities (Lynch & Engle, 2010; National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). As with increasing enrollment rates, researchers have advanced a variety of reasons for the gaps in graduation rates.

Prior to arriving on campus, Black students have been socialized into a culture of White privilege, racial discrimination, and oppression. In the face of countless messages of deficiency and inferiority, Black students see college as a pathway to personal and professional confidence and success (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Wood, 2012). In studies by Ostrove and Long (2007) and Ostrove, Stewart, and Curtin (2011), the authors determined that students’ sense of belonging within the institution was integral to their ability and desire to integrate and commit to the institution as well as the purpose and process of higher education. In their studies, Black students were particularly sensitive to identity-based rejection. Identity-based rejection on campus combined with previous experiences with racism and oppression lowers the student’s sense of belonging within the university and adversely affected their progress toward graduation (Ostrove & Long, 2007; Ostrove, Stewart & Curtin, 2011; Wood, 2012).
Upon entering the academy, like their White peers, Black students want and, therefore, seek out a place to fit in. However, unlike their White peers, what these students encounter is the stress of negotiating their racial identity, the role of student, and an array of positive and negative societal and university assumptions that reinforce the feeling that they do not belong (Masuda, Anderson & Edmonds, 2012; Wood, 2014). Experiences of not fitting in and hostility may result in Black students leaving the institution and in some cases higher education. Unfortunately, Black male college students are particularly vulnerable to attrition (Wilkins, 2014; Wood, 2012, 2014).

Black students who persist and find success in college negotiate and perform their racial identity and student roles in a myriad of ways. In direct opposition to Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) and Tinto’s (1993) assertions that students must break away from the family and community, other researchers have challenged this idea. Black students need and maintain their connections to the family and community for support against the racism they experience on campus (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2012). For example, Black female college students, who have reported feeling added community and campus pressure, to reach high levels of academic achievement conceal academic success to maintain connections with their community (Henry, Butler & West, 2012). In addition, the fear of discrimination and stereotyping keeps some Black students from seeking help, causing them to disregard warning signs and avoid campus resources like health and mental health services (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2012; Harwood, Choi, Orozco, Huntt & Mendenhall, 2015; Masuda, Anderson & Edmonds, 2012).

Black students engage in silence and self-concealment; they tend to avoid sharing personal concerns or issues as they fear the information will be used against them in a
negative way (Henry, Butler & West, 2012; Masuda, Anderson & Edmonds, 2012). Anticipated frustration and hurt as a result of negative messages and alienating experiences make Black students especially vulnerable to stereotype threat (i.e. students performing poorly because it is expected that they will) and other self-destructive behaviors (e.g., substance use, body image issues, and involvement in unhealthy relationships) (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2012; Wood, 2014). Black students practice caution when making decisions to engage in the classroom, building friendships with White peers, and developing out-of-class relationships with faculty (Henry, Butler & West, 2012; Masuda, Anderson & Edmonds, 2012). When Black students need help, they more often turn to peers and or campus support services (e.g., advisors, counselors or coaches) instead of faculty (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2012; Wood, 2014). Black students look for *othermothers*—individuals at the university whom they trust to provide guidance and support beyond classroom knowledge and academic advice (Griffin, 2013; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2012).

To distinguish themselves from the stereotypes and racialized meanings of youth culture, Black students may disassociate themselves from the ubiquitous extended adolescence of college (Wilkins, 2014). They join professional and social organizations such as the National Society of Black Engineers, National Association of Black Accountants, fraternities, sororities, and other service- or academically focused organizations (Lewis, Mendenhall, Harwood & Huntt, 2013; Wilkins, 2014). Black males may move away from athletics to avoid participating in stereotypical demonstrations of Black masculinity and learn to manage relationships and interactions in such a way as to escape the perception and label of the “angry Black man” (Wilkins, p. 184, 2014). Black
female students may turn to spirituality, making concerted efforts to develop and maintain a healthy self-image by consciously rejecting the Eurocentric beauty ideal and avoiding contact with potentially harmful situations and people (Lewis, Mendenhall, Harwood & Huntt, 2013).

Black students recognize the value of a college education as evidenced by their enrolling in greater numbers; however, the graduation rates of Black students trail their White peers by 20% (Education Trust, 2014). At least one major challenge for Black students is finding their place in the university. As Gusa (2010) noted,

Black students experience their campus more negatively than White students, …predominantly White institutions do not have to be explicitly racist to create a hostile environment, instead unexamined historically situated White cultural ideology embedded in the language and cultural traditions and perceptions of knowledge allow these institutions to remain racialized. (p. 465)

In April 2015, The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education’s list of “Campus Racial Incidents” reported eight separate racially charged incidents at colleges and universities in the US (para. 1). Highly salacious incidents make the nightly news while daily microaggressions go largely unnoticed and are even expected by the students who endure them. The presence of racism and racial discrimination on college and university campuses significantly influences Black students’ decision-making and role performance as they transition to and develop their college student identity.

**LGBTQ Youth in College**

In 2014, Duke University joined the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the laws schools at Boston, Pennsylvania, and Washington universities as well as the University of Iowa and Elmhurst College as one of the few postsecondary institutions to inquire about the sexual orientation of their student applicants (O’Shaughnessy, 2012;
Stainburn, 2013). Elmhurst College received national attention when they became the first institution to ask about sexual identity. Campus officials said they were not looking for publicity or media attention, and their efforts were not immediately well received or adopted; however, despite the controversy, they were “glad they asked” (Ray, 2011). Why did tiny Elmhurst College, with a total student population of 2,700, take on such a controversial issue? Campus officials saw no difference in asking students about their sexual identity and other social identities, such as race and gender, and knowing this information about their students would help the college better support and provide resources for their LGBTQ students (Cegler, 2012; Ray, 2011).

The list of institutions asking about sexual identity is short, but the number of institutions actively recruiting LGBTQ students is rapidly increasing. According to Campus Pride, sponsor of the first online LGBTQ college fair, the number of institutions in attendance has grown each year since the fair began. The 2015 fair had well over 50 colleges and universities in attendance (Campus Pride, 2015a). Colleges and universities have been actively recruiting students of color, international students, athletes, etc., for years, and it seems LGBTQ students are coming into view as well. Using social media, dance parties, living learning communities with gender-neutral residence halls, and a variety of other recruitment strategies, colleges and universities hope to not only attract LGBTQ students to their campuses but also send a message about the importance of inclusivity and diversity on their campuses (Almeida-Neveu, 2010; Einhaus, Viento & Croteau, 2004; Lipka, 2011).

Colleges and universities are right to address issues of inclusivity and diversity on their campuses, as young people are coming out at an earlier age (13–16) compared to
two decades ago (19–23) and campus climate is a major factor in the college decision process (AVERT, 2014; Candido, 2011; Denizet-Lewis, 2009; Pew Research Center, 2013). LGBTQ students want their college experience to be different from that of middle or high school. In a national survey, more than 50% of LGBTQ middle and high school students reported that they felt unsafe because of their sexual orientation and nearly 40% because of their gender expression (Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer & Boesen, 2014). The same survey also revealed that more than 60% of LGBTQ students avoided school functions and extracurricular activities as they felt unsafe or uncomfortable because of their sexual orientation or gender expression; most distressing, more than 50% of respondents reported hearing homophobic and other disparaging remarks from teachers or other school staff about their sexual orientation or gender expression (Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer & Boesen, 2014). The very nature of college, with its creative spaces, push toward broader perspectives, critical thinking, and exploration, would suggest that “it gets better”\(^2\) and students should look forward to experiences that are more positive than what they might have endured in middle or high school (Woodford, Kulick, Sinco & Hong, 2014).

Unfortunately, while busily recruiting LGBTQ students to campus, college and university officials may not have done all of their homework to ensure that the recruitment rhetoric matches the LGBTQ students’ campus experience. The results of a national college and university climate study conducted by Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, and Frazer (2010) suggest more work is needed before LGBTQ students feel safe on

\(^2\) Reference to the It Gets Better Project (http://www.itgetsbetter.org/), whose mission is to communicate to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth around the world that it gets better and to create and inspire the changes needed to make it better for them.
campus. In this study, LGBTQ respondents were significantly less likely to feel very comfortable or comfortable with overall campus climate. They were least likely to feel comfortable in class and more likely to perceive or observe harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The respondents were twice as likely to perceive physical violence in their environment compared to their heterosexual counterparts and less likely to agree that the college or university provided adequate resources on LGBTQ issues or positively responded to incidents of LGBTQ harassment (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld & Frazer, 2010). How then do LGBTQ students move through college when campus is not the inclusive, safe space advertised in university marketing materials and what influence do these situations have on role performance?

Gay identity development is a complex cognitive and social process. Coming out (specifically, the decision to come out or not)—only one aspect of gay identity development—is iterative; situations and interactions require constant evaluation and re-evaluation of whether or not the environment or an individual is safe (Cass, 1979; D’Augelli, 1994). LGBTQ students may choose to remain closeted while in college, hiding their sexual orientation from others when they perceive campus to be unsafe (Rhoads, 1994). Hiding one’s sexual orientation potentially promotes psychological stress and, in severe cases, dire consequences for the young person (Meyer, 1995, 2003). A college suicide prevention publication sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reported that LGBTQ students have double the rate of suicide risk compared to their heterosexual peers (Lawrence University, 2012).

College offers LGBTQ students, like their heterosexual peers, opportunities for experiences filled with newness and excitement. However, sexual prejudice and
discrimination may prevent LGBTQ students from successfully integrating into the life of the institution. Negative experiences can have a detrimental effect on (LGBTQ) students’ desire to engage academically and socially inhibit their overall growth and satisfaction with the college experience (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Dugan & Yurman, 2011; Tinto, 1996, 2006). Regrettably, failure to engage in the life of the institution may result in isolation and self-destructive behaviors.

For example, LGBTQ students may find it necessary to opt out of traditional or formative college activities such as dorm life and Greek organizations—both areas that have a history of being notoriously emotionally challenging environments for LGBTQ students (Fine, 2011; Schmidt, Miles & Welsh, 2011). In their effort to fit in and feel comfortable interacting socially, gay male students, in particular, spend less time with former friends and consume more alcohol than their heterosexual peers (Longerbeam, Inkelas, Johnson & Lee, 2007). The struggle to connect with peers and an inability to find one’s place in the institution may encourage these students to give up and leave the institution. Sadly, LGBTQ students who experience greater levels of discrimination are at even greater risk for stopping or dropping out, which may have long-term effects on their potential career pathways and overall well-being (Oswalt & Wyatt, 2011).

Fortunately, LGBTQ students—more so than their heterosexual peers—avail themselves of campus mental health services to cope with the pressures of sexual and student identity formation (Oswalt & Wyatt, 2011). Depending upon the degree to which LGBTQ students are out, they may participate in existing student groups, form new groups, and or take on campus leadership positions (Renn, 2007). Campus and civically engaged LGBTQ students develop a more positive self-awareness and motivation to
speak out against other forms of oppression (Renn, 2007). Gay male students seek out peer groups offering a safe space in which to engage in discussions around academic and professional aspirations (Longerbeam, Inkelas, Johnson & Lee, 2007). Although researchers have expressed concern about the long-term effects of this particular strategy, LGBTQ students may cope with the fallout of sexual prejudice by minimizing or defining antigay acts as “no big deal” in an effort to stave off damage to their psyche, thereby increasing resilience in the face of heteronormative encounters (Fine, 2011).

LGBTQ students seriously consider their sexual identity when making academic major and career choices; this practice may result in positive or negative consequences for the student (Magallanes, 2012). Positive consequences occur because the students have thoughtfully considered to their major choice, ideally increasing their commitment to the major and the likelihood of degree completion (Longerbeam, Inkelas, Johnson & Lee, 2007). That said LGBTQ students might avoid certain career fields out of fear of societal prejudices and assumptions (Magallanes, 2012; Schmidt, Miles & Welsh, 2011). Finally, LGBTQ students are keenly aware of the personal and professional challenges they may encounter in college; to minimize these challenges LGBTQ students seek out supportive individuals and LGBTQ role models to guide them through the college process (Dugan & Yurman, 2011; Longerbeam, Inkelas, Johnson & Lee, 2007).

Regardless of the happy smiling faces of diverse groups of students on the covers of college and university recruitment brochures peddled by admissions officers, previous experience with alienating attitudes and behaviors may result in LGBTQ students taking a cautiously optimistic approach to college selection. The college transition process is complicated and is made more challenging for LGBTQ students when colleges and
universities profess openness and inclusivity, yet LGBTQ students find themselves the
targets of daily microaggressions, causing them to question their safety across nearly all
areas of campus life (Stevens, 2004). As evidenced by the discussion thus far, antigay
sentiment expressed by classmates, professors, campus officials, community residents,
and family members influence the manner in which LGBTQ students enact their student
role.

Still, research on LGBTQ youth/college students is concentrated in the areas of
identity development, heterosexual attitudes, and campus climate, while less has been
written about the influence of college experiences on decision making and role
performance (Jenkins, Lambert & Baker, 2009; Renn, 2010; Whitley, Childs & Collins,
2010). A closer investigation reveals even less is known about the decision-making and
role performance of BLG youth/college students as extant research centers on sexual and
mental health (e.g., risk behaviors, suicide, substance misuse) and the cultural acceptance
or lack thereof of sexual minorities within Black communities (Battle & Crum, 2007;
Huang et al., 2010; Johnson, 2014; McCabe, Hughes, Bostwick, West & Boyd, 2009;
Morgan, 2014; Renn, 2010).

With the decision-making and student role performance of Black and LGBTQ
students individually outlined, to complete the foundation upon which this study is built
requires an exploration of the relationship between Black LGBTQ community members
and Black communities. When BLG young people arrive on campus, they bring with
them a collection of messages about what it means to be Black and a sexual minority.
They also have a set of experiences from which they will draw to help them evaluate and
make decisions about situations they encounter in college. What are those messages and
how might they influence decision-making and role performance in the college environment?

**Black Communities and Black LGBTQ Community Members**

Research and discussions surrounding the cultural acceptance of sexual minorities within Black communities are expanding and multifaceted. Many social scientists and cultural historians point to racism and sexism within the larger society as the driving forces behind the ostracization and bullying of BLG community members within Black communities and the central challenges to Black communities wholly embracing their gay and lesbian community members. The primary goal of this next section is to provide cultural context wherein one may begin to understand the influence of cultural factors, like racism, sexism, and religion, on community relationships, not debate the level or intensity of heterosexism in Black communities.

The story of the relationship between Black heterosexual and Black LGBTQ community members is inextricably linked to the Black experience in the US. In the 1920s, more than 80% of the Black population of New York City lived in Harlem, making it the epicenter of Black culture and one of the first gay enclaves in New York City (Dudley, 2013). Blacks of all sexual orientations gathered at jazz clubs, speakeasies, and other entertainment venues (Dudley, 2013; Zimmerman, 2000). Unfortunately, the prohibition era would change this as many of the establishments that had been accepting of Black gays and lesbians closed (Dudley, 2013). Increasingly high unemployment rates brought on by the Depression, the fear of losing one’s job as retaliation for sympathetic views toward gay and lesbian struggles, and a swell of faith-based civil rights activism all
conspired to drive a wedge between Black heterosexuals and Black gays and lesbians (Dudley, 2013; Zimmerman, 2000).

Religion and the “Black Church”

Religion and faith have and continue to play an integral role in the cultural survival of the Black community (Barnes, 2013; Boykin, 1996, 2005; Hooks, 2001; McQueeney, 2009). Belief in a higher power and favor in the afterlife have sustained the Black community through the evils of slavery, the indignities of the civil rights era, and the modern ills of poverty and social injustice. While religion uplifts, it also demeans BLG community members (Ashley et al., 2013; Chaney & Patrick, 2011). To maintain deeply desired connections to places of worship, BLG community members may alter their behavior, engage in homophobic speech, and downplay homophobic church doctrine to deflect suspicion of their sexuality (Balaji et al., 2012). The following quote exemplifies the confusion and fear BLG young people experience as a byproduct of ideas and actions carried out in the name of religious beliefs.

The religious thing is the biggest thing about homosexuality. It’s against God. It’s against God. We can deal with racism, hate, rape, murder. All that’s fine. But you gay, we will all join together and kill ya’ll. I think if they could really put everybody (homosexuals) together and throws us over there and do some genocide. (Balaji et al., 2012, p. 734)

For the purpose of this discussion, the phrase “Black church” is used only to reference the combined power of faith and influence of church organizations—specifically, Christian—within the Black community (Hill, 2013). The Black church has a long history as the model and primary teacher of the manner in which Black community members should conduct themselves (Barnes, 2013, p. 1411). The author recognizes the diversity of religious doctrine and church leadership and acknowledges the presence of
affirming Black church communities; however, such is not the focus of the discussion to follow. Religious practice in the Black community includes certain tools—namely, “scriptures, stories, rituals and symbols germane to the Black experience” in the United States (Barnes, 2013, p. 1411; McQueeney, 2009).

Uniquely characteristic of the Black church are spirituals/gospel music, “call and response,” a commitment to service and support, and the idea of a linked or common experience positioned in a racist past and present (Barnes, 2013, p. 1411). Members of stigmatized groups, specifically Blacks, manage discredited identities and negotiate encounters with White society by “overemphasizing modesty, adopting a stance of sexual conservatism and traditional sex norms” (Barnes, 2013, p. 1412; Chaney & Patrick, 2011; Collins, 2013). Within the Black church and by extension the Black community, discussions around sexuality and sexual minorities as well as other topics that might bring about community stigma are taboo (Barnes, 2013, p. 1412; Gibbs & Jones, 2013).

Homosexuality’s connection to mental illness, perversion, and biblical sin associates those engaged in such behaviors with social stigmas the Black church contests (Barnes, 2013; McQueeney, 2009). In an effort to demonstrate acceptability to White society, the Black church holds up the traditional nuclear family and child-centeredness as the expectation for Black community members (Barnes, 2013; Dudley, 2013; McQueeney, 2009). Church-sanctioned heterosexism may have resulted from the Black community’s efforts to live as full human beings in the face of racial oppression (Boykin, 1996, 2005; Hooks, 2001). One could argue that heterosexism in the Black community is the consequence of a White supremacist past and internalized racism, a perspective
taking shape and gaining ground in the current discourse around Black heterosexism (Barnes, 2013; Manago, 2012).

In Chaney and Patrick’s study entitled “The Invisibility of LGBT Individuals in the Black Mega Church: Political and Social Implications”, world-renowned pastor and author Bishop T. D. Jakes is quoted as saying “I am not supportive of gay marriage…for those who fundamentally apply the word of God, Christian marriage should be a picture of Christ in the church” (2011, p. 209). Despite a number of social service programs, including an HIV prevention program, within his more than 25,000-member church Potter’s House (one of the largest Black mega churches in the country), Jakes is firm in his stance on the withholding of marriage equality from gay and lesbian people (Chaney & Patrick, 2011). Many of the church leaders interviewed by McQueeney for her 2009 article “We are God’s Children, Y’All: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Lesbian and Gay Affirming Congregations” and Barnes for the 2013 article “To Welcome or Affirm: Black Clergy Views About Homosexuality, Inclusivity and Church Leadership” expressed similar heterosexist sentiments. McQueeney’s and Barnes’ studies revealed that church leaders had condoned frequent homophobic statements and discriminatory behaviors perpetrated by congregations (Balaji et al., 2012; Barnes, 2013; Chaney & Patrick, 2011; McQueeney, 2009). In addition to the negative experiences shared by research participants in these studies, the researchers also documented a heteronormative ideology present in everything from church doctrine to weekly sermons.

Potter’s House and other Black churches focus on the physical health needs of their gay and lesbian church and community members, offering HIV/AIDS services, medical referrals, food pantries, and homelessness prevention and outreach, yet neglect
the core of what it means to Black and gay or lesbian. It is a widely held belief across various faith traditions that religion and religious institutions should be a place of refuge, acceptance, and spiritual healing from the destructive attitudes and hurtful actions inflicted upon us and by us (Barnes, 2013). Certainly, open and affirming churches exist; unfortunately, regardless of the affirming nature of some Black churches, in many instances the invitation for Black gay individuals to join in worship and fellowship does not include the privilege of holding positions of leadership or the congregation’s support for marriage equality (Barnes, 2013).

However, even affirming Black churches may adopt a “don’t ask, don’t tell” standard for Black LGBTQ members, “taking full advantage of Black LGBTQ gifts and talents” while denying them the opportunity to participate fully in the church or the larger community (Barnes, 2013, p. 1424; Chaney & Patrick, 2011; Gibbs & Jones, 2013; McQueeney, 2009). Distancing itself from certain actions and “lifestyles it considers to be immoral,” the Black church has been called out for this hypocritical stance (Barnes, 2013, p. 1418). Black LGBTQ community members believe the church chooses to focus on the expulsion of certain sins, while turning its head on others, and fails to question biblical scripture relating to homosexuality, as it had when biblical scripture was used as the justification for slavery (Balaji et al., 2012; Barnes, 2013). The Black church has a great deal of influence on the beliefs and attitudes of individuals within the Black community; as such, the church’s denunciation of homosexuality is deeply rooted in Black culture (Balaji et al., 2012; Barnes, 2013; Chaney & Patrick, 2011; McQueeney, 2009).
Perspectives on the Origins of Black Heterosexism

Decades after the initial AIDS epidemic of the 1980s, discussions on Black LGBTQ and heterosexual community relations have become the topic of a growing body of research. Key figures have emerged in the discourse on Black LGBTQ experiences within Black communities. In Keith Boykin’s (1996) seminal work *One more River To Cross: Black and Gay in America*, he exposed the trials and tribulations of Black LGBTQ community members. He began the discussion with a look at the nature of Black heterosexism and sexual prejudice. Boykin (1996) shared the story of Malik, a Black gay man whose family argued that “God doesn’t want homosexuals in his kingdom” as an example of the sentiment expressed by some members of the Black community (p. 156). However, Boykin did not point the finger at the Black church as the sole purveyor of Black homophobia. Boykin (1996) suggested that the Black community’s inability to expel homophobia from its community is a byproduct of early homophobic ideas perpetuated by Black intellectuals and popular culture (p. 157).

Boykin cited the work of Dr. Frances Cress Welsing, Amiri Baraka, Eldridge Cleaver, Nathan Hare, Robert Staples, Haki Madhubuti, and Molefi Asante, who blame white supremacy for Black homosexuality and the ultimate destruction of the Black community (Boykin, 1996). Amiri Baraka described homosexuality as a “white man’s problem born out his weakness, for which Black males should have no part” (Boykin, 1996, p. 157). Asante and Staples’ writings on the proliferation of homosexuality as an outgrowth of the increasing imprisonment of Black men and Cleaver’s 1969 work *Soul on Ice*, equating Black homosexuality to the Black man’s acceptance of a “racial death wish,” illustrate the influence that Black intellectuals have had on socio-political aspects
of Black culture with regard to homosexuality (Boykin, 1996, p. 158). In addition, noted
Black intellectuals linked homosexuality to the decline of the Black family. For example,
Nathan and Julia Hare wrote that “homosexuality does not promote black family
stability,” as evidenced by the breakdown of the family in ancient Greece and Rome and
the “result of rampant gender confusion” in those populations (Boykin, 1996, p. 160).
Black intellectuals believed homosexual behavior threatened the existence of the Black
community.

Black intellectuals described the AIDS epidemic and the ensuing crisis as a
White, middle-class, homosexual problem and concluded that Blacks could (and should)
avoid contracting the disease by not engaging in homosexual sex acts (Boykin, 1996).
Madhubuti’s work contributed to the opinion that being homosexual was cause for
shame, further stigmatizing Black men and women who contracted AIDS through
homosexual activity and reinforced Black heterosexual privilege (Boykin, 1996). Boykin
also called out “pseudo-intellectuals and social commentators”—specifically, Sister
Souljah, an influential Black female rapper at the time, who shared in her incongruously
titled book No Disrespect the story of a love interest she later learned was struggling with
his sexuality (Boykin, 1996, p. 162). Souljah referred to the young man as “an
emasculated husk of a man” and provided the next generation with grounds for continued
alienation and violence against its Black LGBTQ community members (Boykin, 1996, p.
162).

Refusing to stop there, Boykin (1996) unpacked what he called the “most
ridiculous” of all ideas about Black homosexuality: Black men become homosexual
because of poor relationships with Black women, weak and or absent fathers and the
Black man’s failure to understand homosexuality is a choice (p. 162). Especially quick to point out the flawed and dangerous nature of such ideas, “they (Black intellectuals) work backward from the conclusion that a particular person is homosexual to find any dysfunctional characteristic in that person that might have caused his homosexuality” (Boykin, 1996, p. 163). Black intellectuals in this camp fail to explain why everyone with these “dysfunctional elements in their personalities and families does not become homosexual, nor do they explain why all homosexuals do not share the dysfunctional characteristics associated with homosexuality” (Boykin, 1996, p. 163). Black communities do not have a problem with sexual minorities; some Black individuals have a problem with what they believe the acceptance of Black LGBTQ persons means to the strength, prosperity, and existence of the Black community and, therefore, engage in discourse that is largely heteronormative and sexist (Boykin, 1996, 2005; Collins, 2000).

Noted author and activist Bell Hooks, offers another perspective on Black LGBTQ and heterosexual community relations. In her essay “Homophobia in Black Communities,” Hooks challenged earlier ideas and expressed her frustration with the question of whether Black communities are more heterosexist and challenged what she believed were heteronormative, racist beliefs concerning the Black community. Hooks (2001) used her essay to highlight a significant flaw in the question of Black heterosexism: the notion of a singular Black community. Within the Black community, there is a multitude of diversity, especially around the issue of LGBTQ acceptance (Collins, 2013).

Using her personal experience, Hooks (2001) then described how gay and lesbian people in her neighborhood were neighbors, friends, and family, not a separate subculture
of misguided acquiescing Black folk: “[T]hey were us, a part of our black community,”
connected by a common circumstance of poverty, fierce racism, and survival (p. 68). The
desire to maintain familial ties and community support meant some LGBTQ people
learned to live a sort of closeted lifestyle while others lived openly gay lives (Hooks,
2001; McQueeney, 2009). Hooks pointed to a limited catalog of autobiographies and oral
histories exploring the lives of Black LGBTQ people who live contentedly in Black
communities. More outspoken antigay Black voices significantly contributed to the
perception of a more heterosexist Black community (Hooks, 2001).

Hooks recounts the stories of a young gay man who made deeply disparaging
remarks about LGBTQ folk, yet was a primary source of support for a lesbian sister and,
the Baptist minister who expressed negative attitudes toward LGBTQ community
members from the pulpit while in her daily interactions was supportive and cared for
many LGBTQ friends (Hooks, 2001). These kinds of contradictory behaviors in Black
communities speak to the overall “ambivalence about sexuality, sex and attitudes toward
homosexuality” (Hooks, 2001, p. 69). Hooks did not attempt to diminish the role
religious beliefs and the church play in promoting heterosexism within the Black
community; rather, she recognized that many “Christian black folks are taught in
churches that it is a sin to be gay” (Hooks, 2001, p. 69; Gibbs & Jones, 2013). With that,
Hooks suggested that it was the responsibility of theologians, scientists, activists, and
others to examine the nature of heterosexism in the Black community without

Social activist Cleo Manago, founder of the Black Men’s Xchange, a community-
based movement promoting healthy self-concept and behavior “among same gender
loving (SGL), gay-identifying and bisexual African-descended males,” offered a
contemporary and controversial, perspective on the nature of Black heterosexism
(Manago, 2012, para. 13).

Contrary to the prevailing wisdom in America, Black people—Black men
specifically are not more homophobic than other groups of people. But Black
men's male insecurity—a more accurate term for what we are really discussing—
does have a root cause: White supremacy’s emasculation of Black men and its
twisted construction of Black masculinity as inherently violent, predatory,
disposable and dangerous…Without an understanding of the deep hurt that Black
men have around issues of masculinity and their role as a man, you can’t hope to
eliminate anti-homosexual sentiment in Black men. There has been no national
project to address the psychic damage that White supremacy has done to Black
men. (Manago, 2012, para. 5)

The different perspectives on the origins of heterosexism signal no single root
cause for the existence of heterosexism in Black communities. Unaffirming religious
teachings, the Black church’s failure to act, racism, sexism, and the proliferation of
heterosexist ideology, set within an overall ambivalence and fear of engaging in
discussions on sexuality, interact resulting in a negative relationship between Black
LGBTQ and heterosexual community members. We can see evidence of said influence in
everyday familial and community interactions between LGBTQ and heterosexual
individuals in Black communities.

Family

The family of origin and extended community play significant roles in the
protection, socialization, maturation, and development of various aspects of our human
identity (Erikson, 1968). Caregivers and community members share stories and impart
other forms of cultural knowledge to assist Black youth in the development of their racial
identity (Cross, 1971). However, the development of one’s sexual identity represents a
much more difficult process for Black LGBTQ youth, especially if the individual lives in a family where any sexual identity other than heterosexual is unacceptable (Balaji et al., 2012; Cass, 1979; D’Augelli, 1994; Follins, 2003; Majied, 2010).

Within the Black family, there are strongly defined gender roles (and stereotypes related to masculinity and femininity) that are maintained and transmitted from one generation to the next, crossing gender lines is frowned upon and potentially very dangerous for individuals who do (Gibbs & Jones, 2013). In 2015, a brutal example of a Black father’s unacceptance of his son’s gender nonconformance played out on network television in the pilot episode of Fox Network’s Empire. During a party at his home, the lead character and patriarch notices his son wearing his mother’s headscarf, pink high-heeled shoes and carrying a shiny purse; the father violently grabs his six- or seven-year-old son, takes him outside into the snow, and dumps him into a trashcan. Partygoers watch, yet no one except the boy’s mother steps in to save him. Although one might believe such a horrific scene was included for viewer titillation and sensationalism, Lee Daniels, critically acclaimed Black gay filmmaker, admitted the scene is a reenactment of his own father dumping him into the trash when he was just five years old (Moyer, 2015).

Coming out to one’s mother is difficult; however, potentially more challenging and dangerous is coming out to one’s father, where the risk is “wholesale rejection” of one’s person (Voisin et al., 2013; West, 2011).

Black gay youth, who are less likely than White youth to tell their parents they are gay or lesbian, have a very real fear of being thrown out of their home as a consequence of coming out to their parents (Christmas, 2013). In the soon-to-be-released documentary entitled Pier Kids, directed by Elegance Bratton, himself a former homeless Black gay
youth, Bratton chronicles the lives of homeless Black LGBTQ youth on the streets of New York City. The primary filming location of the documentary is Christopher Street and the nearby piers, oddly just steps from Stonewall Inn, which some say is the birthplace of the 1970s gay rights struggle (Luis, 2013; Nichols, 2013). In one interview, Bratton contended that nearly all of the young people who call New York City’s Christopher Street, and the piers home are living on the streets because their parents or guardians asked them to leave or, worse, after coming out their homes became emotionally unaffirming and/or physically unsafe (Luis, 2013; Nichols, 2013).

Bratton “outs” parents for turning their back on their children, local business owners and neighborhood homeowners, largely White and LGBTQ, for pushing the kids out of the one place, they can call home (2014). The movie’s tagline—“No wants to live on the street”—represents the feelings expressed by many of the homeless Black gay youth in the documentary (Luis, 2013; Nichols, 2013). The problem of homelessness stretches beyond urban centers. According to the National Coalition for the Homeless (2013) and a study conducted by the Williams Institute (Choi, Wilson, Shelton & Gates, 2015), homelessness among LGBTQ youth is a national problem, with more than 30% of homeless Black youth across the country identifying as LGBTQ.

In the midst of the pain of familial rejection, a myriad of other potential dangers emerge. Black parents may also take a “don’t ask, don’t tell” approach, forbidding their LGBTQ child from forming relationships with same-sex partners, not allowing same-sex friends in their home, and/or demanding the young person not come out to siblings or extended family, and they absolutely do not have discussions about sexuality or sex acts (Dudley, 2013; Voisin et al., 2013). Some Black parents resort to minimizing or ignoring
altogether their child’s coming out story, serving only to invalidate further the young
person (Voisin et al., 2013). When nothing else seems to work, some parents resort to
scare tactics, citing the contraction of the AIDS virus and eternal damnation as
consequences of the young person’s “choice” (Balaji et al., 2012; Voisin et al., 2013).

Community

Within the Black community, expressions of hyper-masculinity permeate youth
culture and play out in the behaviors and relationships of Black male youth (Collins,
Harris, 2009). One characteristic of a patriarchal society is the privilege bestowed
on members of the male gender. Within a system of power and oppression, privilege is
maintained through acts of discrimination and violence against those who have less or no
power. Despite the presence of severe racial oppression experienced by Black males, they
are male and, as such, benefit from said privilege. Black heterosexual males see gay men
as “voluntarily” giving up said privilege to be more like women and Black lesbianism as
a female’s attempt to co-opt male power to which she has no right (Harris, 2009).

Heterosexual Black males may outwardly display their objections to sexual minorities
while some heterosexual Black females purposefully avoid any discussion related to
LGBTQ acceptance (Collins, 2000; Dudley, 2013; Harris, 2009). Black heterosexist
filters are applied to Black LGBTQ issues (Cohen, 1999; Collins, 2013). Consequently,
issues facing sexual minorities in Black communities are not seen as representative of the
public (i.e., Black) struggle for survival (Barnes, 2013; Harris & Battle, 2013; Hill,
2013).

Blacks currently have the highest rates of HIV/AIDS in the United States, but
Black communities have yet to make large-scale, community-wide efforts or inroads on
the spread of the disease (Centers for Disease Control [CDC], 2015; Voisin et al., 2013). Presumably, this inaction has left young people in Black communities especially vulnerable. According to the CDC, Black youth represent more than half of all new HIV infections among young people aged 13 to 24 (2014b). The rate of new HIV infections among black females aged 13 to 24 is six times as high as that of Hispanic females and 20 times that of white females the same age (CDC, 2014a, 2014b). Among African Americans diagnosed with HIV, young people are less likely than those who are older to receive care and treatment (CDC, 2014b).

Furthermore, Black heterosexuals have at times failed to come out in support of LGBTQ civil rights (Harris, 2009; Richen, 2013). Comparing the civil rights movement to the fight for LGBTQ rights is extremely off-putting for some Black community members (Raushenbush, 2014; Richen, 2013). The New Black, a documentary by Yoruba Richen, explores the challenges of trying to persuade heterosexual members of the Black community to provide political support for their LGBTQ peers. In a critical and potentially volatile scene, while out canvassing the lead activists, Karess and Samantha encounter three young Black men on the steps of a Baltimore row house. When the activists ask if they can count on the young men voting in support of an upcoming marriage equality referendum, one young man responds quite negatively to their request. Karess and Samantha each appeal to the young man’s sense of obligation to their Black LGBTQ community members, to which the young man responds “that [LGBTQ marriage and civil rights in general] don’t have nothing to do with me” (Richen, 2013).

The attitudes expressed by these young men may be the natural conclusion to a long history of popular Black media personalities telling jokes and making other
salacious comments about members of the Black LGBTQ community. In 2013, Roland Martin, CNN commentator and former Chicago radio personality, left the network after several homophobic tweets were released to the media (Byers, 2013). Martin tweeted, among other comments, “Ain’t no real bruhs [brothers] going to H&M to buy some damn David Beckham underwear” (Martin, 2012). In 2011, actor and comedian Tracy Morgan allegedly made several inflammatory jokes about the prospect of his son being gay and his plan to “beat it out of him” (Lawson, 2011). Chris Rock, a popular comedian, filmmaker, and social commentator was criticized for including what some believed were gay stereotypes and homophobic themes in his recent film *Top Five* (Gross, 2014). In each case, the message was clear, “real” Black men are not gay, and they are deserving of physical punishment if they appear so.

Well documented is the evidence of physical violence against Black gay community members. In a 2014 report of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP), the NCAVP found that Black LGBTQ people were more likely to have experienced physical violence, threats, and intimidation; more likely to be injured and require medical attention; and more likely to be harassed in public areas. Long-held heterosexist beliefs and bullying attitudes and actions within Black communities directly and indirectly influence the daily life experiences of BLG youth. BLG youth bound for college leave their communities carrying incredibly heavy “invisible knapsacks” of inferiority, hate, and fear (McIntosh, 1990).

*Black and Gay*

Certainly, there is enormous diversity within Black gay life experience; however, consistently present are the influences of racism, heterosexism, and patriarchy. Black gay
males experience prejudice and discrimination because they are both Black and non-heterosexual. In 2010, Raymond Chase, a student at Johnson and Wales University, and Joseph Jefferson, a promising young, gay rights activist from New York, committed suicide (Advocate, 2010; Dominus, 2010). Their deaths speak to the overwhelming challenge of balancing familial and societal expectations with one’s need to live authentically (O’Donnell, 2011).

In addition to the internalized pain and anguish of being Black and gay is the very real and present danger of lethal homophobic acts perpetrated against one’s person. For example, in 2005, Rashawn Brazell, a bisexual man, was murdered and his dismembered body left in a New York City subway tunnel (Fahim & Koblin, 2006). In 2011, Robert Champion, a Florida A&M drum major, was beaten to death by band mates (Balona, 2012). Although Champion’s death was prosecuted as a campus-hazing incident, others pointed to Champion being an out Black gay man as motivation for the attack. Their deaths are a horrific reminder of the ugliness and brutality of sexual prejudice.

One might argue the situations discussed thus far are extreme cases; however, we cannot deny the effect that heterosexist attitudes and behaviors have on the emotional and physical well-being of Black gay lives. Overall, Black gay youth have lower self-esteem and difficulty engaging in school (Diaz & Kosciw, 2009). They suffer negative sexual health outcomes in larger numbers and, most disturbing, greater numbers of Black gay youth report having daily thoughts of suicide (Christmas, 2013; Michigan Project for Informed Public Policy, 2014). There is no shortage of ways Black gay males experience sexual prejudice in their daily lives, including homelessness, name calling, physical violence, “malicious gossip, intimidation, vandalism, theft of property, discrimination at
work [and school], isolation, social [and familial] rejection, sexual assault, imprisonment, [and] even death” (CDC, 2011; Ford, Whetten, Hall, Kaufman & Thrasher, 2007; Hill, 2013, p. 211). There is also the sense of not fitting in and feeling pressure to pledge sole allegiance to one’s racial identity. Long term, the effects of alienation and isolation result in increased levels of stress, anxiety, internalized homophobia, and other more serious and potentially fatal life experiences (Ashley, McIntosh & Barber, 2013; Balaji et al., 2012; Moradi et al., 2010).

**Black and Lesbian**

Black lesbian lives are shaped by elements of racism, heterosexism, and sexism. Sexual minorities have a shared experience, similar obstacles, experiences of discrimination, and isolation, except there are pieces of the Black lesbian narrative inextricably linked and directly influenced by sexism and patriarchy (Collins, 2000, 2013; M. Moore, 2012; Smith, 2000). In 1985, the film adaptation of Alice Walker’s book *The Color Purple* appeared on movie screens across the country. Almost immediately, criticism and debate ensued around various cultural themes in the film, including Black lesbianism.

Tony Brown, host of the long-running (1968–2008) public television program *Tony Brown Journal*, was one of the most vocal critics of the film. Brown said, “No lesbian relationship can take the place of a positive love relationship between black women and black men” (Boykin, 1996, p. 164; Bobo, 1988). Shallowly buried in Brown’s statement are heteronormative and sexist cultural expectations of the Black female role and her responsibility to Black men, her family, and her community. Brown was not alone in his criticism of the film or Walker’s book. Joining Brown were several
other Black community members who thought the film encouraged lesbianism, which would ultimately bring about the demise of the Black family and patriarchy (Bobo, 1988).

The effect of racism results in distinctly different sexual minority experiences that have indirectly contributed to our lack of insight into and support for Black lesbian communities. Historically, Black lesbians/feminists have steered clear of adopting White lesbian/feminist rhetoric (Collins, 2000; Smith, 2000). Instead, they have challenged what appeared to be reluctance or refusal on the part of White lesbian/feminists to explore issues of race or include Black lesbian voices (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989; M. Moore, 2012; Smith, 2000). In response to their perceived exclusion, Black feminists sought to carve out space for discussions of Black heterosexual and lesbian issues.

As such, in recent years, research on Black lesbian lives and Black feminist ideology has grown; where previously, racism and heterosexism limited the publication of work on Black lesbian themes (M. Moore, 2006). Black female writers typically wrote about antiracist politics, but the fear of lesbian labels deterred some Black female writers from exploring lesbian themes (M. Moore, 2006). As a result, the body of literature—and, by extension, our knowledge of Black lesbian communities’ cultural norms, nuances, needs, and lived experiences—remains underdeveloped (Battle & DeFreece, 2014; Bowleg, Brooks & Ritz, 2008; M. Lewis, 2011; Lewis & Marshall, 2012; Reed, Miller, Valenti & Timm, 2011).

One exception is in the area of familial connections and the importance of community support within Black lesbian communities. Immediate and extended familial attachments play a significant role in the coming out stories of Black lesbians (L. Moore,
Coming out to family and friends is considered a mark of LGBTQ sexual identity development (Cass, 1979). For Black LGBTQ individuals—especially Black lesbians, to whom familial and community support is paramount for survival—coming out is a substantially more complex proposition (Battle & Ashley, 2008; Bowleg, Burkholder, Teti & Craig, 2008; M. Moore, 2006, 2011; Prokos & Keene, 2010). Coming out might result in alienation, feelings of isolation, and the overall loss of community connections on which Black lesbians rely for protection from racism and sexism. Cut off from family and community, Black lesbians may feel more isolated and struggle to develop a healthy self-concept (Battle & DeFreece, 2014; Bowleg, Burkholder, Teti & Craig, 2008; Reed, Miller, Valenti & Timm, 2011).

In addition to their reluctance to reveal their sexual orientation to family and community, Black lesbians are also hesitant to discuss their sexual orientation in professional help settings and research situations, largely because of a perceived fear that they will experience rejection and discrimination (Bridges, Selvidge & Matthews, 2003; Durso & Meyer, 2013; Glass & Few-Demo, 2013). In *Lipstick or Timberlands? Meanings of Gender Presentation in Black Lesbian Communities*, Moore pointed to frequent unaffirming messages about Black lesbians and Black lesbian families from their extended families, churches, and Black and White LGBTQ communities as a source of fear about coming out among Black lesbians (2006). The fear of coming out results in Black lesbians (and their families) being a particularly hidden population (Abraham, 2012; Carbado, McBride, Weise & White, 2002; Davis, 2011; Moore, 2006; Woody, 2014).
Finally, a clear example of the everyday influence of racism, heterosexism, and sexism in Black lesbian communities appears in the significant income disparities between Black lesbian couples and both Black and White heterosexual couples and male same-sex couples. Black lesbian couples report a “median income of $9,000 less than Black married heterosexual couples and Black male same-sex couples and $21,000 and $29,000 less than White female and male same-sex couples, respectively” (Bowleg, 2008, p. 313). These income disparities are especially significant for Black lesbian couples as they are more likely to be the caregivers of multiple children (Bowleg, 2008; National Black Justice Coalition, 2012).

The introduction of additional Black lesbian voices into the literature will expose the presence of racism, heterosexism, and sexism in Black lesbian communities and potentially encourage additional research that will expand our understanding of Black lesbian lives. Given the discussions herein, an intersectional perspective asks that we resist the temptation to extrapolate a BLG narrative from the experiences of White sexual minorities or Black heterosexuals. In this effort, the current study forges ahead to Chapter 3, which presents a discussion of the methodology and processes employed to secure first-person narratives of BLG college student experiences.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

_In order to address the effects of power, one first must render it visible._

- Chantal Mouffe

Before the 1970’s most of what we understood about the human experience and human development placed little emphasis on the diversity of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, etc. In 1978, William Cross developed the first model of Black identity development, followed by Vivienne Cass, who in 1979 created the first gay identity development model. Prior to Cross and Cass's models, the human development process had been defined and communicated through a racially exclusive, patriarchal, heteronormative lens. Cross and Cass introduced new theoretical frameworks of human development establishing legitimacy for alternative ways of knowing inspiring others to research a variety of issues related to identity development. Despite tremendous growth and depth in the social science literature over the last forty years, still there is more we can know about the compounded effects of racism and sexual prejudice on the lives of young adults who identify as both Black and also gay or lesbian.

This chapter represents the philosophical underpinnings or methodology guiding this study and the methods employed to answer the study’s research questions. What is the lived experience of BLG college students? What meaning is attributed to these
situations? What roles do they enact as a result? Together, these questions represent an underlying desire and philosophical commitment to the exploration of the nature of reality for BLG college students within the campus and local community as they describe it.

**Participatory Action Research**

In keeping with a commitment to the exploration of BLG lived experience, through a process of critical reflection, the primary goal of this study is to hear and learn from BLG student voices; therefore, this study is positioned in the qualitative, participatory action research (PAR) tradition (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative methods are useful in uncovering subtle, nuanced social processes and have been particularly beneficial in explorations of sexual orientation (Bettinger, 2010; Fine, 2011; Gamson, 2003). Qualitative methods afford the researcher a myriad of ways to capture the voices/stories directly from research participants. A modified version of Wang and Burris’ (1994) PAR technique Photovoice that concentrates on the critical reflection phase of PV was used to engage BLG college students, at two public-Midwestern, research-intensive universities within the state of Kentucky (Plunkett, Leipert & Ray, 2013).

The objective of PAR is to support communities in their efforts to address community needs. Researchers help to create empowerment opportunities fostering the development of critical consciousness, which in turn may lead to the liberation of marginalized individuals within these communities; the expectation is by doing so researchers give back to the communities from which they take valuable information (McIntyre, 2008; Smith, Willms & Johnson, 1997). PAR was an “intellectual and
practical creation of the peoples of the Third World when traditional academic research
approaches and findings did not stimulate needed social and economic changes” (Smith,
Willms & Johnson, 1997, p. 176). PAR has three principles: (1) all people have the
capacity to think and contribute (2) information, skills and resources shared equitably and
(3) transformation and liberation requires commitment and action from all of society’s
members (Freire, 1995; McIntyre, 2008; Smith, Willms & Johnson, 1997).

There are a number of social science researchers and activists responsible for the
proliferation of PAR theory and research (Kurt Lewin in the 1940’s, The Tavistock
Institute of Human Relations in London and the Work Research Institute in Oslo).
However, the work of Paulo Freire is often at the center of almost any discussion on
PAR’s philosophical, theoretical and practical development and implementation
(McIntyre, 2008). Freire, a Brazilian educator, activist, and theorist envisioned
individuals from marginalized communities (lacking power or status) actively involved in
the creation and ownership of knowledge (McIntyre, 2008; Smith, Willms & Johnson,
1997; Freire 1995). Freire also sought to expand the definition and ways knowledge was
*conscientização* 
\[^3\]
was the path to liberation for marginalized people and raising critical
consciousness required bringing individuals together in thoughtful reflection of their
community’s strengths and needs to take action against inequality (McIntyre, 2008;
Smith, Willms & Johnson, 1997).

\[^3\] In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1993) describes *conscientização* as “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (p.17).
The information obtained by using art, music, poetry and other creative media, to spur critical reflection was acceptable and valuable knowledge (Freire, 1995). During periods of reflection Freire (1973) describes two shifts occurring, the revelation of oppression followed by the expulsion of myths created and cultivated by the existing social structure, these shifts are essential to the development of critical consciousness (Smith, Willms & Johnson, 1997). Freire (1973) writes if marginalized individuals and communities are to achieve liberation they must reject damaging images and beliefs about one’s culture and replace those with positive, pride-filled narratives (Smith, Willms & Johnson, 1997).

PAR studies, regarded as tools community empowerment, afford researchers the opportunity to engage members of marginalized communities in social research as co-creators of knowledge. (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Wang & Burris, 1994). This level of engagement in the research process can empower those with less social influence and authority by providing a platform for participants to share first-hand accounts of their experiences (Wang & Burris, 1994). Through this process of identifying and naming community strengths and needs, there is the potential for individuals to develop critical consciousness, a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the nature of oppression (Freire, 1995; Wang & Burris, 1994).

**Photovoice**

There is no fixed formula for designing, practicing or implementing PAR; as it is typically context or goal specific and shaped by the theoretical and ideological perspective of the practitioner (McIntyre, 2008). Inspired by Freire, feminist theory and PAR’s potential for transformation and liberation, Wang and Burris (1994, 1997)
developed the PAR technique Photovoice (PV) to challenge the traditional roles of documentarian and documentary authorship by putting cameras in the hands of community members (Wang 1999). “Photovoice is a process by which people can identify, represent and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique” (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 369). To accomplish this, participants in PV studies are given cameras to capture images that “tell the story” of their community (Bell, 2008; Wang & Burris, 1997).

Participant photographs are the objects of reflection in regular group sessions where the emphasis is on participants sharing their photos and discussing issues and community (or individual) concerns represented in and by the images (Wang and Burris, 1997). During these sessions, participants write stories that explain the meaning behind and significance of their photographs (Wang and Burris, 1997). These “photostories” become the focus of community exhibits where policy makers are the primary audience (Bell, 2008; Wang & Burris, 1997).

Photovoice is a unique data gathering technique. Photovoice casts study participants in the role of co-researcher as they are the experts in defining their community’s needs and the researcher becomes a guide or facilitator of the PV process (Freire, 1995; Wang & Burris, 1994, 1997; Wang 1999). Photovoice is, therefore, a platform for first-hand accounts of participant experiences whose primary goals are to enable marginalized and voiceless community members to (1) record and reflect on personal and community experiences (2) stimulate dialogue and generate information about personal and community issues from group discussions of the images (3) reach policymakers in order to enhance one’s community (Wang & Burris, 1994, 1997; Wang
Wang and Burris employed the art of photography because images have an ability to stimulate deeply felt reactions, offering a distinct advantage over typical conversation-based strategies used to engage study participants and policy makers (1994). Also, the ability to take a photograph is accessible and easy to teach expanding PV’s capacity to reach individuals across a broad range of educational levels (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Wang & Burris, 1994).

While Wang and Burris (1997) first used PV to explore the lived experiences of women in the Yunnan Province of China, because of the technique’s flexibility, accessibility and social justice footings, academics, practitioners and community activists have used PV to engage a variety of individuals and communities in critical reflection and/or action in various contexts across a broad range of community concerns. Some of those projects include neighborhood safety, environmental hazards (e.g. coal mining communities) personal health decision making, safe play spaces for children, food deserts, homelessness, self-esteem building and issues of aging (Bell, 2008; Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Goodhart et al., 2006; Vaughan, 2014; Wang, Yi, Tao & Carovano, 1998; Warne, Snyder & Gadin, 2013). However, based on a review of the literature PAR/PV is underutilized and only recently gaining ground within the postsecondary education context with college students positioned as community participants (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Cook, 2014; Lichty, 2013; Elliott & Gillen, 2013; Mulder & Dull, 2014; Seitz et al., 2012).

PAR/PV will help us to explore and develop some understanding of the lived experience of BLG college students. To accomplish this, the BLG students in this study will use their personal smartphones to capture images illustrating situations and
experiences they encounter in and around their college campus. The students will meet and reflect on the images and create photostories telling the story of the images and their experiences. An iterative process of photographing images and reflection will result in a list of individual and community needs. The images captured by these students will be presented to the campus community and the resulting list of community needs shared with campus policymakers.

Given the purpose, process and goals of Photovoice, a PV study with BLG college students is appropriate. As BLG students are a marginalized group within society, the target of sexual prejudice and discrimination in the campus environment, that negatively influences their college experience, their long-term quality of life and emotional well-being in society (DeBlaere, Brewster, Sarkees & Moradi, 2010; Freire, 1995). Despite the accessibility and appropriateness of PAR/PV for the college environment and theoretical fit with the process of student identity development, with the exception of a small number of student theses and dissertations, PAR/PV studies aimed at the BLG college student community are underdeveloped (Graziano, 2003; Harley, Hunn, Elliott & Canfield, 2015; Means, 2014).

The processes of student identity and critical consciousness development (an underlying goal of PAR and by extension PV) closely align and, therefore, support each other’s development. Student identity and critical consciousness development both require the student to engage in some form of critical reflection as a part of the process of becoming an empowered and liberated self. For BLG college students developing a critical awareness of racial and heterosexist oppression as a result of engaging in the critical reflection phase of a PV project may empower them and by extension facilitate
the successful development of their student identity. At the same time, students who are successfully navigating their way through the student identity development process may be perfectly situated to participate in critical reflection of racial and heterosexist oppression. Equally, students experiencing a lag in the transition to their student role may cultivate university connections and peer group relationships in critical reflection discussions that trigger forward movement in the student identity development process.

Additionally, the critical reflection phase of PV is cost effective to implement with college students. A camera is the primary tool of the PV method, the increasing use of camera smartphones among college age youth all but erases the primary cost of purchasing cameras and processing film, easily the biggest financial obstacle to implementing a PV research project (Ransford, 2010). A campus-based project offers researchers and students a variety of meeting and exhibition spaces, as well as peer and professional support in the form of counseling centers and student organizations. Another advantage of a college-based project is the researcher’s access to and collaboration with campus contacts (e.g. faculty, administrators and student activists). These individuals are especially important in gaining access to closed or hidden communities (DeBlaere, Brewster, Sarkees & Moradi, 2010; Tufford, Newman, Brennan, Craig & Woodford, 2012; Wheeler, 2003). Finally, the critical reflection phase of the PV technique has the potential to promote critical thinking and confidence in one’s experiences and abilities, reinforcing many of the skills higher education endeavors to teach students under the heading of civic engagement (Ehrlich & Jacoby, 2009; Kezar, Chambers, & Burkhardt, 2005; Palibroda, Krieg, Murdock & Havelock, 2009; Strand, 2003).
The critical reflection phase of PV is well positioned to address the challenges outlined in our earlier discussions of Crenshaw’s perspective on intersectionality, role theory, and Chickering’s student identity development process. However, the sensitive and complex nature of gay and lesbian sexual identity development, societal attitudes and limited existing research on the use of PV within the college environment (specifically with BLG students) encourages a conservative implementation of the PV method (Bettinger, 2010; Harley, Hunn, Elliott & Canfield, 2014). Therefore, the implementation of the critical reflection phase of PV is the central focus of this study. This modified PV project includes the recruitment of BLG students to take photos illustrating their daily activities and experiences followed by prescribed periods of sharing and dialoguing with other BLG students around the stories of these images.

This study did not include a PV action phase; however, the students were encouraged to create a list of community needs to share with campus administrators. While PAR can be a pathway to critical consciousness, to offer a single PV study as playing a pivotal role in the achievement of conscientização is grandiose (Freire, 1995). Therefore, this project seeks to provide BLG students with a platform for dialogue on their college experiences; a means to connect with university peers and identify their campus needs. As the researcher and project facilitator, I hope simultaneously to draw from this process and other data some understanding of the BLG student experience, the meaning attributed to those experiences and the influence these experiences have on racial, sexual and student identity role performance.
**Study Sites**

The University of Louisville (U of L) and the University of Kentucky (U of K/UK) campuses are the study sites for this project. U of L and UK are two of the eight public baccalaureate institutions in the state of Kentucky. U of L the leader in the western part of the state and UK in the eastern, despite their rivalry on the hardwood and the field, through research and community-based efforts both universities play a significant role in the advancement and quality of life for all Kentuckians. What follows is a brief profile of each institution and the city in which they are located.

**University of Louisville**

Under the leadership of its 17th president, the university’s mission is to become “Kentucky's premier nationally recognized metropolitan research university.” The institution is committed to teaching, research, service to the community and the advancement of educational opportunities. The institution has the second largest enrollment in the state with 22,599 undergraduate and graduate students. The U of L is a four-year, public, research-intensive, Division I institution\(^4\) accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. In fall 2014, 70% of U of L’s first-time freshmen lived on campus, and the cost of full-time attendance was $5,118 per semester.

**Faculty, Staff, and Student Demographics**

U of L’s student body is 73.9 % White, 10% African American and 16.9% all other minorities. Seventy-four percent of the students enrolled at the U of L are Kentucky

\(^4\) All institutional data taken from *Just the Facts* 2014-2015 edition published by the U of L Office of Institutional Research and Planning, Office of Academic Planning & Accountability, the University of Louisville website and the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education Comprehensive Database.
residents. Of the 2,385 faculty and 4,478 staff, 129 and 554 respectively, are African American.

Retention and Graduation Rates

As of fall 2013, the U of L’s first-year retention rate for first-time, full-time freshmen was 80.6%, and the current six-year graduation rate based on the fall 2008 cohort was 53.6%.

Campus Diversity

U of L has an Office of Diversity, which falls under the purview of the Provost’s Office. Among other diversity initiatives, the Office of Diversity directs the university’s Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT).

BIRT is a group of faculty and staff working to create a proactive response for students, faculty and staff to instances of hate and bias in the following ways, support those who are targeted by hate or bias, refer them to the resources and services available, educate the campus community about the impact of hate and bias and promote initiatives and new ideas that further a welcoming, bias- and hate-free climate at U of L. (http://louisville.edu/biasresponse/)

The Muhammad Ali Institute for Peace and Justice as well as the Cultural, Women’s and International Centers exemplify the university’s commitment to diversity. Additionally, U of L supports students, faculty and staff by providing a professionally staffed and funded LGBT Center (Intersection). In 2015, the university was awarded a 4.5/5 Campus Pride Index rating. This rating is an “overall indicator of institutional commitment to LGBTQ-inclusive policy, program and practice” (Campus Pride, 2015b). Other LGBT initiatives at U of L include, the Bayard Rustin LGBT and Social Justice Themed Living Community, the Lavender Graduation Ceremony, LGBT-themed Study Aboard opportunities, PRIDE Week, Safe Zone Programs, LGBT speaker’s bureau, LGBT Campus Ambassadors program, Outlook Days (i.e. organized campus preview
days for prospective LGBT students) and the annual PINK event, a student-produced amateur drag and variety show. The university offers several gender inclusive bathrooms and affords students the option of using a preferred name on class rosters, student identification cards, and other university correspondence.

The City of Louisville

The city of Louisville is the largest in the state of Kentucky and ranks 30th by population among US cities (Baruch College, 2014; WorldAtlas, 2014). Louisville’s proximity to the Ohio River encourages a lively downtown culture. Louisville is home to several national and world famous museums, as well as art, music, theater and sports venues and a variety of annual events and festivals. The Kentuckiana Pride Foundation is a grassroots LGBTQ social justice organization. Their mission is to “provide a forum for creative expression and education related to the LGBT community and to give back through charitable and in-kind donations” (Kentuckiana Pride Foundation, 2012). In 2001, Louisville hosted its first Kentuckiana Pride Festival, in 2004 its first Gay Pride Parade in downtown Louisville and 2011 its first Prom (Kentuckiana Pride Foundation, 2012). Louisville’s Black LGBTQ communities have a much less visible social media presence, 2013 marked the third annual Kentuckiana Black Pride Festival. Events organized by Kentuckiana Black Pride are unrelated to the Kentuckiana Pride Foundation. Black LGBTQ organizers have criticized the Kentuckiana Pride Foundation and Louisville’s White LGBT communities for their lack of inclusivity.

It's the 15th anniversary and they proclaim to be the area's biggest and oldest LGBTQ pride celebration and yet all these years later Kentuckiana Pride Foundation still hasn't figured out a significant way to include African Americans and other people of color as grand marshals or entertainment in the Kentuckiana Pride Festival & Parade. (Let alone Transgender advocates, activists and entertainers!) And this issue has been raised in a very specific way before, but
clearly the folks at KPF don't care to change or become more inclusive. Hashtag: Who's Pride Festival? (Gardner, 2015)

**University of Kentucky**

For 150 years, the University of Kentucky has maintained its dedication to improving lives through excellence in education, research, creative work, health care, and service. The University envisions itself becoming one of the nation's 20 best public research universities. To that end, the institution is currently revitalizing several sectors of campus, by adding new housing, academic facilities and gathering spaces for its students. The institution has the largest student enrollment in the state of Kentucky with 30,131 undergraduate and graduate students. The U of K is a four-year, public, research-intensive, Division I institution\(^5\) accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. In the fall of 2014, 82% of UK’s first-time freshmen lived on campus, and the cost of full-time attendance was $5232 per semester.

**Faculty, Staff, and Student Demographics**

The U of K’s student body is 75.2% White, 6.8% Black, and 18% all other minorities. Seventy-six percent of the students enrolled at the U of K are Kentucky residents. Of the 2,287 faculty and 10,143 staff, 69 and 966 respectively, are Black.

**Retention and Graduation Rates**

As of fall 2012, the U of K’s first-year retention rate for first-time, full-time freshmen was 82.5%, and the current six-year graduation rate based on the fall 2008 cohort was 60.2%.

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\(^5\) All institutional data taken from the 2013-2014 *Fact Book* and *Fast Facts* published by the U of K Offices of Institutional Research & Advanced Analytics and Institutional Effectiveness, the University of Kentucky website and the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education Comprehensive Database.
Campus Diversity

The University of Kentucky’s Office for Institutional Diversity falls under the purview of the Office of the President. In addition to the Commission on Excellence, Diversity, and Inclusion, the university also has task forces on campus climate, Latino, women and LGBT issues. While the Martin Luther King Jr. Cultural Center is the center of campus cultural events, college specific and student-led diversity offices dot the campus. For example, the College of Agriculture sponsors the UK chapter of Minorities in Agriculture and OUTSource, the student-led LGBTQ resource center, falls under the purview of campus student organizations.

The University has over 500 student organizations on campus. The Gay Straight Alliance, OUTLaw, UKHope and Shades of Pride are support and advocacy organizations for LGBTQ students of color. The University of Kentucky has a detailed strategic plan for implementing new diversity initiatives. Starting fall 2015, the university’s newly, formed Office of LGBTQ Resources will have a full-time director to lead the development of support programs and activities for students, faculty and staff. Strategically positioned the office will serve as a central location for accessing information, support, and services related to diverse sexualities and gender identities. The mission of the office is to be “radically inclusive, set on three core pillars: community building, education, and advocacy.” In addition to this newly formed office and position, the university has created the LGBTQ and Friends Community Room, to act as an inclusive and safe space for dialogue and sharing. The university is also actively discussing the addition of inclusive restrooms to classroom buildings and other campus facilities.
The City of Lexington

The city of Lexington is the second largest in the state of Kentucky, and it ranks 61st by population among US cities (Baruch College, 2014; WorldAtlas, 2014). Lexington dubbed the Horse Capital of the World, surrounded by rolling hills and horse farms the city has a small town feel. A shopping and dining destination for residents of the eastern part of the state, Lexington has experienced a great deal of growth in retail, entertainment and in revitalized and repurposed areas of the city. Some of Lexington’s resources for LGBTQ community members include AIDS Volunteers of Lexington, Gay and Lesbian Services Organization, Lexington Fairness, PFLAG Central Kentucky, TransKentucky, Entre Nosotros, a Latino LGBTQ support group, H.E.A.L an HIV support group and Heart to Heart an LGBTQ discussion group.

The Lexington Pride Festival, now in its eighth year offers a day of celebration and activism in downtown Lexington. Bluegrass Black Pride founded in 2013 as an advocacy group to unite the Black LGBTQ community, is comprised of more than a dozen lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgender Lexington residents (Davis, 2015). In 2014, Bluegrass Black Pride organized their first ever pride event in Lexington (Bluegrass Black Pride, 2015). The organization collaborates with the University of Kentucky and the Roots and Heritage Festival on education and community awareness events. Bluegrass Pride is making a concerted effort to raise the visibility and awareness of the Black LGBTQ community in Lexington (Davis, 2015). Herald-Leader columnist Merlene Davis (2015), quotes Thomas Tolliver a member of Lexington’s Bluegrass Black Pride,

The white gay community has made so many advances. There are a number of white people elected to public office and serving on influential boards as openly
gay people. In the black community, being gay is a negative. It goes against the strong macho man image. We hide it rather than deal with the discrimination.

Study Preparation

Published PV research and several completed PV projects were reviewed prior to conducting this study. A freelance photographer was consulted to offer guidance on the use of camera phones, specifically the camera’s tools and options. The use of student smartphones and free-open campus workspace kept the start-up costs of this project to a minimum; therefore was no outside funding. Later scholarship funds, in support of LGBTQ research, received from the Kent School helped to defray the cost of professional transcription services.

Other study preparations included consultations with several community insiders, including an LGBTQ researcher and two LGBTQ campus staff contacts (Bettinger, 2010). Among other suggestions and cautions, the consultants advised LGBTQ students of color were less likely to visit or hang out in typical LGBTQ campus spaces. The Provost for Diversity at U of L was consulted and informed of the researcher’s plan to conduct the study. Finally, the study proposal was submitted and approved by U of L’s Institutional Review Board and the IRB Chairperson at UK (Tufford, Newman, Brennan, Craig & Woodford, 2012; Wheeler, 2003). Copies of these documents are included in Appendix I.
Measures

PAR is described as an “antidote” for the spell cast on marginalized communities by the existence and effects of oppression (Diemer, Kauffman, Koenig, Trahan & Hsieh, 2006, p. 445; Watts, Griffith & Abdul-Adil, 1999). Hopper (1999) explains “critical conscious represents one’s capacity to critically reflect and act upon one’s sociopolitical environment … learning to see in the mundane particulars of ordinary lives, how history works, how ways of thinking and feeling serve to perpetuate existing structures of inequality” (Diemer, Kauffman, Koenig, Trahan & Hsieh, 2006, p. 445). As the number of PAR based interventions increased, researchers and practitioners desired a more consistent measure to help them gauge the effectiveness and or influence the interventions had on the critical consciousness of individual study participants (Diemer, Rapa, Park & Perry, 2014).

Interested in critical consciousness and awareness development among marginalized youth, Diemer, et.al, (2014) developed the Critical Consciousness Scale (CCS), a twenty-two item measure whose primary purpose was the measurement of critical consciousness (Diemer and Li, 2011). Using a sample of 326 young people, the CCS measured consciousness of racial/ethnic, class and gender inequalities, it did not directly measure consciousness of inequalities related to sexual orientation or differently abled status (Diemer, et. al, 2014).

The same year Thomas et al. (2014) published their work on the development of the Critical Consciousness Inventory (CCI). Guided by Freire and similar to Diemer et.al, Thomas’ research team was also interested in the development of critical consciousness among marginalized youth. Thomas et al. espouses, to be “engaged and informed
citizens, youth need to have the ability (and opportunity) to critically evaluate situations…” (2014, p. 487). Believing the CCS limiting in its conceptualization of critical consciousness and lacking in its ability to identify shifts in critical consciousness development Thomas’ team used Watts and Flanagan’s (2007) model of adolescent sociopolitical development as the theoretical basis for the CCI. This would support their belief in the capacity of young people to understand oppression, liberation and social equity and that the development of said understanding occurs in measurable stages (Thomas et al., 2014).

Thomas’s (2014) team devised the CCI using social dominance and social stigma as the underlying constructs. Pratto, Sidanius and Levin (2006) define social dominance as the belief that “certain groups carry positive and negative social value, that one’s group carries a higher level of positive value and that minority groups have earned and deserved their status of inferiority (Thomas et al., 2014). Harvey (2001) defines social stigma or “spoiled social identity” as individuals who deviate from mainstream society (Thomas et al., 2014, p. 487). Members of stigmatized groups occupy a devalued status within society and are frequently subject to oppressive acts, such as disparate access to and poor quality of healthcare, education, political representation, employment opportunities, etc. (Thomas et al., 2014). As critical consciousness grows, so does awareness of one’s social identity and the societal categorizations (i.e. dominance/stigma) of others (Thomas et al., 2014).

Derived from Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth and Malle’s (1994) social dominance scale and Harvey’s (2001) stigmatization scale, the resulting CCI is a nine-item Guttman format scale, written to assess the evolving nature of critical consciousness (Thomas et
The CCI has the potential to serve as a pre and post assessment for educators focused on the development of critical thinking skills as well as clinicians and community activists assessing change to critical consciousness as a byproduct of participation in interventions or cultural enrichment programs (Thomas, et. al, 2014). The CCI identifies four stages of critical consciousness development:

- **Precritical** - an individual does not recognize issues of inequity and oppression,
- **Beginning Critical** - individual begins to recognize inequality and oppression,
- **Critical** - individual has a solid sense of critical consciousness;
- **Postcritical** - individual take some form of personal or social action in response to oppression or inequity (Thomas et al., 2014, p. 489).

All nine items on the CCI have four sub-item choices, each has an assigned numerical score (i.e. a=1, b=2, c=3, d=4). “Participants circle the response that best describes them, and the scale is scored by averaging across the items” (A. Thomas, personal communication, March 9, 2014). The study sample (N=206) was drawn from college freshman at two Midwest universities, of which the mean age of participants was 18.98 (SD =1.32) with nearly 80% of participants between the ages of 18-19 years old (Thomas et al., 2014). CCI results for the study revealed a mean score of “2.86 (SD=.45), indicating most of the study participants were between the beginning and critical stages of critical consciousness,” and a Cronbach’s alpha of .87 (9 items; $\alpha = .87$) (Thomas, et. al, 2014).

The CCI is theoretically and pragmatically appropriate, to obtain multiple measures of critical consciousness among the students in this study. A measure of students’ critical consciousness levels was taken before the first reflection session and after the last reflection session to assess whether critical consciousness levels were
positively influenced by student participation in a reflection centered PV project. The initial measure was delivered in hardcopy format; the second measure was administered electronically. A copy of the CCI is included in Appendix D, and the results of the CCI are included in the subsequent chapter.

**Recruitment and Sampling**

Recruitment strategies used for this study included face-to-face meetings with faculty and student affairs staff, telephone calls and emails. The researcher also canvassed LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ student organization meetings and campus events, posted messages on Facebook and solicited the help of the Bluegrass Chapter of the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network to inform members of local LGBTQ communities about the study. Flyers were hung (Appendix B) throughout both campuses including the Health Sciences campus and graduate student services offices, in classrooms and common areas, including an ad placed in the U of L’s student newspaper. Three informational meetings were held at the Cultural Center on U of L’s campus and two at the Student Center on UK’s campus.

Criterion and purposeful sampling strategies were used to recruit students who identified as Black and gay or lesbian (Creswell, 2013). Sampling from hidden populations is challenging. Extant research examines and attempts to explain the challenges of recruiting members of vulnerable populations, especially members of the LGBTQ community, for research (Bettinger, 2010; DeBlaere, Brewster, Sarkees & Moradi, 2010; Renn, 2010). Despite the use of several recruitment strategies, including advertising on social media, the challenge of recruiting from the BLG population proved to be an issue for this study.
Wang (1999) recommends 7-10 participants for a PV project; however, Blackman and Fairey (2014) suggest researchers consider the sensitivity of the issues under review and the intensity of the project’s objectives when determining group size. As such, groups of five or six may be appropriate when working with members of vulnerable populations around psychologically or socially sensitive issues (Blackman & Fairey, 2014). The sample size for this study was an $N=6$. Therefore, the sample size is appropriate given the sensitive nature of the study. The study sample size and research design prohibit the researcher from generalizing beyond the students in this study.

Included in the study sample were four students from the University of Louisville and two students from the University of Kentucky. There were no attrition concerns as all six members of the study sample, while exhibiting varying levels of participation in the project, remained in the study through its completion.

Participants

The target population for this study was BLG college students at the University of Louisville and the University of Kentucky. In addition to basic demographic and identifying information, the students were asked to list current co-curricular involvement (e.g. student and professional organizations). A schedule of the specific questions is included in Appendix E. While most of the students in the study were “out” on campus, some were not “out” to their families; therefore, to preserve a level of anonymity, the students agreed to identification only by their first and last initials. The six students in the study ranged in age from 19-25. They were all Black, gay-identified, males. Four undergraduate and two graduate level students with majors in communication, art history, studio art, human nutrition, college student personnel and higher education studies. It was
the researcher’s intention to explore the lived experience of both gay and lesbian students; however, despite an extended recruitment period and numerous recruitment strategies utilized for this study, the researcher was unable to recruit individuals who identified as Black and lesbian to the study. Therefore, their experiences are not included in the study’s findings. A discussion of this limitation is included in the summary chapter.

The Process of Critical Reflection

After conducting several informational/recruitment sessions during the fall 2014 semester, students attended their first PV project meeting in January 2015 at U of L and February 2015 at UK. To build trust and credibility with the students, during the first meeting, the researcher disclosed the purpose of conducting such a study (Bettinger, 2010; DeBlaere, Brewster, Sarkees & Moradi, 2010; Wheeler, 2003). Each student was given a copy of Black Like Us, the study introduction and training packet (Appendix C). The packet included an overview of the study’s objectives, benefits to the student, time commitment and criteria for participation and other training materials.

The primary researcher facilitated all reflection sessions. To maximize participation, by minimizing disruption to student’s coursework and co-curricular activities the study group met every 2-3 weeks over the course of the spring term (Catalani and Minkler, 2010; Palibroda, Krieg, Murdock & Havelock, 2009). The project was designed to coincide with the natural flow of the academic calendar. While overall retention of study participants was excellent (100% of students completed the study), unfortunately, not all of the students attended every session as scheduling was especially challenging for the graduate students in the study. While the specifics of this limitation are addressed in Chapter 5, the table below details project attendance for both campuses.
Table 1

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Note: # of students in attendance at each PV project meeting.

As a group, the students and the researcher discussed the overall goals of the project and informed consent documents. The researcher provided an explanation of the PV method and reviewed the contents of the study introduction packet. In addition to the items mentioned above the packet also information on camera etiquette and image quality, ethical responsibilities of the photographer, photo and video release forms and session ground rules and instructions for reflecting on the images and students’ stories, that would help the group create a list of action points for university administrators.

At the end of the project introduction and training meeting, students completed the CCI. In preparation for our first reflection session, students were instructed to use their camera phones to capture 3-5 photos depicting positive and negative everyday experiences on and off campus and upload them to the project Dropbox folder before the next reflection session. Again, to minimize workload and added stress that might negatively influence participation students had the option of making brief notes about the photos prior to presenting them to the group or waiting and telling their stories during our reflection sessions.

The first reflection session took place two weeks later. During reflection sessions, the group discussed each student’s photographs. All of the students had a chance to
present their photos and tell the stories of the images. While Wang and Burris’s SHOWeD approach was explained and demonstrated for the students, they were not required to use it in the re-telling of their stories (1994). The SHOWeD process asks students to discuss the points below as they relate to their photos and the situations they encounter:

- What they **See** happening here? (Describe what the eyes see)
- What is actually **Happening** here? (What is the unseen story behind the picture, what does the heart see?)
- How it relates to **Our** lives?
- Why the problem/strength exists?
- How the photo might **E**ducate people?
- What to **D**o about it? (How does this photo provide opportunities for us to improve life in your community?). (Wang & Burris, 1994)

Students’ listened to their peers and made notes of commonalities in the images and their stories. After all of the students had presented their photos, the group discussed which photographs best personified their experiences. Using the Building Themes worksheet as a guide (included in the Black Like Us introduction packet), the group worked together to create titles for the images. At the end of each reflection session, students had an optional session feedback form to complete (Appendix F). They could email their responses or bring their feedback forms with them to the next reflection session. The researcher closed every reflection session by reminding students to continue taking photographs, uploading them to Dropbox and writing their stories. The researcher sent follow-up emails after each reflection session to thank the students for their participation and attempt to mitigate any emotional stress brought on by participation in the project (Bettinger, 2010).
The students participated in five reflection sessions; each student presented his photos and the group reflected on and discussed the images and their experiences. By the end of the project, each group had identified a collection of the most meaningful photostories. U of L students agreed to display their photostories during campus pride events in the fall of 2015, and the student’s list of community needs presented to the Assistant Provost and Director of the LGBT Center. UK students agreed to present their photostories to the Director of UK’s newly formed Office of LGBTQ Resources with a list of their campus community needs. The final group meetings were on April 21st at U of L and April 24th at UK. During these sessions, the students did a final review of the photos and photostories and discussed their overall thoughts on the project. The researcher gave each student a $50 gift card for his time and effort. Approximately, three weeks later students completed an electronic copy of the CCI via Survey Monkey, a free online survey tool.

Data Collection, Management & Analysis

In addition to recordings of LGBTQ campus activities/student group meetings, reflection sessions, field notes, student photographs and photostories, the researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with each student in the study. The researcher chose to conduct interviews, as they are a proven strategy to obtain detailed information from individual research participants (Creswell, 2013; Fine, 2011). A schedule of the interview questions is included in Appendix G. Student interviews were conducted in a private study space at the campus library. Due to time constraints and proximity one student asked to be interviewed at an off-campus location. The digitally recorded, student
interviews were 1-1.5 hours long. To preserve data integrity recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription service.

The web based password protected data storage service Dropbox was used to secure and protect study data. A PV project folder was created in the researcher’s Dropbox account. The PV project folder housed two sub-folders STUDENT and SECURE. Student access was limited to the STUDENT sub-folder where they uploaded their photographs. All study materials were maintained electronically, including scanned hardcopy documents (e.g. consent forms, field notes), electronic documents (e.g. IRB application, email correspondence, transcribed interviews), in the SECURE folder. Students were granted access to the STUDENT folder only after they submitted their signed consent; later all hardcopy documents were returned to the students or shredded and disposed of in confidential bins.

Data Analysis

This is an exploratory study with the goal of uncovering BLG college student experiences, no a priori codes or themes were imposed on the data. Instead, In Vivo coding sometimes referred to as “literal or verbatim coding” was used to analyze the data from student interviews. In Vivo coding requires the researcher to use short phrases from the research subject’s actual words in the data record as codes (Saldaña & Miles, 2013). The data from student interviews was analyzed and coded using Dedoose, a web-based qualitative data analysis program (http://www.dedoose.com/). In Vivo coding is an appropriate data analysis technique for nearly all types of qualitative data, furthermore the process prioritizes and honors the participant’s voice, which speaks directly to PAR/PV principles and the goal of this study (Coghlan & Brannick, 2009; Strauss &
In Vivo coding is also particularly useful for research with young people and members of marginalized communities (e.g. Black gay and lesbian youth) (Saldaña & Miles, 2013). Coding the exact words of participants as opposed to terms developed by the researcher filters the researcher’s personal or professional experiences (Saldaña & Miles, 2013; Stringer, 2007).

*In Vivo* codes should capture behaviors or processes, thereby explaining to the researcher how a problem is processed and resolved, while preserving within the code itself the meanings, views and actions of participants (Charmaz, 2006; Saldaña & Miles, 2013, Strauss, 1987). Interview transcripts were reviewed three times. First, the interviewer read the complete transcript once all the way through. The second time the researcher sought to identify (i.e. create excerpts) meaningful and repeated words and phrases (Saldaña & Miles, 2013). During the third pass of the interview transcripts the researcher selected words and phrases from the data excerpts to create a code (when manually coding quotation marks around the subject’s words and phrases identifies a code) (Saldaña & Miles, 2013). The coded transcripts and initial codebook were forwarded to one student community insider and one graduate student for review. Their feedback resulted in the fine-tuning of several codes. After integrating their suggestions, the revised codes were forwarded for a second review and additional feedback. The second review resulted in only minor alterations to the codes, with the adjustments complete a second cycle coding process was initiated.

While it is appropriate to use *In Vivo* coding as the sole coding method for small-scale studies such as this, focused coding was employed as a second cycle coding process, to develop overarching categories or themes from the *In Vivo* codes (Saldaña &
Focused coding allows the researcher to explore and pinpoint relationships between the codes to further define or bring into focus the phenomena under study (Charmaz, 2006; Saldaña & Miles, 2013). After closely examining the *In Vivo* codes; where there were connections between the codes; the codes were organized into categories and labeled. Tree diagrams were created to serve as visual representations of code and category connections.

**Study Ethics and Rigor**

A clear demonstration of adherence to the standards of rigor and validity in qualitative research is paramount. Creswell (2013) encourages researchers to engage in at least two validation strategies. Four techniques were used to safeguard study ethics and rigor, in no particular order, prolonged engagement with study participants, member and expert checking, provide detailed explanation of the phenomena under study with thick, rich descriptions provided by the students and *bracketing* or “clarifying researcher bias” (Creswell, 2013; Tufford & Newman, 2012; Whittmore, Chase & Mandle, 2001).

Prolonged engagement directs the researcher to engage with participants for a period long enough to building rapport and develop trusting relationships (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006a). The “researcher begins to blend in, and respondents feel comfortable disclosing information that no longer tows the party line” (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006a, para. 3). Initially, the students were very reluctant to talk about their personal lives in the presence of the researcher. By the third meeting, students were discussing bad dates, family struggles, and secret crushes, so much it was often a challenge to keep the group on task.
Member and expert checking were key components of the research process. As previously stated, faculty members with expertise in LGBTQ studies and two professional campus contacts were consulted concerning the structure and language of the study (Creswell, 2013; Wheeler, 2003). Additionally, they offered advice on recruiting and support processing thoughts and feelings as a heterosexual person conducting LGBTQ research. Honoring participant stories is one of the primary objectives of PAR/PV research. In keeping with PAR/PV principles and qualitative research standards of rigor, students were allowed to review and give feedback (i.e. member checking) on study findings (Creswell, 2013). Study findings were emailed to students, and they were given ten days to provide feedback on whether or not their experiences and ideas were accurately depicted.

The beauty of PAR/PV research is the opportunity to engage with study participants in their environment. The PAR/PV process encourages a “bottom up” exchange of information with the position of power shared between the researcher and study participants (Freire, 1995). By doing so, the researcher is afforded direct access to participant stories told in their words. From this the researcher may develop detailed, unmediated accounts of cultural and social relationships; supported by thick-rich descriptions of participant experiences, drawn from the reflection sessions, field notes, and interviews that tell the story of BLG college student experiences, meaning making and role performance (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006b; Creswell, 2013; Whittemore, Chase and Mandle, 2001).

The fourth and final validation technique applied to this study is bracketing. To bracket, the researcher purposefully explores their experience with the phenomena under
study (Ahern, 1999; Creswell, 2013). The practice of bracketing serves as a “means of demonstrating the validity of the data collection and analysis processes” by creating space for the researcher to “identify areas of potential bias” and explore one’s motives for engaging in the research in an effort to minimize the researcher’s influence on study findings (Ahern, 1999, p. 407; Creswell, 2013; Townsend-Bell, 2009; Tufford & Newman, 2012). Application of this technique was demonstrated in an earlier chapter under the heading *I am a Black Heterosexual Woman.*
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

I think black brothers and sisters can learn something from gay brothers and sisters. They’ve had to deal with the wholesale rejection of their mothers and fathers, I’ve never had to deal with that. My mother and father never rejected me at that level – I don’t know what that’s like.

-Cornel West

The voices of BLG college students are largely missing from the existing literature. The overall objective of this study was to explore the lived experience of BLG college students, advance our understanding of the meaning BLG college students attribute to their life experiences and discover the how they perform the roles of intersecting racial and sexual identities within the campus and community environment. Structured in two parts- this chapter reports the various findings of the research process previously described.

Presented in the first half of this chapter are the photographic illustrations and accompanying narratives that define and symbolize the college experiences of the students in this study, a compilation of community needs or “action items” created by the students and the results of the CCI administered to the students as a measure of critical consciousness levels at the beginning and end of the PV project. The second half of this chapter includes a qualitative analysis of student interviews and other data collected during the PV project to answer the study’s research questions.
Several weeks of picture taking and discussion resulted in the students selecting twenty images that best represent Black gay student experiences on the U of L and UK campuses. The images, accompanying photostories and descriptions of student experiences are presented below; other images captured by the students appear in Appendix J. All images are original and have not been retouched or censored.

“I am Black and Gay”

The students talked openly about the assumptions classmates and professors make about various aspects of their life experiences as a Black gay person. BG and other students spoke about the responsibility they felt to “fight” against prejudice and discrimination in the face of these assumptions to feel safe and affirmed in their identities. All of the students entered college expecting to face a myriad of challenges. As such, each student devised a strategy for getting the most out of their college experience.

“I Have My Own Story”

I had to realize that I wasn’t the representative for all black people. I had to recognize that I wasn’t the representative for all gay people and that I was an individual that identified with these things, and an individual that advocates for equity, and an individual that advocates for freedom, but at the same time, my voice was not the voice of everybody.

Figure 2: “I Have My Own Story” shot by BG student at University of Louisville

The students talked openly about the assumptions classmates and professors make about various aspects of their life experiences as a Black gay person. BG and other students spoke about the responsibility they felt to “fight” against prejudice and discrimination in the face of these assumptions to feel safe and affirmed in their identities. All of the students entered college expecting to face a myriad of challenges. As such, each student devised a strategy for getting the most out of their college experience.

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I don’t want to be the product of what the university thinks is me and, or the city itself, you know. I don’t, I’m not going to be that. I’m going to be John who is a man who happens to be gay, and black. You know.
On both campuses, students shared experiences of feeling conflicting pressures to conform, especially in the area of body type/image. Students at U of L talked extensively about their experiences and the challenges of being judged against both Black and gay stereotypes. A “threatening” or “too urban” appearance would result in ostracization from White gay spaces in the community as well as on campus and negative reactions and ridicule from Black heterosexuals for not having a more masculine “strong” presence and body type. Despite these experiences, the university environment afforded the students the opportunity to question, push against and challenge those stereotypes.

"Stereotypes"

Usually, at gas stations, when you buy a certain amount of gas or whatever, you get like a freez pop or something like that, but they’re offering cigarillos. Are the store owners targeting Black people because of preconceived notions? What does this say about what they think about the Black community?

Figure 3a: "Stereotypes" shot by BG student at University of Louisville
Yes! I’m bold enough to carry a purse on campus and wear a Mickey Mouse vest. People smile in your face saying, I’m brave for not caring what people think. Then behind your back they saying all kinds of negative things.

You feel like you have to prove everyone wrong.

During a U of L session, JH and JB were audibly emotional as they shared at length about the challenges of living “authentically” and “loving myself” [themselves] despite societal expectations and negative messages about “being Black and gay.” The students recounted feeling especially emotional when they thought about the possibility of living their life in the “dark.” Black gay students expect a brighter tomorrow and look for immediate and long-term opportunities to cultivate the lifestyle they want.

Because I'm just so tired. I love them so much, but if like doing this [not being out] all the time is what it means, I don't want the love. I'm sorry. I dearly love my family. I'm a family guy. You won't see me with friends at home. I'll be with my Mom, and we'll go shopping. I'll be with my Dad outside. I'm a family guy, but at the end of the day, I've just got to do me now. I love my family. They're my biggest supporters when it comes to
school, when it comes to me feeling any type of way. But if that's what it [not being out] means, then I don't want that anymore because I'm not doing what I feel like I should be doing because I'm just doing what everyone else thinks I should do, and that's not fun.

Students did not express a need to maintain contact with social or religious groups where they felt further marginalized or were unable to express the fullness of their identities. More often, they continued looking for other opportunities. JH and JB shared the story of their breaking away from their childhood church family. They used words like “uncomfortable”, “anxious”, “fearful”, “alone” and “anger” as they talked about their church experience. Many of the students expressed feeling less connected to a particular church now that they were in college.

I told some friends I was gay, and it just never felt the same after that.
You’re trying to fit in and hide at the same time!
Emotions ran high. Anger, exasperation, and impatience were evident during several sessions on both campuses. Students from both campuses spoke passionately about the frequent invalidating and unaffirming conversations with peers in residence halls, organization meetings, and campus events. Universally, the students appeared easily able to recall multiple incidents of “ugly” and “hurtful” interactions with campus peers. Despite institutional commitments to diversity and safety, in everyday interactions Black gay students experience multiple microaggressions and threats of violence.

*It was my first year, but I remember I would go to the Ville Grille and eat lunch, around 12:00. Big mistake because that was the same time football players would come and eat, and they said some of the most rudest, crudest things I've ever heard — I mean, I've never even heard some of the words they were saying about me.*
While a discussion on Black gay lives would be incomplete without mentioning the broader issues of equity and social justice, a prolonged discussion is beyond the scope of this study; that said, the students liked this photo and felt strongly it should be included as one of the exhibit photostories. Black gay students are deeply concerned about the lives and rights of other marginalized people. While focused on the opportunity to tell their story, they did not want to miss a chance to speak to the injustices and pain of everyone society has labeled undesirable or unworthy.

*I'm always one for talking about social justice for anybody, and rights, and freedom, and equal opportunities, and equitable opportunities for everyone. Whenever we talk about social justice, a lot of people just think race and basically black/white or they'll think LGBT rights. Those aren't the only issues out there. We're talking about social justice for everything and everyone.*
Although it appears there is growing social acceptance of LGBTQ community members, civil rights discussions and the media’s promotion of alternative lifestyles (e.g. Sister Wives and Neighbors with Benefits) JB, ST and FF cautioned, the everyday experiences of LGBTQ people remain largely a “struggle” for “acceptance”, recognition of their humanity and the “freedom” and “safety” to love.

My cousin is supportive of me coming out, but she just says I have to be sure because the way her mom found out, she was on the phone in her house. Her Mom picked it up to make a call. She hears their whole conversation that she and the girl were having; and I don’t know what kind of conversation they were having, but her mom just went off. Threw the phone down and went into her room. "Get the f- out of my house. You're an abomination. Don't be around you're little brothers and sisters." Yeah, it was rough.
Courses focused on issues of race and gender are instrumental in providing the students with a place of affirmation and refuge. Students on both campuses spoke of their gratitude and appreciation for courses and professors who specifically reached out to them, offered support or “made people [classmates] uncomfortable” by not tolerating poor behavior in their classroom. In these courses, the students found the words to examine critically and communicate their experiences.

It took a while but I did find a community. I had to take classes that identified me to find them.

My Korean teachers, they have that disconnect from American society already. They’re outsiders too and then also being half Korean, I’m able to communicate with them on a different level than a lot of my classmates.
The issue of safety is particularly complex for Black gay students. Students talked about the “stress”, “feeling” and “knowing” White faculty and students (as well as their Black heterosexual peers) question the legitimacy of their presence on campus. Students at UK laughed aloud at the response they thought they might receive if as a gay man, let alone a Black gay man they called the after-hours campus escort service for an escort from the library to their residence hall. Students at UK shared their experiences of “uncomfortable” and “scary” moments on and off campus. Being Black in a largely White environment and the anticipation of antigay comments or actions left the students in a constant state of “uneasiness.”
JJ and JH shared a similar Greek life experience despite being on different campuses. They felt “isolated”, “ignored” and largely “unable to be themselves.” The students expected the process would be uncomfortable; however, they never imagined how “overwhelming” and “intense” the feelings of discomfort would be, so much so JJ did not complete the process, and JH dropped out shortly after joining. The overwhelming sense was that Greek life in the traditional sense was not an option for Black gay students on either campus. While the students were aware of the existence of gay friendly Greek organizations at other institutions, they did not believe such an option existed on their campus.
I did the whole fraternity thing for a while and I mean, it was just so obvious that I was gay and it was just like becoming something like at that crossroad in life, and it’s either I could be that dude that’s always in the closet, that’s always sneaking around being gay, or I could just be it [gay]. And I was just so sick of sneaking, I was just so sick of like not being honest, and so I mean, that was like five years ago.

Three of the six students held positions on campus. JJ, BG and JB felt they were “lucky” to have a campus job in a supportive department. JJ shared a story told to him by a friend who felt so harassed in the campus office where he worked he quit his campus job for an off-campus position. JB has held several student leadership positions; on more than one occasion, he was surprised how little his sexuality seemed to affect his interactions with peers and faculty advisors. Black gay students see great value and take advantage of supportive situations and relationships that will help them to progress successfully.
It was just the equity piece, and trying to make things fair for everybody, and trying to make things accessible for everybody, and try to provide resources. That’s what I was attracted to [in student affairs], and I didn’t know that the practice does have a very large population of LGBT members and then I went to a national conference and I got to see this displayed throughout the entirety of the conference. I was like, “Yes. This is the correct place for me because people aren’t going to limit me to one thing, but they’re also going to provide me with opportunities to explore this identity and that identity.

“Constant Stress”

Like it still bothers me being here. It’s still hard being black, being African, being gay, all these things, so it’s like I’m always on my P’s and Q’s all the time. Even though I’m still fine with who I am, it’s just the thought there’s so many other people that probably aren’t.

Figure 13: “Constant Stress” shot by FF student at University of Kentucky

However, despite supportive work and social environments, UK students agreed they were “always worried” about the reactions of others. Even JJ who presented as one of the more self-assured students of the six said he was “careful” about when, how and with whom he interacted in his role as an RA. The students appeared to have a level of awareness and understanding of the ways in which cultural and developmental differences influence individual attitudes toward racial and sexual diversity.
My department is very supportive, but it's more or less of having to deal with that interaction between residents and them coming from different backgrounds. So I have to maintain a personal safety level for me, because I've seen multiple times where people have said, "Oh, my hall director was coming on to me because he's gay." That's like what I don't want to happen.

Campus social spaces pose unique dangers for Black gay students, requiring students to eat, play and live in a constant state of high alert. All of the students confirmed typical conversations in the men’s halls revolve around sports, video games, flirting with and “hooking up” with girls. There “wasn’t a single day” where the students felt “comfortable” or “relaxed” the hall didn’t feel like “the home away from home” that the university’s housing office promised. Through what seemed like nervous laughter they said, more often, they felt “nervous”, “fearful” and “silenced.”
I remember living in the residence hall. It was horrible. I always felt out of place. I totally moved off campus sophomore year.

I wasn’t out in high school and I was afraid to tell my college friends because, finally maybe I made the friends I’d been trying to find here. I was like, “Oh, my God, they’re going to not be my friends anymore and tell everybody. I had all these bad thoughts.

Figure 15: “Coming Out at College” shot by FF student at University of Kentucky

Three of the six students participating in the project were not out prior to attending college. Having elected to come out in some campus circles, the students at UK discussed their desire for and the importance of supportive and safe friendships. The student’s time in college affords them the opportunity to develop and test personal boundaries wherein the student will develop an understanding of what they need from and who they can trust within their peer/social groups.

I had a huge group of friends when I first started college, then it kind of dwindled down to a few key figures. And we’re all kind of all different in our own ways. It’s almost like the runts of all the groups, right. I think we’re all kind of becoming satisfied with where we are in life.

I’m still taking the time out to learn about myself because once I started here [college], that’s when I like finally became me.
"Rejection"

Sometimes people will use things that we're not supposed to use to take the pain away. And it kind of sucks because I know people that have taken their lives because when they come out to their parents, and their parents react in the worst way possible, and it's like that's not cool, and that leads to someone going down a path that we shouldn't go down like to drug use, alcohol use, depression, anxiety. It (pain) builds up, and no one knows that it's just this internal warfare that you have to battle; and if you can't talk to anyone, you're going to turn to whatever you can to take that pain away.

Figure 16: "Rejection" shot by JB student at University of Louisville

"Coping"

I just really needed a drink! I was in a physical space that I really didn't enjoy. I was in a relationship with a guy, or kind of in a relationship with a guy, and I don't know. Things, I guess, were working out but kind of not working out. I just needed that mental break.

Figure 18: "Coping" shot by BG student at University of Louisville
Multiple times over the course of the project, students talked openly about their own and other Black LGBTQ students use of alcohol and marijuana to “de-stress” as well as engaging in self-destructive sexual behaviors as a means of “coping” with “rejection” and the “struggle” to find “love” and “acceptance” in family, community, and romantic relationships. JB and FF found the campus environment particularly limiting as far as the possibility of developing healthy romantic relationships. The students experienced many more Black students identifying as gay or lesbian than were out on campus. One of the primary reasons cited by the students for not being out on campus was the overall fear of antigay attitudes and behaviors. The prospect of being different and disrespected are particularly painful moments.

*It’s like no one's trying to be out about it [being gay] so no one's going to want to pursue a dating relationship because if you're around a guy all day, every day, and you know it's hard to not show your affection when you're in love with someone, so I feel like some people just stay away from it [a relationship] and just want to hook up and then experience it [connection/sex] that way until when they leave. Then they can actually like express the way they want, and it's sad.*
JB became emotional as he presented the above photo. As he described its significance, he talked about the “drama” his being gay caused in his family. Others in the group became visibly irritated as they attempted to “understand” why others felt they had the “right” to comment on or make decisions about the lives of others. The students have a desire to understand equal to their commitment to overcoming racial and sexual prejudice. However, the perpetual extension of the physical and emotional energy needed to overcome cultural assumptions and stereotypes without replenishment from trusting intimate and social relationships leaves little in reserve for the work of being a student or nurturing a healthy self-image.

Sometimes the pain is so overwhelming. It’s just gets to be too much.  
Dealing with the stupid things that come out of people’s [Blacks, White heterosexuals and gays] mouths is tiring.
College offered all of the students the space and opportunity to expand their ideas about intimate relationships. Since starting college, all of the students were inspired to examine the intimate relationships in their lives. Students sought out other LGBTQ students on campus as well as LGBTQ community members off campus. Hearing the stories of how others resolved familial issues gave students the strength and tools they needed to take care of themselves before, during and after coming out to parents and siblings. The students felt more inclined to socialize with other LGBTQ people at off campus social events and activists groups. They hoped by widening their circle they would also expand their chances of developing healthy intimate relationships.
I envision how I'll say it to them [parents], who would probably be there. I just thought about all those things. Trust me, I've thought about that moment. I've rehearsed lines. I sit in the mirror. I've done it all.

My friend, tells me I should just take my time about it. She's like, don't go out and like say it until you're sure of everything. Like if you're sure about if you can survive on your own if they [parents] were to make you leave.

People say, “He doesn't look your type.” And he’s not, but isn't that what love is. Love is always the complete opposite of what you thought you needed, sometimes. I guess sometimes you're lucky enough to find the one you actually imagined, but my boyfriend is everything that I never thought that I could have, but he’s the complete opposite of me.

Finally, students from both campuses echoed the sentiment expressed in JH’s photostory below. All of the students had visions of a brighter tomorrow. Completing college meant they would have a better life than their parents and the students were hopeful that legislation, and the passage of time would change society’s ideas and feelings about LGBTQ issues.
From the more than fifty photos taken, by the students participating in this project, the above were specifically identified as embodying Black gay experiences on the U of L and UK campuses. As previously mentioned, the PAR technique Photovoice typically includes an action phase, wherein project participants develop and execute a plan to present agreed upon community issues to those in the best position to address said issues. While the implementation and discussion of the Photovoice action phase are beyond the scope of this study, as previously stated, the photostories presented above, and the action items listed below will be shared with campus officials at U of L and UK as directed by the students in this study.

Based on the conversations and issues raised during reflection sessions it was not surprising safety was a major concern for the students. Their desire for a safer campus
community went beyond protection from the threat of physical violence. The students were equally outspoken about their perceived lack of emotional and intellectual safety. Students from both campuses felt their university could do more to secure their safety. Students at the University of Louisville (U of L) identified the following community issues/points of action for campus officials:

- Develop a plan to discuss and then address campus safety that considers multiple identities.
- Initiate objective free dialogue with LGBTQ students of color.
- Required training for faculty and staff on LGBTQ issues and students with multiple identities.
- Offer life skills courses to help students transition to independence.
- Develop LGBTQ specific sexual health discussions.

U of L students felt campus physical and mental health services should give more attention to sexual health issues specific to the Black LGBTQ community. The seeming lack of focus on these issues has resulted in the students having the impression the university does not understand, is fearful of discussing the topic or does not care enough about these important health issues. For example, offer special health programs in conjunction with other campus events, like freshmen orientation and residence hall activities. Additionally, the university should try posting LGBTQ sexual health information on social media and advertise health awareness events with local LGBTQ community targeted media outlets.

U of L students desired more spontaneous, less prescribed or structured discussions about the issues they face as BG students on campus. They wanted interactions with university officials to be more organic –ask about their experiences without predetermined agendas. One student described it like this,

…collaboration is built off of impromptu conversations that you have, not always the intentional reaching out, because you already have an
Unfortunately, all of the students knew someone who experienced fiercely negative reactions from parents/guardians after coming out. Students who choose this time in their lives to come out are fearful of losing the emotional and financial support of their parents thereby jeopardizing their ability to stay in college. The students thought the university might do more to help students prepare for independence. For example, helping students understand and apply for financial assistance or offering housing/food assistance when a young person is asked to leave their home as a result of coming out to their parents. If the student is doing well and wants to stay in college, the university should help with those efforts.

Finally, the students felt the university had a responsibility to educate faculty, staff and students on issues related to racial and sexual diversity and investigate claims of racial discrimination and sexual bias. For example, the students wondered if campus police had been properly trained to respond and interact with LGBTQ students and same-sex couples. Would infractions be investigated and the individual officer or officers held accountable if they failed to conduct themselves professionally? Ultimately, the students felt campus safety needed to be addressed through training, the exchange of ideas and programs collaboratively designed by community advocates, students, and campus officials.

University of Kentucky (UK) students identified the following community issues/points of action for campus officials:

- Increase course offerings on intersecting identities (e.g. Black and LGBTQ, LGBTQ and disabilities, Transgender identity).
- More discussions of LGBTQ safety on campus.
• Housing options for LGBTQ students -with counseling support for students who have recently or are thinking about coming out.
• A campus-wide program to teach students about LGBTQ and other oppressions (e.g. AlcoholEdu).
• Be committed to talking openly and regularly with LGBTQ students of all races.

Students at UK wanted more courses on issues related to race, gender, social class and the differently abled, especially courses on issues facing individuals and groups with multiple identities. The students believed these courses were the most influential in helping students like themselves manage the transition to college and learn more about their history. The students suggested the university share faculty with other institutions to expand their current course offerings.

Having access to trustworthy support and resources was very important to the students. During a student organization meeting, one student talked about feeling “thrown away” by the university after attempting suicide in their dorm room. While the student understood the university’s position in asking him to leave campus, the student could not shake the feeling the university had joined an already long list of people who did not understand or care about her. Students at UK were very clear; it would help them and others tremendously if the institution had a backup plan and resources in place for students estranged from their families and or struggling with their sexual identity.

At the time of this writing, UK offered LGBTQ students a gathering space in the student center complex. This space was set aside to offer LGBTQ students a place to connect with and feel supported by peers. UK students expressed strong opinions about the university’s responsibility to reach out, listen to and protect LGBTQ students. They wanted the opportunity to talk openly about the issues they face on campus and discuss ways the institution can make the campus safer for them and other minority students.
The students thought one way UK might address campus safety would be to incorporate a cultural sensitivity education program like the AlcoholEdu program that currently exists on campus. AlcoholEdu is a mandatory alcohol awareness course for all incoming freshmen. The students believe a mandatory diversity education program would send a clear and strong message about the university’s commitment to all of its students.

After the photographs, photostories, action items and several weeks of discussion, the students were asked to provide feedback on their experience with the project. In addition to feedback on the more practical aspects of the project, the student comments below represent qualitative evidence of growth in critical consciousness vis-a-vis a heightened sense of awareness, self-acceptance and empowerment.

*I think just the chronology of the pictures really helps because I'm able to reflect on them just in the different stages of what I was going through. It's just a testament that a lot of things are temporary as far as emotions or feelings about things, but as far as advocacy, my face is going to be attached to these words. It's a very powerful statement for me to display this and then to say my narrative and be totally open about it. I think that's me trying to be a good advocate, but this was a good opportunity for me to voice a counter story if somebody had another story that they thought was kind of the mainstream black gay experience.*

*I just want to say thank you so much for this project. I enjoyed doing it because it definitely persuaded me that I should speak out. Just doing this alone showed me ways I can speak out. Just like all the issues we've talked about I was like wow. I just loved the project. It was fun. It taught me a lot about myself. I was surprised at my pictures. I didn't know I was that artsy. I didn't know the iPhone was that great, but I just wanted to say thank you.*

*I've been inspired. This project has just been one of those things where it's a once in a lifetime chance because you get a chance to show people that being black and gay is not just rainbows and witty comebacks. I'm not asking you for money. I'm not asking you to march with me. I'm asking you just simply look, and walk a day, a second, in my shoes. Are you bothered? Are you uncomfortable- good! I'm uncomfortable every day when I walk on campus and when I see other people who are hiding who they are to make others feel better about themselves.*
Additionally, pre and posttests were administered to assess whether engaging in an iterative process of critical reflection would positively affect BG students’ level of critical consciousness. Critical consciousness was measured on a scale with a mean score ranging between 1 and 4, with a higher mean score indicating a higher level of critical consciousness. At the beginning of the Photovoice project, the mean critical consciousness score for the combined U of L and UK group was 3.12 (SD=.325). After eight weeks of critical reflection, the mean critical consciousness score for the combined U of L and UK group was 3.37 (SD=.319). The increase in mean scores between pre and posttest was -.24. A paired sample T-test shows the increase in mean scores was statistically significant $t(5) = -13.00, p<.05$. The critical consciousness levels of the BG students in this study were positively affected by the process of critical reflection.

The second half of this chapter includes the qualitative analysis of data collected during student interviews, student organization meetings, and campus events to answer the previously stated research questions. First cycle data analysis included the identification of *In Vivo* codes. These codes (i.e. words/phrases) would symbolically capture the essence of an experience, emotion, value or action in the participant’s voice (Adu, 2015; Saldaña & Miles, 2013). Obviously, the number of codes a researcher identifies varies; however, generally Litchtman (2010) recommends identifying 20-100 codes (Ford, 2014).

First cycle data analysis for this study resulted in 35 *In Vivo* codes. After two rounds of code review and refinement, the final code list included 21 *In Vivo* codes.
Below is a visual representation of the codes identified and code frequency within the data. Wherein font size is proportional to the number of times the code was applied to the data.

Figure 22. *In Vivo* code illustration generated using the “Packed Code Cloud” function in Dedoose QR analysis software.

**“This is Your Life”**

Identification of the *In Vivo* codes encourages the use of focused coding for second cycle data analysis. Focused coding allows the researcher to explore relationships between the codes that identify themes within the data related to the central questions of this study (Adu, 2015; Ford & Hjorth, 2014). Three themes emerged from the focused coding process: Understanding, Decisions and Taking Action. The diagrams below illustrate the relationship between previously identified *In Vivo* codes and newly developed themes.
Theme I. Understanding

The first theme begins to address the question, what meaning do BLG college student’s make of their experiences. How and what do they come to understand about themselves through the situations they encounter while attending college. Taking the idea of an anchor code, where the label of the category/theme is derived from the research question, I looked for connections between the codes as they related to key elements of the study’s research questions (Adu, 2015). Therefore, codes demonstrating a relationship to the idea of attributing meaning from situations/experiences, such as awareness, understanding or knowledge development of one’s racial and sexual identity were categorized under the theme Understanding.

![Tree diagram showing relationship of In Vivo codes to Theme I](image-url)
Consistently, students expressed becoming aware of their sexuality early through depictions of gayness in the media and cultural norms transmitted through family/community and peer groups. Heterosexist messages and antigay encounters contributed to the individual’s narrative about themselves. The messages about gay males, specifically Black gay males, were clear and reinforced through various negative consequences. The constant barrage of destructive messages often resulted in the students experiencing varying levels of emotional, psychological and physical distress. This study’s findings reveal across all narratives a shared experience of persistent and pervasive heterosexist and antigay threat present in the lives of BG college students.

You're conscious of your orientation and your race, conscious of how people might react to you being at their university. You know you have to be careful.

You've got to be smart. I think that's a part of why I'm proud of the way I am now, because as a child I learned to work hard, keep my head down and keep my mouth shut only because I was always afraid I'd slip up and say, Oh, I think he's cute.

It’s hard enough making friends who respect you regardless of your race. Of course, I want to participate in campus activities, but there’s not always a safe space for a gay Black man and that makes me angry and sad.

My Mom tries to understand, she does. I’ve really seen her trying and progressing in her understanding and support of me, but she still fights back.

So it’s like it's hard to go home, and you can't talk about the guy you saw in class today, or like that chick if you're a girl, like all those things.
Theme II. Decisions

Similar to the process described above; the second theme *Decisions* emerged from connecting codes expressing resolution and decision making as part of the process of moving toward the attribution of meaning to the situations in which Black gay college students find themselves.

![Tree diagram showing relationship of In Vivo codes to Theme II.](image)

"I'm okay. I'm human"

"This is your life"

"You can’t be yourself"

"Balance"

"Fairness for everybody"

"Respect"

Figure 24. Tree diagram showing relationship of *In Vivo* codes to Theme II.

A goal of the socialization process is to teach us the identities/roles we occupy. As we develop an understanding of the social roles we occupy we also learn society’s expectations of us within those roles. In cases where an individual’s ideas, beliefs or feelings about themselves conflict with societal expectations there comes a point of resolution or decision about how the individual will proceed either within or outside society’s expectation.
Student interviews and other study data show Black gay college students use their pre-college experiences (i.e. early socialization) to make decisions about how they will live into their roles/identities going into the college environment. Post-college experiences add to their preexisting narrative and presents additional opportunities to make role performance decisions. This process is not unique to Black gay college students; however, unique is the complexity of intersecting and compounded factors these students must consider in making decisions about the roles they will perform in the face of societal expectations and consequences.

I thought I had to have this conventional family and do these things or else I would be a failure to my community and to my family and all this other stuff. I was like, “Well, I’ll just have to let that go because, once again, these people aren't paying my bills.” Once you start paying bills, you get a different frame of reference a lot of times. You're like, “I'm working hard, I'm a good person and you got something to say about me. I don't care.”

I was just so sick of like not being honest. I’m just really trying to stay true to becoming myself and it’s taken a very long road.

I think about a lot of the times, I had to forgive people, and I had to forgive myself for putting myself in that situation. Not to say that I blame myself for what people did to me that was wrong, but I have to forgive myself for believing any of it, for letting that come and intimidate my mind. I tell people all the time, “Forgive yourself. If somebody hurts you, forgive yourself too because at some point, it’s going to come into your mind that maybe what they're saying is true.” In that little moment, that small inch of doubt turns into a mound and then everything you do from that moment on is centered around that little thing they said.

I’m being my flamboyant self and accepting it!

I've always known that I was gay. Like from a very young age, I've always known, and I was always afraid. I always had this kind of notion in my mind that I would become of age and then just move away, and then live my life, but then when I had the realization that that wasn't going to happen, I had to really confront what I was going to do. I'm like, “Are you going to live your life, or are you not going to live your life?” that's basically my identity crisis in the formation of my gay identity.
Theme III. Taking Action

Exploring Black gay college student role performance is the focus of this study’s final research question. The codes were reviewed in an attempt to identify periods of change, action or movement. These codes were then grouped under the third theme *Taking Action*. The situations Black gay college students encounter as a by-product of their racial and sexual identity influence the decisions they make about how they will engage life on a daily basis.

![Tree diagram showing relationship of In Vivo codes to Theme III](image-url)

*Figure 25. Tree diagram showing relationship of In Vivo codes to Theme III*
Prior to attending college the students in this study believed college would offer them academic, career and social opportunities to express themselves more freely throughout their lives. Expectations, notwithstanding, the students in this study employed several techniques to prepare and protect themselves from race and antigay bias and discrimination. They set personal boundaries, practiced empathy and a commitment to self-improvement.

You need to know how not to take things personal when someone says something to you, and how to combat the challenges that you may face when people say things that are offensive. And how you have to be on the fence sometimes, but at the same time be able to stick up for yourself and educate someone.

In those situations, even if I'm feeling bad because I know it's not necessarily the space for me to really vent, and a lot of the times people don't even really know that they're committing like a micro-aggression, or a micro-invalidation, but it's my chance to say that, and I can do it in a nice way. I don't have to do it in a mean way, but I can still check you. I think, even though I am tired, it's important that I do it because I don't want the next person to have to do it.

I knew I was going to have to challenge myself to catch up basically, that pressure of I need to get caught up to where my peers are if I even have a chance. I had to go home every night and look up things, look up theories that are used… blah, blah, blah [his major fields of study]- So I had to do all that extra research on my own just to be caught up.

Unfortunately, some of the students employed counterproductive measures to cope and protect themselves from negative experiences. Moments, when the feelings of isolation, rejection (especially by family) and fear were overwhelming the students, either lashed out or turned the pain on themselves. While used less often than other more healthy coping strategies the students did seem to turn to less healthy options for coping when they had reached an emotional breaking point. The students expressed a great deal
of angst for engaging in these types of behaviors and had no illusions about the potential consequences of their unhealthy coping mechanisms.

A long time ago, I remember just saying, “I have to hurt people before they hurt me.” for a lot of gay men, a lot of gay people, that's the mentality, “I have to hurt you before you hurt me.” a lot of people say, “Gay people, you all have the best come backs.” We practice. We have to be able to say something because we don't know what you're going to say to us.

He doesn't do it out of a way like to harm himself. It's just like to relax and not think about his family... If you can't talk to anyone, you're going to turn to whatever you can to take that pain away.

More often, the students exercised positive thinking, demonstrated expressions of gratitude, maintained supportive and diverse peer groups and spiritual connections for relief from the stress of racial and sexual prejudice. These and other protective factors were instrumental in helping the students focus on their overall commitment to personal well-being and self-acceptance.

I think that we keep trying to understand, “Why is the sun shining? Just get lost in the glory of it all and be okay with that.

Black love is already beautiful, but to see LGBT black love is almost like ice cream with sprinkles on top, and to be able to exude that regardless of how people feel, and to be able to love out in the open. It’s okay.

I overemphasize my positivity!

It takes no time to sit down and think, “God. I thank you for giving me the moment to even sit down, to be able to sit on my own ass, to be able to get off my own ass and be able to use my lips and my tongue to thank you,” is enough for you to say, “Know what? It could be worse. It could be worse.” I think, for a lot of people, especially as a gay person, and as a gay, black male, oh, my god, that's just like a double threat. I just thank God, for being me.

The students did not let negative experiences inhibit their desire to engage and grow from their time in college. Their participation in campus charity events, advocacy projects and acts of civil disobedience (UK students participated in a campus die-in to protest police brutality against the members of Black communities) the students came to
understand how they could effect change on campus and in the community. Before participating in this project in small and large ways, the students were already taking steps to challenge racial stereotypes and negative ideas about individuals who identify as LGBTQ.

_I usually let faculty know my identity through a paper. You always have to do the introduction paper, so I usually state it in that form because I never want people to project identity on me. I want people to know me for the person that I am and not think just because I hold this identity that I'm going to talk a certain way, I'm going to have certain mannerisms, or I'm going to think a certain way about anything. I always try to give them an introduction to who I am myself before I kind of introduce them to my different identities._

_I'm always happy to be doing LGBT student training. I co-presented with another member of the student staff who wasn't a person of color, but at the same time who identified with the LGBT community. Students come to this campus with lots of different ideas about black people and LGBT people- they really need exposure to all kinds of different people and ideas._

The students in this study exhibit a level of maturity and resilience that supports them in the process of integrating into the life of the institution. They had a tendency to evaluate their experiences using a logical risk versus reward approach. Focusing on their personal and professional goals as the driving force behind their decision-making and actions, the students sought out opportunities and contemplated the best course of action to take so they might achieve their goals. Despite repeated microaggressions and challenges to their self-image, the students were able to counter harmful acts by availing themselves of resources that would affirm their person, thereby minimizing the instances of purely emotional decision-making that might jeopardize their ability to grow and move forward.

College offers unique opportunities for personal growth and career development; woefully, but not surprising the college environment recreates many of the same trials and tribulations Black gay college students experience prior to enrolling in college. The
students in this study share many aspects, both positive and negative, of a common narrative as Black gay males. Though unable to generalize beyond the scope of this study, it is the researcher’s hope that the results of this study will in a small way contribute to the existing conversation on intersecting identities, specifically as it relates to the intersection of race and sexuality.
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

_Courage is the most important of all the virtues because without courage, you can't practice any other virtue consistently._

-Maya Angelou

College and university campuses have a unique role in society as the incubators of new, innovative and liberatory ideas. Furthermore, a college education offers young people from marginalized communities a means of obtaining the social capital deemed necessary to participate fully in society. However, the college/university environment is not a marginalization free zone. The effects of racism and heterosexism continue to act on the lives of BG students as they make their way through a potentially hazardous social (campus) environment (Fine, 2011). From this study we learn, antigay sentiment “is not just an abstract societal challenge, but a critical, concrete, daily health issue that infiltrates the lives and relationships, hopes and dreams of BG students” (Cawthon & Guthrie, p. 301, 2011). The campus environment does not have to be marked by overt racist or antigay acts to create an inhospitable environment for BLG students –in fact, the best-intentioned institutions may struggle to meet the needs of their BLG students.

The BG students in this study communicated feelings of fear, anxiety, isolation and rejection at the thought of being out on campus.
Similar to the BG students in studies by Carter (2013) and Strayhorn & Mullins (2012) the BG college students in this study often found themselves maneuvering cautiously through campus social spaces, like residence halls and dining facilities as to not have their masculinity, or racial commitments questioned by White and Black heterosexual peers. Unfortunate, yet expected, the emotional stress experienced by BG students in this study lead them to engage in negative coping strategies such as misusing substances, acting out in high-risk sexual behaviors, or avoiding romantic relationships, to survive the emotional fallout of sexual prejudice and racial discrimination (Henry, Butler & West, 2012; Voisin et al., 2013).

Nevertheless, in all cases, there was evidence of students appropriating the knowledge, skills and abilities they learned, as gay persons of color in their families and communities of origin, with feedback from their new environment to determine how they should make the transition to their new role as college student. In doing so, the students clearly demonstrated thought processes, decision-making and actions personifying the student identity development process outlined by Chickering and Reisser (1993). In fact, their comprehension of the various factors that contribute to the existence of microaggressions and sexual prejudice on campus is an excellent example of their mastery of Chickering and Reisser’s developing competence vector (1993).

The students believed the challenges of fitting into the campus environment were exacerbated by the lack of positive and affirming BG role models in the media. Where stereotypical depictions of BG community members perpetuate unidimensional characters and do not express the complexity of life as a BG person. Nonetheless, the BG students in this study responded by performing their racial and sexual identities in ways
to mitigate the effects of “multiple minority stress” on their emotional well-being in order to make the most of their college experience (Hayes, Chun-Kennedy, Edens & Locke, 2011; Woodford, Kulick, Sinco & Hong, 2014).

BG students in this study were strategic in their course selections and co-curricular activities using the ideas learned in these courses, topics largely in opposition to what they learned in their family or community of origin, to push boundaries and develop a broader perspective on a wide variety of social justice issues. They readily used the information gleaned from classroom experiences to make both philosophical and pragmatic decisions about how they would live into their identities, as they moved through college. For example, despite a perceived inability to tap into popular college social networks, such as the Interfraternity Conference or the Pan-Hellenic Council (i.e. campus Greek life), students in the study found other ways to integrate into the life of campus and enhance their overall campus experience. In nearly all cases, they focused their attention and energy on activities centered on their racial identity, professional marketability and goal attainment by joining discipline specific campus groups, holding positions of leadership in said groups and attending professional conferences.

Even though some of the BG students in this study chose to minimize their sexual identity, as one student remarked developing their sexual identity “wasn’t on the [their college] agenda,” all of the students consistently engaged in acts of self-acceptance. Using positive affirmations, connecting with spiritual practices, unapologetically expressing their individuality through art, apparel and music, or participating in activities to increase BG student visibility and acceptance, the students in this study, like other studies of BG persons, sought to mediate the psychological distress they experienced in
order to develop a healthier and more authentic sense of self (Goode-Cross & Tager, 2011; Patton, 2011)

As expected, connections to peer groups were especially important for these students. Peer groups provide the BG student with one more way to mitigate the stress of societal expectations. Astin (1993) wrote the “peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during college years” (Longerbeam, Inkelas, Johnson & Lee, 2007, p. 224). Peer groups for the BG students in this study served as a campus based support group. Their peer groups were typically small, 4-6 individuals, racially, ethnically, sexually and gender diverse to which the student was out. Students received acceptance, refuge, and hope from their peer group- within the group they felt safe to explore the fullness of their identity.

Overall, the findings of this study revealed from negative, emotionally distressing and isolating experiences; BG students were able to make productive decisions about how they would engage in the life of the university and take actions in support of those goals. Furthermore, this study and others provide evidence of value for engaging members of marginalized communities in a process of critical reflection as the primary objective of social work and postsecondary education research (Goodhart et al., 2006; Warne, Snyder, & Gadin, 2013; Vaughan, 2014). Upon completion of this study students used words like “excited”, “motivated” and “ready” to communicate their desire to locate other opportunities to speak out against racist, antigay acts and advocate for social justice.


**Limitations**

Recruiting from vulnerable, hidden populations requires care and thoughtful consideration. To recruit BG students for this study the researcher collaborated with campus officials from the LGBTQ Center and the Violence Intervention & Prevention Center (VIP). Both centers would offer access to some members of the study population; however, because not all BG students utilized the centers, the researcher could not rely on either center as a way to access large or diverse members of BLG student communities, resulting in fewer community entry points or central locations where the researcher might have gained access to additional members of the study population.

The initial goal of this study was to capture the college experiences of Black lesbian and gay college students. Unfortunately, despite a lengthy recruitment period I was unable to recruit Black female students who identified lesbian to this study. Existing literature points to several reasons recruiting Black women, specifically Black lesbians for research studies is a challenge for researchers. In addition the challenges cited in Chapter 2, within some Black lesbian communities “socio-historical experiences with marginalization, sexism and institutional racism may cause Black lesbians to shy away from research or advocate/leadership roles (Coker, Huang, & Kashubeck-West, 2009; Few, Stephens & Rouse-Arnett, 2003; M. Moore, 2006).

Black females with same-sex attractions may not connect with or adopt the label lesbian as a full expression of their sexuality (Lewis & Marshall, 2012). Today, especially among young people there is a move away from the lesbian/gay labels toward
queer and gender nonconforming which meant the language on the recruitment flyer was less inclusive than originally believed (R. Combs, personal communication, February 16, 2015). This idea was substantiated by an exchange with a potential study participant, who for other reasons did not participate in the study, but informed me the terminology used on the flyer did not resonate with her. She wrote, “I do not identify as lesbian. I am queer and in a committed relationship with a transgendered man, so the term lesbian seems more rigid than how my sexuality functions” (EV, personal communication, April 18, 2015). Finally, Wheeler (2003) and Dudley (2013) point to the focus on gay men in the wake of the HIV and AIDS crisis in the 1980’s and 90’s and the financial incentives to study gay men’s health as factors pushing lesbian lives, especially Black lesbian lives, to the back burner, so less is known about how to recruit, study and understand Black lesbian issues.

The long history of oppression and stigmatization of racial and sexual minorities has resulted in feelings of mistrust of researchers, medical professionals and scientists among members of the Black and LGBTQ communities (Bettinger, 2010; Herek, 2010). To earn the trust of minority populations previous research suggests researchers disclose the purpose of the study and how the data will be used (Bettinger, 2010). Following these suggestions, I fully disclosed the purpose and my rationale for conducting this study to students and community insiders. This practice may have allowed me to build credibility within the study group, but it may have also encouraged response bias. My disclosure may have unduly influenced students to participate in the study and or give answers they thought I was looking for or would cast the project in a positive light.
Despite careful consideration of the academic calendar and other student activities, finding a consistent meeting time across student classifications (i.e. undergraduate and graduate) was not possible. After considerable thought, the researcher made the decision to work with one of the graduate students separate from the rest of the study group. The student shared his photos, viewed the photos of other students and talked about his thoughts on the images and ideas expressed by other students in the study. After a review of the process and the solution employed, a recommendation for future research, using the Photovoice technique in a college environment, would be to organize classification specific study samples. In retrospect, not including the graduate student would have been negligible to the results of the study. However, the researcher believes, given the opportunity to engage with other graduate students, the student would have had a more fulfilling experience.

**Strengths**

Consulting LGBTQ community insiders and campus LGBTQ allies throughout the design and execution phases of the study proved integral to its success. During our meetings, I was encouraged to dig deeper into latent feelings and assumptions I held about and toward LGBTQ persons. These periods of reflection would prove beneficial to the rigor and trustworthiness of this study and instrumental to the development of a strategy that allowed students, who might not be out, to participate in the study with minimal compromise to their privacy.

This study afforded BG students the opportunity to tell the story of their college experience. The researcher trusts the critical reflection phase of the project conveyed the message that others care and value the experiences and stories of BG students. Hash and
Cramer (2003) agree research participants who are members of oppressed groups may appreciate the opportunity to be heard and in doing so there is the potential for more immediate benefit to the study participants (Bettinger, 2010; Catalani & Minkler, 2010).

The research process and skills needed to participate in the study were easily transferable and age appropriate (Wang & Burris, 1997). The use of social media and smartphone technology speaks to the contemporary behaviors of young adults, which meant a very small learning curve for the students. The dynamism of critical reflection and student photographs may have kept the students more engaged with the project as no students from either campus dropped out of the study.

**Implications**

**Social Work**

The results of this study have many implications for the field of social work. The profession should focus its response on ways to explore and evaluate the profession’s role in discussions on intersectionality and multiple oppressions. The profession should take the lead in integrating technology especially with communities of color in research, educational and clinical settings and finally, a reminder to emphasize the commitment of the profession and its practitioners to lifelong cultural development.

Faculty, researchers and practitioners in social work should understand the origins, ideas and current research on intersectionality. With this information and social work’s commitment to social justice and human rights, the profession may more effectively address the compounded effects of microaggressions and outright violence against BLG community members as well as individuals with other forms of identity intersection. Murphy et al. (2009) *Incorporating Intersectionality in Social Work*
Practice, Research, Policy and Education as well as Fish’s (2012) Social Work and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans People: Making a Difference would support individual faculty, researchers and practitioners in this endeavor.

It is especially important for social work educators and practitioners to make a commitment to the lifelong discovery of their unconscious heterosexist ideas and behaviors. Van Den Bergh and Crisp’s (2004) cultural competence framework, designed to assist social workers in developing identity-affirming practices support this assertion (Fish, 2012; Gutierrez and Dworkin, 1992). In this framework of capabilities, Van Den Bergh and Crisp (2004) contend highly culturally aware social workers, observe certain principles in their practice that line up across three basic domains- attitudes, knowledge and skills (Fish, 2012). Van Den Bergh and Crisp’s (2004) first domain “Attitudes” speaks directly to the self-awareness tasks of the social worker, to reflect on and evaluate past and present experiences; emotional, and cognitive behavioral aspects of one’s responses to LGBTQ people and their issues and take part in personal and professional activities that foster understanding of LGBTQ culture (Fish, 2012).

Students in this study responded positively to the use of smartphone technology, web-based surveys and electronic communication. Social work researchers should familiarize themselves with less informal structures (i.e. social media) and communication avenues to reach minority populations. This assessment is supported by research conducted by the Pew Research Center who found, the percentage of Black Americans relying on mobile devices for internet access is more than double their White counterparts (Smith, 2015). Additionally, 15% of young people (18-29) and 13% of Americans, earning less than $30K per year are smartphone internet access dependent
These findings suggest growing possibilities—opening previously non-existent channels of access to members of Black and other minority communities, allowing research participants more input in the research process, which may potentially increase the participation rates of Blacks in social research.

**Higher Education**

The objective of this study was to explore the experiences of BLG college students. Therefore, I have also addressed implications for faculty and administrators of postsecondary educational institutions. I urge campus officials to evaluate institutional policies and procedures for heterosexist language and sexual prejudice. Institutions can demonstrate their commitment to BLG students by assessing existing and planned campus resources for accessibility and user-friendliness.

If as Tinto (1993, 2006) and Chickering and Reisser (1993) postulate social integration into the life of the university is key to student success (i.e. movement from entry to completion) and the goal of colleges and universities is to graduate students, then action against the socio-cultural, historical and contextual factors impeding the social integration process of BG college students is without question mission critical. Institutions are responsible for creating inclusive, safe environments for BLG faculty, staff and students. The process starts with stakeholders and others in positions of power exploring assumptions and assessing hidden or ignored institutional policies and procedures (e.g. Messinger, 2009 and Pritchard, 2013).

This study revealed several ways institutions may potentially be more affirming of BG students. Expand course offerings on topics such as poverty, racism, sexism and sexual prejudice. Integrate affirming texts and other works by racially diverse and
LGBTQ authors across all disciplines. Commit to collaboratively developed, yet institutionally organized discussions and on stereotypes and microaggressions in the classroom, residence halls, dining facilities, athletics and students groups. Finally, institutions should minimally commit to the implementation of evidence-based training and co-curricular programming for staff and students respectively, on issues related to intersecting identities. Such training would require more nuanced discussions and movement away from the usual single category focused training/education models that exist on many college and university campuses.

Accessing LGBTQ campus resources should not require or result in a compromise of the student’s integrity or privacy. Institutionally designated safe spaces for LGBTQ students should be staffed, located and outfitted in a way that takes into account the influence socio-cultural factors have on the processes of racial and sexual identity development. Students in this study at the University of Louisville, where they have an LGBTQ support center, had overall very positive feelings about the availability and staffing of the center, yet they were reluctant to utilize it. The students felt the space did not afford them the option to enter at their own pace. Students lamented, “You open the door and you’re right there in front of everyone” or “it feels like a whole scene.” These comments are evidence that Black LGBTQ students may have different needs that go beyond the existence of a “safe space.”

**Future Research**

Researchers in social work and higher education should explore the experiences of BLG students attending other institutions across the state. For example, what are the experiences of BLG students on the predominantly Black campus of Kentucky State
University? Furthermore, what are the experiences of BLG students within the state’s community college system, where issues of social class, age and campus locale present other dimensions of social identity to consider?

Researchers in both social work and higher education have not fully explored participatory action research or Photovoice’s potential to inform and transform albeit clear connections to higher education’s dedication to the skill and practice of critical thinking and social work’s social justice mission (Molloy, 2007). A cursory review of the literature cataloged in the Social Work Abstracts and Education Full Text databases revealed 13 articles published from 2006 to 2014 and 53 articles published between 1997 and 2015 respectively, where the author(s) used Photovoice methodology. Researchers, especially in the social sciences, are uniquely situated such that they can and should employ research methods that reveal, challenge and facilitate micro and macro level change (Bell, 2014; Gibbs & Jones, 2013). For example, while it appears young adults have attitudes that are more accepting of sexual diversity, bullying and violence in schools against LGBTQ youth as well as other members of oppressed minority groups continues. Future researchers would do well to employ PAR and or PV to explore the continued proliferation of racism and sexual prejudice in schools, thereby bringing attention to student, school and neighborhood needs.

Zubrow (1993) discovered peers of urban adolescents often provide support for challenging social injustice facilitating the reflection component of critical consciousness (Diemer, Kauffman, Koenig, Trahan & Hsieh, 2006; Potoczniaik, Crosbie-Burnett & Saltzburg, 2009). Assuming Zubrow’s assessment holds true for young people in rural areas. There may be value in facilitating PV a project wherein the inclusion of BLG allies
encourages and supports greater BLG participation. Including ally narratives would perhaps provide another perspective on campus climate discussions; potentially engage more students in critical reflection and bring to life Lorde’s idea that everyone has a role in the fight against social injustice.

Additionally, when researching sexual diversity within ethnically or racially diverse communities, besides consultations with community insiders, future researchers should make efforts to identify representative definitions of the population of under study. Consider pilot studies or focus groups to find out how members of the potential study population define their identity and take direction from the diversity and cultural differences within groups (Badgett & Goldberg, 2009; Meyer & Wilson, 2009).

Regrettably, majority of studies on LGBTQ racial minorities draw their study sample from large urban centers like New York, Chicago, Atlanta and San Francisco. Including the experiences of LGBTQ racial minorities living in smaller, Midwestern and southern spaces is vital to the social justice conversation and more work is needed to include their voices. Finally, researchers should facilitate critical reflection/transformation-focused studies with members of Black transgender (and bisexual) communities. Current data on interpersonal and personal violence directed toward members of these communities is deeply troubling and should be explored in more detail.


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Lesbian Social Services: Issues in Practice, Policy & Research, 21(2-3), 189-205. doi:10.1080/10538720902772063


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Thomas, A. (2014). [Administering the CCI].


Appendix A

LGBTQI Terminology

A note about these definitions: Each of these definitions has been carefully researched and closely analyzed from theoretical and practical perspectives for cultural sensitivity, common usage, and general appropriateness. We have done our best to represent the most popular uses of the terms listed; however there may be some variation in definitions depending on location. Please note that each person who uses any or all of these terms does so in a unique way (especially terms that are used in the context of an identity label). If you do not understand the context in which a person is using one of these terms, it is always appropriate to ask. This is especially recommended when using terms that we have noted that can have a derogatory connotation.

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Ag / Aggressive - See 'Stud.'

Agendered – Person is internally ungendered.

Ally – Someone who confronts heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexual and genderstraight privilege in themselves and others; a concern for the well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex people; and a belief that heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia are social justice issues.

Androgyne – Person appearing and/or identifying as neither man nor woman, presenting a gender either mixed or neutral.

Asexual – Person who is not sexually attracted to anyone or does not have a sexual orientation.

BDSM: (Bondage, Discipline/Domination, Submission/Sadism, and Masochism) The terms ‘submission/sadism’ and ‘masochism’ refer to deriving pleasure from inflicting or receiving pain, often in a sexual context. The terms ‘bondage’ and ‘domination’ refer to playing with various power roles, in both sexual and social context. These practices are often misunderstood as abusive, but when practiced in a safe, sane, and consensual manner can be a part of healthy sex life. (Sometimes referred to as ‘leather.’)

Bear: The most common definition of a ‘bear’ is a man who has facial/body
hair, and a cuddly body. However, the word ‘bear’ means many things to different people, even within the bear movement. Many men who do not have one or all of these characteristics define themselves as bears, making the term a very loose one. ‘Bear’ is often defined as more of an attitude and a sense of comfort with natural masculinity and bodies.

**Berdache** - A generic term used to refer to a third gender person (woman-living- man). The term ‘berdache’ is generally rejected as inappropriate and offensive by Native Peoples because it is a term that was assigned by European settlers to differently gendered Native Peoples. Appropriate terms vary by tribe and include: ‘one-spirit’, ‘two-spirit’, and ‘wintke.’

**Bicurious** – A curiosity about having sexual relations with a same gender/sex person.

**Bigendered** - A person whose gender identity is a combination of male/man and female/woman.

**Binding** – The process of flattening one’s breasts to have a more masculine or flat appearing chest.

**Biphobia** - The fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of bisexuals, which is often times related to the current binary standard. Biphobia can be seen within the LGBTQI community, as well as in general society.

**Bisexual** – A person emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to males/men and females/women. This attraction does not have to be equally split between genders and there may be a preference for one gender over others.

**Bottom** - A person who is said to take a more submissive role during sexual interactions. Sometimes referred to as ‘pasivo’ in Latin American cultures. Also known as ‘Catcher.’ (See also ‘Top’.)

**Bottom Surgery** – Surgery on the genitals designed to create a body in harmony with a person’s preferred gender expression.

**Butch** – A person who identifies themselves as masculine, whether it be physically, mentally or emotionally. ‘Butch’ is sometimes used as a derogatory term for lesbians, but it can also be claimed as an affirmative identity label.

**Catcher** – See ‘Bottom.’ This term may be considered offensive by some people.
Cisgender – describes someone who feels comfortable with the gender identity and gender expression expectations assigned to them based on their physical sex.

Coming Out – May refer to the process by which one accepts one’s own sexuality, gender identity, or status as an intersexed person (to “come out” to oneself). May also refer to the process by which one shares one’s sexuality, gender identity, or intersexed status with others - to “come out” to friends, etc.

This can be a continual, life-long process for homosexual, bisexual, transgendered, and intersexed individuals.

Cross-dresser – Someone who wears clothes of another gender/sex.

D&D – An abbreviation for drug and disease free.

Discrimination – Prejudice + power. It occurs when members of a more powerful social group behave unjustly or cruelly to members of a less powerful social group. Discrimination can take many forms, including both individual acts of hatred or injustice and institutional denials of privileges normally accorded to other groups. Ongoing discrimination creates a climate of oppression for the affected group.

Down Low - See ‘In the Closet.’ Also referred to as ‘D/L.’

Drag - The performance of one or multiple genders theatrically. Drag King – A person who performs masculinity theatrically. Drag Queen – A person who performs femininity theatrically.

Dyke – Derogatory term referring to a masculine lesbian. Sometimes adopted affirmatively by lesbians (not necessarily masculine ones) to refer to themselves.

Fag – Derogatory term referring to someone perceived as non-heteronormative.

Fag Hag – A term primarily used to describe women who prefer the social company of gay men. While this term is claimed in an affirmative manner by some, it is largely regarded as derogatory.

Femme – Feminine identified person of any gender/sex.

FTM / F2M - Abbreviation for female-to-male transgender or transsexual person.

Gay – 1. Term used in some cultural settings to represent males who are
attracted to males in a romantic, erotic and/or emotional sense. Not all men who engage in “homosexual behavior” identify as gay, and as such this label should be used with caution. 2. Term used to refer to the LGBTQI community as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who does not identify as heterosexual.

**Gender Binary** – The idea that there are only two genders – male/female or man/woman and that a person must be strictly gendered as either/or. (See also 'Identity Sphere'.)

**Gender Confirming Surgery** – Medical surgeries used to modify one’s body to be more congruent with one’s gender identity. See “Sex Reassignment Surgery.”

**Gender Cues** – What human beings use to attempt to tell the gender/sex of another person. Examples include hairstyle, gait, vocal inflection, body shape, facial hair, etc. Cues vary by culture.

**Gender Identity** – A person’s sense of being masculine, feminine, or other gendered.

**Gender Normative** – A person who by nature or by choice conforms to gender based expectations of society. (Also referred to as ‘Genderstraight’.)

**Gender Oppression** - The societal, institutional, and individual beliefs and practices that privilege cisgender (gender-typical people) and subordinate and disparage transgender or gender variant people. Also known as “genderism.”

**Gender Variant** – A person who either by nature or by choice does not conform to gender-based expectations of society (e.g. transgender, transsexual, intersex, genderqueer, cross-dresser, etc.).

**Genderism** – see “Gender Oppression.”

**Genderfuck** – The idea of playing with ‘gender cues' to purposely confuse “standard” or stereotypical gender expressions, usually through clothing.

**Genderqueer** – A gender variant person whose gender identity is neither male nor female, is between or beyond genders, or is some combination of genders. Often includes a political agenda to challenge gender stereotypes and the gender binary system.

**Genderstraight**—See ‘Gender Normative.’

**Hermaphrodite**—An out-of-date and offensive term for an intersexed person. (See 'Intersexed Person'.)
Heteronormativity—The assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is superior to homosexuality and bisexuality.

Heterosexism – Prejudice against individuals and groups who display non-heterosexual behaviors or identities, combined with the majority power to impose such prejudice. Usually used to the advantage of the group in power. Any attitude, action, or practice – backed by institutional power – that subordinates people because of their sexual orientation.

Heterosexual Privilege – Those benefits derived automatically by being heterosexual that are denied to homosexuals and bisexuals. Also, the benefits homosexuals and bisexuals receive as a result of claiming heterosexual identity or denying homosexual or bisexual identity.

HIV-phobia – The irrational fear or hatred of persons living with HIV/AIDS.

Homophobia – The irrational fear or hatred of homosexuals, homosexuality, or any behavior or belief that does not conform to rigid sex role stereotypes. It is this fear that enforces sexism as well as heterosexism.

Homosexual – A person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex.

Identity Sphere – The idea that gender identities and expressions do not fit on a linear scale, but rather on a sphere that allows room for all expression without weighting any one expression as better than another.

In the Closet – Refers to a homosexual, bisexual, transperson or intersex person who will not or cannot disclose their sex, sexuality, sexual orientation or gender identity to their friends, family, co-workers, or society. An intersex person may be closeted due to ignorance about their status since standard medical practice is to “correct,” whenever possible, intersex conditions early in childhood and to hide the medical history from the patient. There are varying degrees of being “in the closet”; for example, a person can be out in their social life, but in the closet at work, or with their family. Also known as ‘Downlow” or ‘D/L.”

Intergender – A person whose gender identity is between genders or a combination of genders.

Institutional Oppression – Arrangements of a society used to benefit one group at the expense of another through the use of language, media, education, religion, economics, etc.

Internalized Oppression – The process by which a member of an
oppressed group comes to accept and live out the inaccurate stereotypes applied to the oppressed group.

**Intersexed Person**—Someone whose sex a doctor has a difficult time categorizing as either male or female. A person whose combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, gonads, and/or genitals differs from one of the two expected patterns.

**Leather:** See ‘BDSM’.

**Lesbian** – Term used to describe female-identified people attracted romantically, erotically, and/or emotionally to other female-identified people. The term lesbian is derived from the name of the Greek island of Lesbos and as such is sometimes considered a Eurocentric category that does not necessarily represent the identities of African-Americans and other non-European ethnic groups. This being said, individual female-identified people from diverse ethnic groups, including African-Americans, embrace the term ‘lesbian’ as an identity label.

**Lesbian Baiting** – The heterosexist notion that any woman who prefers the company of woman, or who does not have a male partner, is a lesbian.

**LGBTQI** – A common abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersexed community.

**Lipstick Lesbian** – Usually refers to a lesbian with a feminine gender expression. Can be used in a positive or a derogatory way, depending on who is using it. Is sometimes also used to refer to a lesbian who is seen as automatically passing for heterosexual.

**Male Lesbian**—A male-bodied person who identifies as a lesbian. This differs from a heterosexual male in that a male lesbian is primarily attracted to other lesbian, bisexual or queer identified people. May sometimes identify as gender variant, or as a female/woman. (See ‘Lesbian.’)

**Metrosexual** - First used in 1994 by British journalist Mark Simpson, who coined the term to refer to an urban, heterosexual male with a strong aesthetic sense who spends a great deal of time and money on his appearance and lifestyle. This term can be perceived as derogatory because it reinforces stereotypes that all gay men are fashion-conscious and materialistic.

**MTF / M2F** – Abbreviation for male-to-female transgender or transsexual person.

**Oppression** – The systematic subjugation of a group of people by another
group with access to social power, the result of which benefits one group over the other and is maintained by social beliefs and practices.

**Outing** – Involuntary disclosure of one’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status.

**Packing** – Wearing a phallic device on the groin and under clothing for any purposes including: (for someone without a biological penis) the validation or confirmation of one’s masculine gender identity; seduction; and/or sexual readiness (for one who likes to penetrate another during sexual intercourse).

**Pangendered** – A person whose gender identity is comprised of all or many gender expressions.

**Pansexual** – A person who is sexually attracted to all or many gender expressions.

**Passing** – Describes a person's ability to be accepted as their preferred gender/sex or race/ethnic identity or to be seen as heterosexual.

**Pitcher** – See ‘Top.’ This term may be offensive to some people.

**Polyamory** – Refers to having honest, usually non-possessive, relationships with multiple partners and can include: open relationships, polyfidelity (which involves multiple romantic relationships with sexual contact restricted to those), and sub-relationships (which denote distinguishing between a ‘primary" relationship or relationships and various "secondary" relationships).

**Prejudice** – A conscious or unconscious negative belief about a whole group of people and its individual members.

**Queer** – 1. An umbrella term which embraces a matrix of sexual preferences, orientations, and habits of the not-exclusively- heterosexual-and-monogamous majority. Queer includes lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transpeople, intersex persons, the radical sex communities, and many other sexually transgressive (underworld) explorers. 2. This term is sometimes used as a sexual orientation label instead of 'bisexual' as a way of acknowledging that there are more than two genders to be attracted to, or as a way of stating a non-heterosexual orientation without having to state who they are attracted to. 3. A reclaimed word that was formerly used solely as a slur but that has been semantically overturned by members of the maligned group, who use it as a term of defiant pride. ‘Queer’ is an example of a word undergoing this process. For decades ‘queer’ was used solely as a derogatory adjective for gays and lesbians, but in the 1980s the term began to be used by gay and lesbian activists as a term of self-identification.
Eventually, it came to be used as an umbrella term that included gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people. Nevertheless, a sizable percentage of people to whom this term might apply still hold 'queer' to be a hateful insult, and its use by heterosexuals is often considered offensive. Similarly, other reclaimed words are usually offensive to the in-group when used by outsiders, so extreme caution must be taken concerning their use when one is not a member of the group.

**Same Gender Loving** – A term sometimes used by members of the African-American / Black community to express an alternative sexual orientation without relying on terms and symbols of European descent. The term emerged in the early 1990's with the intention of offering Black women who love women and Black men who love men, a way of identifying and being that resonated with the uniqueness of Black culture in life. (Sometimes abbreviated as ‘SGL’.)

**Sex** - A medical term designating a certain combination of gonads, chromosomes, external gender organs, secondary sex characteristics and hormonal balances. Because usually subdivided into ‘male’ and ‘female’, this category does not recognize the existence of intersexed bodies.

**Sex Identity** – How a person identifies physically: female, male, in between, beyond, or neither.

**Sexual Orientation** – The desire for intimate emotional and/or sexual relationships with people of the same gender/sex, another gender/sex, or multiple genders/sexes.

**Sexual Reassignment Surgery (SRS)** – A term used by some medical professionals to refer to a group of surgical options that alter a person’s “sex.” In most states, one or multiple surgeries are required to achieve legal recognition of gender variance. Also known as “Gender Confirming Surgery.”

**Sexuality** – A person’s exploration of sexual acts, sexual orientation, sexual pleasure, and desire.

**Stealth** – This term refers to when a person chooses to be secretive in the public sphere about their gender history, either after transitioning or while successful passing. (Also referred to as ‘going stealth’ or ‘living in stealth mode’.)

**Stem** – A person whose gender expression falls somewhere between a stud and a femme. (See also ‘Femme’ and ‘Stud’.)

**Stereotype** – A preconceived or oversimplified generalization about an entire group of people without regard for their individual differences.
Though often negative, can also be complimentary. Even positive stereotypes can have a negative impact, however, simply because they involve broad generalizations that ignore individual realities.

**Stone Butch / Femme**— A person who may or may not desire sexual penetration and/or contact with the genitals or breasts. (See also ‘Butch’ and ‘Femme’).

**Straight** – Another term for heterosexual.

**Straight-Acting** – A term usually applied to gay men who readily pass as heterosexual. The term implies that there is a certain way that gay men should act that is significantly different from heterosexual men. Straight-acting gay men are often looked down upon in the LGBTQ community for seemingly accessing heterosexual privilege.

**Stud** — An African-American and/or Latina masculine lesbian. Also known as ‘butch’ or ‘aggressive’.

**Switch** – A person who is both a ‘Top’ and a ‘Bottom’, there may or may not be a preference for one or the other.

**Top** — A person who is said to take a more dominant role during sexual interactions. May also be known as ‘Pitcher.’

**Top Surgery** - This term usually refers to surgery for the construction of a male-type chest, but may also refer to breast augmentation.

**Trans** - An abbreviation that is sometimes used to refer to a gender variant person. This use allows a person to state a gender variant identity without having to disclose hormonal or surgical status/intentions. This term is sometimes used to refer to the gender variant community as a whole.

**Transactivism**- The political and social movement to create equality for gender variant persons.

**Transgender** – A person who lives as a member of a gender other than that expected based on anatomical sex. Sexual orientation varies and is not dependent on gender identity.

**Transgendered (Trans) Community** – A loose category of people who transcend gender norms in a wide variety of ways. The central ethic of this community is unconditional acceptance of individual exercise of freedoms including gender and sexual identity and orientation.
**Transhate** – The irrational hatred of those who are gender variant, usually expressed through violent and often deadly means.

**Tranny Chaser** - A term primarily used to describe people who prefer or actively seek transpeople for sexual or romantic relations. While this term is claimed in an affirmative manner by some, it is largely regarded as derogatory.

**Transition** – This term is primarily used to refer to the process a gender variant person undergoes when changing their bodily appearance either to be more congruent with the gender/sex they feel themselves to be and/or to be in harmony with their preferred gender expression.

**Transman**—An identity label sometimes adopted by female-to-male transsexuals to signify that they are men while still affirming their history as females. Also referred to as ‘transguy(s).’

**Transphobia** – The irrational fear of those who are gender variant and/or the inability to deal with gender ambiguity.

**Transsexual** – A person who identifies psychologically as a gender/sex other than the one to which they were assigned at birth. Transsexuals often wish to transform their bodies hormonally and surgically to match their inner sense of gender/sex.

**Transvestite** – Someone who dresses in clothing generally identified with the opposite gender/sex. While the terms ‘homosexual’ and ‘transvestite’ have been used synonymously, they are in fact signify two different groups. The majority of transvestites are heterosexual males who derive pleasure from dressing in “women’s clothing.” (The preferred term is ‘cross-dresser,’ but the term ‘transvestite’ is still used in a positive sense in England.)

**Transwoman**—An identity label sometimes adopted by male-to-female transsexuals to signify that they are women while still affirming their history as males.

**Two-Spirited** – Native persons who have attributes of both genders, have distinct gender and social roles in their tribes, and are often involved with mystical rituals (shamans). Their dress is usually mixture of male and female articles and they are seen as a separate or third gender. The term ‘two-spirit’ is usually considered to specific to the Zuni tribe. Similar identity labels vary by tribe and include ‘one-spirit’ and ‘wintke’.

**Ze / Hir** – Alternate pronouns that are gender neutral and preferred by some gender variant persons. Pronounced /zee/ and /here/, they replace “he”/”she” and “his”/”hers” respectively.

**Gender Neutral Pronoun Usage Table:**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Neutral:</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Possessive Adjective</th>
<th>Possessive Pronoun</th>
<th>Reflexive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>She</td>
<td>Her</td>
<td>Her</td>
<td>Hers</td>
<td>Herself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>He</td>
<td>Him</td>
<td>His</td>
<td>His</td>
<td>Himself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Neutral</td>
<td>Ze</td>
<td>Hir</td>
<td>Hir</td>
<td>Hirs</td>
<td>Hirself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spivak</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Em</td>
<td>Eir</td>
<td>Eirs</td>
<td>Emself</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How to pronounce gender neutral pronouns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ze</th>
<th>Hir</th>
<th>Hirs</th>
<th>Hirself</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>Em</th>
<th>Eir</th>
<th>Eirs</th>
<th>Emself</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/zee/</td>
<td>/here/</td>
<td>/heres/</td>
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<td>/ee/</td>
<td>/em/</td>
<td>/air/</td>
<td>/airs/</td>
<td>/emself/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples of how to use these pronouns:

She went to her bedroom. He went to his bedroom.
Ze went to hir bedroom.
E went to eir bedroom.
I am her sister.
I am his sister.
I am hir sister.
I am eir sister.

She shaves herself. He shaves himself.
Ze shaves hirself.
E shaves emself.

This terminology sheet was created by Eli R. Green (eli@trans-academics.org) and Eric N. Peterson at the LGBT Resource Center at UC Riverside © 2003-2004, with additional input from www.wikipedia.org and many kind people who helped support create and revise these definitions. This sheet is always a work in progress so please be sure to check the Instructional Materials section of Trans-Academics.org for updated versions. Please feel free to alter, use or pass on as needed but be sure to give credit to the original creators. Any updates or corrections can be submitted to eli@trans-academics.org. Thank you.
Appendix B

Volunteers Needed for Research Study

What’s it like to be a gay or lesbian African-American student at U of L?

This study will explore the campus and community experiences of gay and lesbian African-American students.

You are invited to participate in a Photovoice social action project for one semester, where you will take pictures and or film video of your daily interactions and narrate them. You will also be asked to complete a survey and an individual interview.

To participate: You must be currently enrolled at U of L, at least 18 years old, African-American and identify as gay or lesbian.

Participants will receive a $50 gift card.

To learn more, contact Erica Caton
@ 859-576-0334 or erica.caton@louisville.edu

This research is conducted under the supervision of Dr. Emma Sterrett, Principal Investigator, University of Louisville, Kent School of Social Work
Volunteers Needed for Research Study

What's it like to be a gay or lesbian African-American student at UK?

This study will explore the campus and community experiences of gay and lesbian African-American students.

You are invited to participate in a PhotoVoice social action project for one semester, where you will take pictures and or film video of your daily interactions and narrate them. You will also be asked to complete a survey and an individual interview.

To participate: You must be currently enrolled at UK, at least 18 years old, African-American and identify as gay or lesbian.

Participants will receive a $50 gift card.

To learn more, contact Erica Caton @ 859-576-0334 or erica.caton@louisville.edu or ecato2@uky.edu

This research is conducted under the supervision of Dr. Emma Sterrett, Principal Investigator, University of Louisville, Kent School of Social Work
Appendix C
Standing in the Intersection:
Using Photovoice to Understand the Lived Experiences of African-American Gay and Lesbian College Students Attending Predominantly-White Postsecondary Institutions

A Photovoice Project
(Fall 2014/Spring 2015)

Developed by
Erica Caton, MSW
Doctoral Candidate
University of Louisville, Kent School of Social Work
Understanding the lived experiences of African-American (AA) gay and lesbian college students is of vital importance to the social, psychological and economic growth of our society. AA gay and lesbian students enter college as members of multiple oppressed identity groups, each identity carrying with it a history of severe victimization, intimidation and marginalization by members of the dominant culture groups in society. Failure to understand the experiences of AA gay and lesbian college students further compromises their academic, physical, and mental well-being and perpetuates a system of privilege and oppression. While it represents a trusted approach in understanding the life experiences of oppressed people, the participatory action research (PAR) method photovoice developed by Wang and Burris is underutilized as a means of understanding the experiences of individuals who are members of multiple oppressed identity groups. The photovoice process provides participants with an opportunity: to document in photographs and video community/group strengths and concerns, to educate and engage in conversation around salient issues, and to share these images with policy makers and in doing so there is the potential to bring about needed change for their community. This study will employ the PAR method photovoice to gain a deeper understanding of how AA gay and lesbian college students experience college. Following a period of photographing and video recording their day-to-day college experiences, AA gay and lesbian students will engage in an iterative process of critical dialogue to identify community strengths and needs, the result of which will be shared with campus and community policy makers.
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Ethical Considerations

Consent Forms

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Welcome...

Many, many thanks for expressing an interest in this research project. I am very excited to work with each of you to bring this innovative and creative project to the University of Louisville campus community.

So what is Photovoice?

Photovoice was originally created by Wang and Burris (1997). “Photovoice uses a combination of photography and critical group discussions as a way to engage participants in identifying their own views of the research topic, and as a tool for social change (Powers, Freedman and Pitner, 2012).”

Photovoice is a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach that integrates photography and critical discussion to examine issues from the perspective of the “resident experts” – the people living, working, playing, and praying in a targeted context (Wang, 2003). Insights from photovoice processes are then used to inform grassroots social action (Wang & Burris, 1994). In our study, photovoice was used to provide a forum for participants—residents of a public housing community—to record and reflect on their community’s strengths and concerns, promote critical dialogue and knowledge about community issues, and inform and promote social change efforts in the community.

Photovoice is ultimately focused on promoting change at personal and community levels. It empowers people to develop a critical assessment of their reality, share this information with important stakeholders and promote change based on these insights. As a needs assessment tool, it has advantages over other types of assessment (such as community inventory), as it allows the community members to not only assess what they believe the problems to be, but also to define potential solutions (Wang & Pies, 2008). Moreover, photovoice allows community members to participate in all phases of a community change project (Wang & Pies, 2008).

Drawing upon feminist theory, “Photovoice participants work to change the way their public presence is defined: Photovoice represents part of the attempt to disrupt and ultimately revise the views of gender, class, ethnicity, and other forces that contribute to oppression” (Wang & Pies, 2008, p.185).

Raising critical consciousness (Freire, 2005) through deep reflection and examination of community concerns is one of the goals of photovoice (Wang, 2003). This heightened sense of the complexity of community concerns becomes a springboard for collective efficacy (Sampson, 2004). Collective efficacy refers to a level of trust and cohesion among residents that leads to shared expectations that all residents will intervene to support the well-being of their
community (Sampson, 2004). Thus, photovoice is designed to serve as both a process and outcome for community change (Powers, Freedman and Pitner, 2012).

Study Overview

The focus of this photovoice project is to answer the following questions:

- How do African-American gay and lesbian students experience college life as members of multiple oppressed minority groups?
- What meaning is made of these experiences?
- What are the strengths of the African-American gay and lesbian U of L student community?
- What and where are the opportunities for improving the community?

Objectives

During each two-hour session, we will meet in the U of L Cultural Center to engage in conversation about your community, review your photos, create titles, and narrations and agree upon the contents of our photovoice collection. A campus wide exhibit wherein campus administrators, staff and students will be invited to view your artwork will mark the completion of the project.

Benefits:

- Learn leadership and social activism skills.
- Identify the strengths and concerns of your community.
- Help others learn about your community.
- Published artist by displaying your photography and videos.
- Make new friends.

Commitment:

- Complete a pre and post project questionnaire.
- Attend at least 5 photovoice sessions (2 hours/session).
- Participate in a one on one interview with the project coordinator.
- Participate in photovoice exhibit at the U of L Ekstrom Library (TBD) / UK Student Center.
- Give your feedback about the project.

You may participate in this project if you...

- Identity as African-American and gay or lesbian,
- Are a full-time U of L student and willing to provide consent to participate,
• Are eager to share ideas about how to make your community better
• Enjoy working collaboratively,
• Are willing to devote time this fall and early spring to complete the project.
Subject Informed Consent Document

Standing in the Intersection:
Using Photovoice to Understand the Lived Experiences of African-American Gay and Lesbian College Students Attending Predominantly-White Postsecondary Institutions

Investigator(s) name & address: Dr. Emma Sterrett and Erica Caton, MSW - Kent School of Social Work

Site(s) where study is to be conducted: U of L – Belknap and Health Sciences Campus
Phone number for subjects to call for questions: 859-576-0334 or 502.852.3931

Introduction and Background Information

You are invited to participate in a research study. Dr. Emma Sterrett, PhD and Erica Caton, MSW and PhD student at the University of Louisville, Kent School of Social Work are conducting the study. The study will take place at the University of Louisville, on locations throughout the Belknap and Health Sciences campuses. Approximately 25 subjects will be invited to participate.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of African-American gay and lesbian college students as well as explore how said students understand and balance their racial and sexual identities.

Procedures

In this study, you will be asked to document using photographs and video your daily experiences on and off campus. In group photo selection sessions, you and other study participants will critically analyze the photos/videos with the goal of creating a cumulative list of images that best represent your community experience. During this process, you will also be asked to participate in a 1-2 hour individual interview conducted by the researcher. All photo selection sessions and interviews will be audio recorded. You have the right to decline to answer any questions asked during the group photo selection sessions or individual interview that may make you uncomfortable. Finally, you will be asked to plan and participate in a campus exhibit of the selected photos/videos for campus and community officials.

Potential Risks

There are no foreseeable risks other than possible discomfort in answering personal questions however, there may be unforeseen risks.

Benefits

The possible benefits of this study include the opportunity to participate in a social action project whose goal is to raise the level of awareness of the needs of
students at the university and in the local community. The information learned in this study may also be helpful to students at other colleges and universities.

**Compensation**

You will be paid **$50, in the form of a gift card for your** time, inconvenience or expenses while you are in this study. Because you will be paid to be in this study the University of Louisville must collect your name, address, social security number, ask you to sign a W-9 form, and keep records of how much you are **paid.** You may or may not be sent a Form 1099 by the University. This will only happen if you are paid $600 or more in one year by the University. We are required by the Internal Revenue Service to collect this information and you may need to report the payment as income on your taxes.

This information will be protected and kept secure in the same way that we protect your other private information. If you do not agree to give us this information, we can’t pay you for being in this study. You can still be in the study even if you don’t want to be paid.

**Confidentiality**

Total privacy cannot be guaranteed. Your privacy will be protected to the extent permitted by law. If the results from this study are published, your name will not be made public. While unlikely, the following may look at the study records:

- University of Louisville Institutional Review Board
- Human Subjects Protection Program Office
- Office for Human Research Protections

Additionally, study participants will have the option to have their image and or their photographs and or videos included in a web-based exhibit. A separate written consent/media release will be required to participate in this portion of the project. Without written consent from the study participant no images/videos or likenesses of study participants will be released.

All photographs, videos, recordings of photo selection sessions, interview recordings and accompanying transcripts will be housed on a password-protected computer in a locked cabinet within a locked office. Only the principal researcher and co-investigator will know the password and have key access to said location.

**Conflict of Interest**

This study **does not** involve a conflict of interest because no payment or other benefit will be made to the institution or the investigator.

**Voluntary Participation**

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to be in this study, you may stop taking part at any time. If you decide not to be in this study or if you stop taking part at any time, you will not lose any benefits for which you may qualify.
You will be told about any changes that may affect your decision to continue in the study.

Research Subject’s Rights, Questions, Concerns and Complaints

If you have any concerns or complaints about the study or the study staff, you have three options.

You may contact the principal investigator at 502.852.0388.

If you have any questions about your rights as a study subject, questions, concerns or complaints, you may call the Human Subjects Protection Program Office (HSPPO) (502) 852-5188. You may discuss any questions about your rights as a subject, in secret, with a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or the HSPPO staff. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, staff of the institutions, as well as lay members of the community not connected with these institutions. The IRB has reviewed this study.

If you want to speak to a person outside the University, you may call 1-877-852-1167. You will be given the chance to talk about any questions, concerns or complaints in secret. This is a 24 hour hot line answered by people who do not work at the University of Louisville.

This paper tells you what will happen during the study if you choose to take part. Your signature means that this study has been discussed with you, that your questions have been answered and that you will take part in the study. This informed consent document is not a contract. You are not giving up any legal rights by signing this informed consent document. You will be given a signed copy of this paper to keep for your records.

__________________________________________________________
Signature of Subject/Legal Representative Date Signed

__________________________________________________________
Signature of Person Explaining the Consent Form Date Signed
(if other than the Investigator)

__________________________________________________________
Signature of Investigator Date Signed

LIST OF INVESTIGATORS PHONE NUMBERS

Dr. Emma Sterrett 502.852.0388
Erica Caton, MSW, PhD student 859-576-0334
Schedule of Photo Sharing Sessions
Fall 2014 /Spring 2015

All sessions will be held at the U of L Cultural Center (@ UK VIP Office)

Participant photos must be uploaded to the project Dropbox account by the Wednesday before our session discussion. Each participant will have password protected access to the account. Only the project coordinator will have the ability to delete photos from the account. If after you upload a photo you decide you do not want it shared with the group, you have that option – simply email erica.caton@louisville.edu to have the photo removed.

During sessions, we will discuss, create titles and captions for our photos and then develop overarching themes or categories, with the ultimate goal of selecting images to communicate community strengths and concerns. The final steps in the project consist of a closing celebration and campus wide exhibit where your artwork will be displayed. All dates and timelines are set and subject to change by the group.

If the group agrees we will also display your art work on social media outlets such as Facebook, Instagram, and Tumblr.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Welcome, Introductions, Review of voice project, Ground Rules, Photography Ethics &amp; Guidelines</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Photo Sharing &amp; Reflection</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Photo Sharing &amp; Reflection, begin writing titles and captions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Photo Sharing &amp; Reflection, continue writing titles and captions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Photo Sharing &amp; Reflection, continue writing titles and captions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finalize and Close Project</td>
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</table>
Standing in the Intersection:
Using Photovoice to Understand the Lived Experiences of
African-American Gay and Lesbian College Students
Attending Predominantly-White Postsecondary Institutions
Photovoice Ethics Agreement Form

Participant’s Name: ________________________________________________________

In this Photovoice project, you and other participants will take pictures and share stories about
the strengths and concerns of African-American gay and lesbian students at U of L. This is a
chance to teach others about your life and your community.

By signing this ethics agreement form, you also agree to follow the ethics of photovoice. Please
read the following statements and sign your initials next to each statement to confirm that you
have read and understand each ethic of Photovoice.

_______ I will not intrude into an individual’s personal space both publicly and privately.

_______ I will not disclose embarrassing facts about individuals unless they have given me
permission to do so.

_______ I will not place individuals in false light with my photographs.

_______ I will respect the confidentiality of the stories that were discussed during the
Photovoice reflection sessions.

_______ I will obtain the signature of all individuals represented in my photographs.

_______ I will not reveal the name(s) of any subject(s) in my photographs, and will not use
them when discussing or writing about my photographs.

Signing this ethics agreement form means that you have read, understand and respect the
ethics and privacy concerns involved in a photovoice project. If you fail to follow these
principles, you may be asked to leave the project.

______________________________________     ___________________
Print Your Name Here                      Date of Birth

______________________________________     ___________________
Sign Your Name Here                   Today’s Date
Standing in the Intersection:  
Using Photovoice to Understand the Lived Experiences of African-American Gay and Lesbian College Students Attending Predominantly-White Postsecondary Institutions

Photography 101 Handout

**Light** ~ Pay careful attention to the light conditions in your photograph

- When trying to avoid harsh shadows, shoot photographs of people in covered shade so the light is more even across your subject(s).

- Try to place the sun at your back when you are shooting your photographs. This will help you avoid backlit subjects with shadowy faces.

**Shooting** ~ When shooting a photograph, hold the camera as steady as possible as you snap your photo.

- Hold the camera with both hands, with elbows against your body and feet spread apart. This helps to avoid camera shake or vibration, which leads to less sharp pictures.

**Subject** ~ Have a strong center of interest in your photograph

- Get as close as you can with your camera to include only what is needed in the frame. Photographs often have extra things in the frame that distract from the center of care.

**Framing** ~ Pay attention to the background in your photo

- Watch for clutter or for an object like a telephone pole that might appear to be growing out of the subject’s head on the final picture.

- Are there elements in your photograph’s background that are important for telling the story you want to tell?

**Composition** ~ Composition is the placement of elements (people, objects, environment) in a photograph within the restriction of the frame of the photograph
• Pay attention to how you arrange the people, objects, and environment in your photograph

Tips:
• Experiment with different lighting. Remember that the flash will not reach very far at night. Be sure to limit night shots to objects that are within arm’s length. You may need to use the flash even on a sunny day outdoors.
• Keep the sun behind the photographer when outdoors.
• Keep your finger away from the lens and flash

“Seeing Like a Photographer”

The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes. – Marcel Proust

For me the camera is a sketchbook, an instrument of intuition and spontaneity. In order to give meaning to the world, one has to feel oneself involved in what one frames through the viewfinder. This attitude requires concentration, a discipline of mind, sensitivity, and a sense of geometry. – Henri Cartier-Bresson

A few tips to get you started...

• Be mindful of the surroundings
• Don’t rush your shots
• Don’t be afraid to play with your camera
• Look beyond the obvious

A few guidelines of photographic composition

1. Keep it simple
2. Subject in Focus?
3. Control the background
4. Horizontal vs. vertical orientation?
5. Pay attention to light and shadow
6. Be imaginative and have fun!
Ethics and Safety Guidelines Handout

• Voluntary Participation
• In what way can I show respect for a person’s decision to be photographed?
• How do I get consent to take their picture?

• Do No Harm
• What is my purpose for taking this photo?
• Am I creating and using photos in a manner that will do no harm to persons appearing in the photos?

• Fairness/Justice
• Am I using photos in a way that fairly represents the real situation, subject identity, or physical location of the image?
• Am I respectful of the people, places, and things that I am photographing?

Image Ethics

According to Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) there are four distinct but important areas of privacy that must be taken into consideration when participants take photographs during their photovoice experience:

• Intrusion into One’s Private Space
• Disclosure of Embarrassing Facts about Individuals
• Being Placed in False Light by Images
• Protection Against the Use of a Person’s Likeness for Commercial Benefit

Photographer Safety

Maintaining your personal safety is of highest priority.

No photo is worth personal danger.

Be aware of your surroundings
• Buddy system
• Don’t do anything you wouldn’t usually do
• Don’t go anywhere you wouldn’t usually go
• What if you are met with resistance and or negative reactions?
  – Stay calm
  – Be smart
  – Personal safety first and foremost
  – Bad situations are not always the best time for social activism

**Camera and Image Security**

Use of your cell phone camera
Dropbox downloads
Image file integrity
What Matters to Me Worksheet

Things I am proud of…

About Me  1.
2.
3.

My friends  1.
& family  2.
3.

In my  1.
Community  2.
3.

Things I would like to change…

About Me  1.
2.
3.

My friends  1.
& family  2.
3.

In my  1.
Community  2.
3.
Photography Practice Worksheet

You have the 10 minutes to go out and capture two photographs – think about our “What matters to me” discussion as you make your subject selections. Once you have your images come back and make a few notes on the subject of your photos.

**Remember if you take photographs of people you must have signed release forms.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of the Photo</th>
<th>Why I took this Photo</th>
<th>Photo Release Form Obtained – if necessary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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Standing in the Intersection:
Using Photovoice to Understand the Lived Experiences of African-American Gay and Lesbian College Students Attending Predominantly-White Postsecondary Institutions

Permission to Photograph/Film Release Form

Project Director: Erica Caton, MSW - Doctoral Student
University of Louisville – Kent School of Social Work

Photovoice Doctoral Research Project
*Form to be completed anytime a photographer takes a picture of a person’s face.*

What am I being asked to do?
I am asking that you give me your permission to take your picture.

Why are you taking these photographs?
I am taking pictures for a photovoice project, called “Standing in the Intersection.” This photovoice project is being conducted to better understand community strengths and challenges in the African-American gay and lesbian student community at U of L. To reach this goal, community members like myself will be equipped with cameras (cell phones) and asked to go into their community and photograph people, places and things that represent their community. The photographs taken will be used for the purpose of triggering discussion amongst others participating in the project, and to illustrate important ideas. The pictures may also be used in publications and presentations about the project. The names of people who appear in the pictures will not be used or disclosed; however, someone who sees the publications or presentations may recognize the images of people in the pictures. At the conclusion of the project, the photos will belong to me as the photographer.

Who are the people running this project, and how can I call them?
* The principal investigator is Dr. Emma Sterrett. She can be reached at (number)
* The co-investigator is Erica Caton. She can be reached at 859-576-0334
This project is being conducted by a student attending the University of Louisville, Kent School of Social Work.

How will you use my picture?
After I have taken a certain number of pictures, I will bring them to a photo-discussion session. At this session, I will meet with other participants and we will discuss our pictures. There is also the chance that some of the photographs will be included in a campus wide exhibit of the photovoice project.

Will people know that I had my picture taken for your project?
To ensure “confidentiality”, your name or any identifying information will never be mentioned.
during the discussions we have about our photos. Also, your name will not be revealed if your picture was included in any presentations or displays. Still, there is always the chance that somebody may recognize you. All photographs and information will be maintained in a confidential manner. Data will be stored in computers that are password protected and all data will be secured in a locked storage file.

**What will I get out of having my picture taken for your project?**
You will have a chance to effect positive change on our campus and within the local community through identifying strengths and concerns, raising awareness about the concerns and building on the strengths to improve our community.

**Do I have to allow you to take my picture? Can I withdraw my consent to use my picture if I wish?**
You do not have to have your picture taken. Further, if you decide at a later date that you do not want your picture discussed or displayed anywhere, you may contact any of the research investigators whose names and phone numbers are listed above and your picture(s) will be removed immediately from the collection. You do not have to give any reasons for withdrawing your consent. Remember, your willingness to be photographed is completely voluntary and you may decline at any time.

**What if I have any questions about the project or my participation?**
If you ever have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Erica Caton at (859) 576-0334.

*********************************************************************
If you are willing to give your consent to having your (and/or your child’s) picture taken, please fill out the following information, sign the bottom of the form, and return it to me.

**STATEMENT OF CONSENT**

*If photographee is under 18 years of age, then the parent or guardian must sign below.*

Having read the above information, I __________________________ (printed name), give permission to have my (and/or my child’s) photograph taken for purposes of this project. I give ______________ unlimited permission to copyright and use the photographs that may include me (and/or my child) in presentations about this project, as well as in publications. I have been told that I/my child will not be identified by name or by other background information. I waive any right that I (and/or my child) may have to inspect or approve the publication or use of the pictures.

If your photo is selected for the photo exhibit on TBD at Ekstrom Library at the University of Louisville, we would like to provide you with a copy. Would you like a copy of the photo sent to you?

_____ Yes _____ No
Would you like this sent to you by [ ] email or [ ] regular mail? (check one)
If you provide your address below, we will send you an invitation to the photo exhibition.

Mailing Address: _____________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

Email Address: ________________________________________________

“Photographee/Subject” Name ______________________________________

“Photographee/Subject” Signature __________________ Date ______

*If Minors:
Parent/Guardian of “Photographee/Subject” Name _____________________
Parent/Guardian of “Photographee/Subject” Signature __________________ Date ______

“Photographer” Name _________________________________________________

“Photographer” Signature ______________________________________ Date _____
Expectations and Ground Rules for Photovoice Sessions

What are your hopes for what would have to happen to make the photovoice sessions a terrific experience?

– e.g., people will openly share their thoughts about the photos

What are your fears of what could happen that would make the photovoice sessions a terrible experience?

– e.g., I will be misunderstood

In developing ground rules we want to:

– build on the terrific
– avoid the terrible

Ground Rules

• Confidentiality
• Punctuality
• Attendance
• Respect & Respectful language
• No side-bars
• One-Mic
• Listening
• No texting
• Questions = understanding
• Disagreements can be worked out.
• Be Direct
• Be compassionate
• Others?
**Coming Up Next...**

Take 3-5 photographs, upload them to Dropbox, think about the subject(s) of your photos using the guidelines below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>What do you See happening here? (Describe what the eye sees)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>What is actually Happening here? (What is the unseen story behind the picture? What does the heart see?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>How does it relate to Our lives?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Why does the problem/strength exist?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>How could this photo Educate people?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>What can we Do about it? (How does this photo provide opportunities for us to improve life in your community?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Building Themes

Thinking about all of the photos you took as well as the photos of others...

1. What are the first thoughts that come to mind?
   
   a. Record 3-5 words or phrases that capture the main strengths about the community – things that people are proud of.

   b. Record 3-5 words or phrases that capture the main challenges in the community – things that people want to improve.

2. Sorting our words into common categories.
   
   a. Can we write a title for each group of words?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1:</th>
<th>Theme 2:</th>
<th>Theme 3:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Words:</td>
<td>Words:</td>
<td>Words:</td>
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<tr>
<th>Theme 4:</th>
<th>Theme 5:</th>
<th>Theme 6:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Words:</td>
<td>Words:</td>
<td>Words:</td>
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Handbook adapted from:

Appendix D

Critical Consciousness Inventory

**Directions:** The following statements concern thoughts you might have about yourself and a variety of situations. There may be more than one choice that you agree with, but circle the choice that best describes you.

1a. I believe that the world is basically fair.
1b. I believe that the world is basically fair but others believe that it is unfair.
1c. I believe that the world is unfair for some people.
1d. I believe that the world is unfair, and I make sure to treat others fairly.

2a. I believe that all people are treated equally.
2b. I believe that some people don’t take advantage of opportunities given to them and blame others instead.
2c. I believe that some groups are discriminated against.
2d. I work to make sure that people are treated equally and are given equal chances.

3a. I think that education gives everyone an equal chance to do well.
3b. I think that education gives everyone who works hard an equal chance.
3c. I think that the educational system is unequal.
3d. I think that the educational system needs to be changed in order for everyone to have an equal chance.

4a. I believe people get what they deserve.
4b. I believe that some people are treated badly but there are ways that they can work to be treated fairly.
4c. I believe that some people are treated badly because of oppression.
4d. I feel angry that some people are treated badly because of oppression and I often do something to change it.

5a. I think all social groups are respected.
5b. I think the social groups that are not respected have done things that lead people to think badly of them.
5c. I think people do not respect members of some social groups based on stereotypes.
5d. I am respectful of people in all social groups, and I speak up when others are not.
6a. I don’t notice when people make prejudiced comments.
6b. I notice when people make prejudiced comments and it hurts me.
6c. It hurts me when people make prejudiced comments but I am able to move on.
6d. When someone makes a prejudiced comment, I tell them that what they said is hurtful.

7a. When people tell a joke that makes fun of a social group, I laugh and don’t really think about it.
7b. When people tell a joke that makes fun of a social group, I laugh but also feel uncomfortable.
7c. When people tell a joke that makes fun of a social group, I realize that the joke is based on a stereotype.
7d. I tell people when I feel that their joke was offensive.

8a. I don’t see much oppression in this country.
8b. I feel hopeless and overwhelmed when I think about oppression in this country.
8c. I feel like oppression in this country is less than in the past and will continue to change.
8d. I actively work to support organizations which help people who are oppressed.

9a. I don’t feel bad when people say they have been oppressed.
9b. I feel sad or angry when experiencing or seeing oppression.
9c. I often become sad or angry when experiencing or seeing oppression, but I find ways to cope with my feelings.
9d. I work to protect myself from negative feelings when acts of oppression happen.

Used with permission:

Appendix E
Standing in the Intersection
Photovoice Project

Name:
Age:
Major:
Classification:
Sexual Orientation/Identification:

Student Activities and Volunteerism

Do you belong to a campus organization(s)? If so, which?

Do you hold an office?

How often do you attend meetings?

If you were going to create a student group, what would it be?

Have you attended lectures or special guest speakers outside of class this semester? If so, which?

Do you volunteer outside of campus? If so, with which organizations do you volunteer?

Do you hold an office?

How much time do you spend working with off campus organizations?
Appendix F

Standing in the Intersection:
Using Photovoice to Understand the Lived Experiences of African-American Gay and Lesbian College Students Attending Predominantly-White Postsecondary Institutions

Post-Session Participant Feedback Sheet

Name: ________________________________

1) What was the best thing in today’s session?

2) What would be something we could improve for next session?

3) Is there anything else you would like to share?

Thank you for your participation!
Appendix G

Photovoice Project: Standing in the Intersection

Individual Interview Schedule

1. What’s it like to be AA and gay/lesbian at...
2. Tell me about your experiences since arriving to campus?  
   Negative/positive
3. How if at all are your experiences in college the same or different  
   from your neighborhood/HS?
4. Why did you choose U of L / UK?
5. Do you use/visit the Intersection/OutSource? If so, why? And if not,  
   why not?
6. Were there moments when you thought you might leave the  
   university? If so, why?
7. What have your experiences within the city of Louisville been like?
8. Have you been able to find a sense of community at the university/in  
   the city of Louisville?
9. If there was, one thing the university could do to make your time  
   more fulfilling, what would it be?
10. What if anything could local officials do to enhance your time and  
    interactions within the city of Louisville?
11. How did you feel about taking the photos?
12. Did you learn anything about yourself as you took them- reflecting on  
    them now are there thoughts or feelings that come up for you?
Appendix H

Standing in the Intersection:
Using Photovoice to Understand the Lived Experiences of
African-American Gay and Lesbian College Students
Attending Predominantly-White Postsecondary Institutions

Consent to Film

I consent to my being photographed or video recorded as a participant and artist in the Photovoice project listed above.

This agreement applies to print, film/video and electronic media including the World Wide Web.

The image(s) may be retained by, and will only be accessed by, authorized persons of the University of Louisville /University of Kentucky engaged in the above mentioned project. The image(s) will only be retained for the purpose of project promotion and other means for which the photographed and all members of the project agree appropriate.

All people in the footage must sign:

Date: _______________________________

Name: ______________________________ Signature: ______________________________________

____________________________________   ______________________________________

____________________________________   ______________________________________

____________________________________   ______________________________________

____________________________________   ______________________________________

____________________________________   ______________________________________

____________________________________   ______________________________________
Appendix I

Subject Informed Consent Document

Standing in the Intersection:
Using Photovoice to Understand the Lived Experiences of
African-American Gay and Lesbian College Students
Attending Predominantly-White Postsecondary Institutions

Investigator(s) name & address: Dr. Emma Sterrett and Erica Caton, MSW - Kent School of Social Work
Site(s) where study is to be conducted: U of L – Belknap and Health Sciences Campus
Phone number for subjects to call for questions: 859-576-0334 or 502.852.3931

Introduction and Background Information

You are invited to participate in a research study. Dr. Emma Sterrett, PhD and Erica Caton, MSW
and PhD student at the University of Louisville, Kent School of Social Work are conducting the
study. The study will take place at the University of Louisville, on locations throughout the Belknap
and Health Sciences campuses. Approximately 25 subjects will be invited to participate.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of African-American gay and lesbian
college students as well as explore how said students understand and balance their racial and sexual
identities.

Procedures

In this study, you will be asked to document using photographs and video your daily experiences on and
off campus. In group photo selection sessions, you and other study participants will critically analyze the
photos/videos with the goal of creating a cumulative list of images that best represent your community
experience. During this process, you will also be asked to participate in a 1-2 hour individual interview
conducted by the researcher. All photo selection sessions and interviews will be audio recorded. You have
the right to decline to answer any questions asked during the group photo selection sessions or individual
interview that may make you uncomfortable. Finally, you will be asked to plan and participate in a campus
exhibit of the selected photos/videos for campus and community officials.

Potential Risks

There are no foreseeable risks other than possible discomfort in answering personal questions;
however, there may be unforeseen risks.

Benefits

The possible benefits of this study include the opportunity to participate in a social action project whose goal
is to raise the level of awareness of the needs of students at the university and in the local community. The
information learned in this study may also be helpful to students at other colleges and universities.
Standing in the Intersection:
Using Photovoice to Understand the Lived Experiences of
African-American Gay and Lesbian College Students
Attending Predominantly-White Postsecondary Institutions

Compensation

You will be paid $50, in the form of a gift card for your time, inconvenience or expenses while you are in
this study. Because you will be paid to be in this study the University of Louisville must collect your name,
address, social security number, ask you to sign a W-9 form, and keep records of how much you are
paid. You may or may not be sent a Form 1099 by the University. This will only happen if you are paid $600
or more in one year by the University. We are required by the Internal Revenue Service to collect this
information and you may need to report the payment as income on your taxes.

This information will be protected and kept secure in the same way that we protect your other private
information. If you do not agree to give us this information, we can’t pay you for being in this study. You can
still be in the study even if you don’t want to be paid.

Confidentiality

Total privacy cannot be guaranteed. Your privacy will be protected to the extent permitted by law. If the
results from this study are published, your name will not be made public. While unlikely, the following may
look at the study records:
University of Louisville Institutional Review Board
Human Subjects Protection Program Office
Office for Human Research Protections

Additionally, study participants will have the option to have their image and or their photographs and or
videos included in a web-based exhibit. A separate written consent/media release will be required to
participate in this portion of the project. Without written consent from the study participant no images/videos
or likenesses of study participants will be released.

All photographs, videos, recordings of photo selection sessions, interview recordings and accompanying
transcripts will be housed on a password-protected computer in a locked cabinet within a locked office. Only
the principal researcher and co-investigator will know the password and have key access to said location.

Conflict of Interest

This study does not involve a conflict of interest because no payment or other benefit will be made to
the institution or the investigator.

Voluntary Participation

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to be in
this study you may stop taking part at any time. If you decide not to be in this study or if you stop
taking part at any time, you will not lose any benefits for which you may qualify.

You will be told about any changes that may affect your decision to continue in the study.
Standing in the Intersection:
Using Photovoice to Understand the Lived Experiences of
African-American Gay and Lesbian College Students
Attending Predominantly-White Postsecondary Institutions

Research Subject’s Rights, Questions, Concerns, and Complaints

If you have any concerns or complaints about the study or the study staff, you have three options.

You may contact the principal investigator at 502.852.0388.

If you have any questions about your rights as a study subject, questions, concerns or complaints, you may call the Human Subjects Protection Program Office (HSPPO) (502) 852-5188. You may discuss any questions about your rights as a subject, in secret, with a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or the HSPPO staff. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, staff of the institutions, as well as lay members of the community not connected with these institutions. The IRB has reviewed this study.

If you want to speak to a person outside the University, you may call 1-877-852-1167. You will be given the chance to talk about any questions, concerns or complaints in secret. This is a 24 hour hot line answered by people who do not work at the University of Louisville.

This paper tells you what will happen during the study if you choose to take part. Your signature means that this study has been discussed with you, that your questions have been answered, and that you will take part in the study. This informed consent document is not a contract. You are not giving up any legal rights by signing this informed consent document. You will be given a signed copy of this paper to keep for your records.

Signature of Subject/Legal Representative Date Signed

Signature of Person Explaining the Consent Form (if other than the Investigator) Date Signed

Signature of Investigator Date Signed

LIST OF INVESTIGATORS PHONE NUMBERS

Dr. Emma Sterrett 502.852.0388
Erica Caton, MSW, PhD student 859-576-0334

Page 3 of 3
RE: IRB Study Inquiry

Hedrick, Andrew

Sent: Wednesday, January 28, 2015 1:42 PM
To: Caton, Erica
Cc: Kolasa, Amy
Importance: High

Erica-

I heard back from the IRB Chairman. After reviewing the materials below he agreed that UK is not engaged in your study at this time. You should obtain appropriate approvals from the departments on the UK campus in order to conduct your study.

If something about your project changes in the future that may engage UK in the project, such as adding one of our faculty, staff, or students to your research team, please notify our office immediately and BEFORE implementing the change. Also, if our office or any other department on campus requests that you cease your research activities, you are expected to abide by that directive and to contact our office.

If you have any further questions, please let us know.
Thank you,
Andrew

Andrew Hedrick, MPA
IRB Coordinator (Social/Behavioral/Educational)
Office of Research Integrity | University of Kentucky
304 Kinead Hall, Lexington, KY 40506-0057
(859) 257-1639 (phone) | andrew.hedrick@uky.edu

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From: Caton, Erica
Sent: Tuesday, January 27, 2015 11:20 AM
To: Hedrick, Andrew
Cc: Kolasa, Amy
Subject: RE: IRB Study Inquiry

Hello Andrew and Amy,

Thank you very much for the update - I await a response from the Chair.

Have a great day,

Erica Caton

---

From: Hedrick, Andrew
Sent: Tuesday, January 27, 2015 9:52 AM
To: Caton, Erica
Cc: Kolasa, Amy
Subject: RE: IRB Study Inquiry

https://exchange.uky.edu/uaws?enm=Item&n=IPN.Note&d=RgIAAAADRD8%2bNlKsRkowu26LdeT28wD5apc9AIKc9kPEyPChrn0EAAAAGeehAAAvKxeekaA29. 1/3
Subject Informed Consent Document

Standing in the Intersection:
Using Photovoice to Understand the Lived Experiences of
African-American Gay and Lesbian College Students
Attending Predominantly-White Postsecondary Institutions

Investigator(s) name & address: Dr. Emma Sterrett and Erica Caton, MSW - Kent School of Social Work
Site(s) where study is to be conducted: U of L – Belknap and Health Sciences Campus
Phone number for subjects to call for questions: 859-576-0334 or 502.852.3931

Introduction and Background Information

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Purpose

The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of African-American gay and lesbian college students as well as explore how said students understand and balance their racial and sexual identities.

Procedures

In this study, you will be asked to document using photographs and video your daily experiences on and off campus. In group photo selection sessions, you and other study participants will critically analyze the photos/videos with the goal of creating a cumulative list of images that best represent your community experience. During this process, you will also be asked to participate in a 1-2 hour individual interview conducted by the researcher. All photo selection sessions and interviews will be audio recorded. You have the right to decline to answer any questions asked during the group photo selection sessions or individual interview that may make you uncomfortable. Finally, you will be asked to plan and participate in a campus exhibit of the selected photos/videos for campus and community officials.

Potential Risks

There are no foreseeable risks other than possible discomfort in answering personal questions; however, there may be unforeseen risks.

Benefits

The possible benefits of this study include the opportunity to participate in a social action project whose goal is to raise the level of awareness of the needs of students at the university and in the local community. The information learned in this study may also be helpful to students at other colleges and universities.
Standing in the Intersection:
Using Photovoice to Understand the Lived Experiences of
African-American Gay and Lesbian College Students
Attending Predominantly-White Postsecondary Institutions

Compensation

You will be paid $50, in the form of a gift card for your time, inconvenience or expenses while you are in this study. Because you will be paid to be in this study the University of Louisville must collect your name, address, social security number, ask you to sign a W-9 form, and keep records of how much you are paid. You may or may not be sent a Form 1099 by the University. This will only happen if you are paid $600 or more in one year by the University. We are required by the Internal Revenue Service to collect this information and you may need to report the payment as income on your taxes.

This information will be protected and kept secure in the same way that we protect your other private information. If you do not agree to give us this information, we can’t pay you for being in this study. You can still be in the study even if you don’t want to be paid.

Confidentiality

Total privacy cannot be guaranteed. Your privacy will be protected to the extent permitted by law. If the results from this study are published, your name will not be made public. While unlikely, the following may look at the study records:
University of Louisville Institutional Review Board
Human Subjects Protection Program Office
Office for Human Research Protections

Additionally, study participants will have the option to have their image and or their photographs and or videos included in a web-based exhibit. A separate written consent/media release will be required to participate in this portion of the project. Without written consent from the study participant no images/videos or likenesses of study participants will be released.

All photographs, videos, recordings of photo selection sessions, interview recordings and accompanying transcripts will be housed on a password-protected computer in a locked cabinet within a locked office. Only the principal researcher and co-investigator will know the password and have key access to said location.

Conflict of Interest

This study does not involve a conflict of interest because no payment or other benefit will be made to the institution or the investigator.

Voluntary Participation

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to be in this study you may stop taking part at any time. If you decide not to be in this study or if you stop taking part at any time, you will not lose any benefits for which you may qualify.

You will be told about any changes that may affect your decision to continue in the study.
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If you have any concerns or complaints about the study or the study staff, you have three options.

You may contact the principal investigator at 502.852.0388.

If you have any questions about your rights as a study subject, questions, concerns or complaints, you may call the Human Subjects Protection Program Office (HSPPO) (502) 852-5188. You may discuss any questions about your rights as a subject, in secret, with a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or the HSPPO staff. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, staff of the institutions, as well as lay members of the community not connected with these institutions. The IRB has reviewed this study.

If you want to speak to a person outside the University, you may call 1-877-852-1167. You will be given the chance to talk about any questions, concerns or complaints in secret. This is a 24 hour hot line answered by people who do not work at the University of Louisville.

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Signature of Subject/Legal Representative   Date Signed

Signature of Person Explaining the Consent Form   Date Signed
(if other than the Investigator)

Signature of Investigator   Date Signed

LIST OF INVESTIGATORS   PHONE NUMBERS

Dr. Emma Sterrett  502.852.0388
Erica Caton, MSW, PhD student  659-576-0334

Page 3 of 3
Appendix J
UK Health Colleges undergraduate, graduate, and professional women
Join us for

Sister Circle
Monday, March 30th, 2015
5:30pm – 7:30pm
Nursing 213

"Being born a girl means you are more likely to be subjected to violence, disease, poverty and disadvantage than any other group on the planet."

Come hold your “Circle of Security” as we converse, connect, and watch a powerful documentary, revealing what it means to grow up female in the 21st century. Refreshments will be served!

HCBS program participants must engage in 30 minutes of the session to receive program benefits.
Appendix K

The revised document(s) for the above referenced study have been received and contain the changes requested in our letter of 07/16/2014. This study was reviewed on 08/01/2014 by the Chair/Vice-Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and approved through the Expedited Review Procedure, according to 45 CFR 46.110(b), since this study falls under Category 7: Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

The following items have been approved:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Version Number</th>
<th>Version Date</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Research Design/Protocol</td>
<td>Version 1.0</td>
<td>07/30/2014</td>
<td>Approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revised C&amp;C Recruitment Flyer</td>
<td>Version 1.0</td>
<td>07/10/2014</td>
<td>Approved</td>
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<td>RIAS Development</td>
<td>Version 1.0</td>
<td>07/10/2014</td>
<td>Approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoSIEC Development</td>
<td>Version 1.0</td>
<td>07/10/2014</td>
<td>Approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photovoice Project - Informed Consent</td>
<td>Version 1.0</td>
<td>06/28/2014</td>
<td>Approved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study now has final IRB approval from **08/01/2014** through **07/31/2015**. The committee will be advised of this action at their next full board meeting.

**Site Approval**

If this study will take place at an affiliated research institution, such as KentuckyOne Health, Norton Healthcare or University of Louisville Hospital, permission to use the site of the affiliated institution may be necessary before the research may begin. If this study will take place outside of the University of Louisville Campuses, permission from the
organization should be obtained before the research may begin. Failure to obtain this permission may result in a delay in the start of your research.

Privacy & Encryption Statement

The University of Louisville’s Privacy and Encryption Policy requires such information as identifiable medical and health records: credit card, bank account and other personal financial information; social security numbers; proprietary research data; dates of birth (when combined with name, address and/or phone numbers) to be encrypted. For additional information: http://security.louisville.edu/PolStd/ISO.PS018.htm.

Implementation of Changes to Previously Approved Research

Prior to the implementation of any changes in the approved research, the investigator will submit any modifications to the IRB and await approval before implementing the changes, unless the change is being made to ensure the safety and welfare of the subjects enrolled in the research. If such occurs, a Protocol Deviation/Violation should be submitted within five days of the occurrence indicating what safety measures were taken, along with an amendment to revise the protocol.

Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks to Subjects or Others (UIRTSOs)

In general, these may include any incident, experience, or outcome, which has been associated with an unexpected event(s), related or possibly related to participation in the research, and suggests that the research places subjects or others at a greater risk of harm than was previously known or suspected. UIRTSOs may or may not require suspension of the research. Each incident is evaluated on a case by case basis to make this determination. The IRB may require remedial action or education as deemed necessary for the investigator or any other key personnel. The investigator is responsible for reporting UIRTSOs to the IRB within 5 working days. Use the UIRTSO Form located within the IRIS system to report any UIRTSOs.

Continuation Review Requirements

You are responsible for submitting a continuation review 30 days prior to the expiration date of your research study. Investigators who allow their study approval to expire have committed significant non-compliance with federal regulations. Such lapses may require reporting to federal agencies, a program audit by compliance auditors to ensure that subjects were not enrolled during the expired period, and may lead to findings of serious and continuing non-compliance if expiration were to occur a second time.

1099 Information (If Applicable)

As a reminder, in compliance with University policies and Internal Revenue Service code, all payments (including checks, gift cards, and gift certificates) to research subjects must be reported to the University Controller’s Office. Petty Cash payments must also be monitored by the issuing department and reported to the Controller’s Office. Before issuing compensation, each research subject must complete a W-9 form.

For additional information, please contact the Controller’s Office at (502) 852-8237 or control@louisville.edu. If you have any questions, please contact the HSPO at (502) 852-5188 or hsppofo@louisville.edu

Full Accreditation since June 2005 by the Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs, Inc.

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Thank you for your submission.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Peter M. Quesada, Ph.D., Chair
Social/Behavioral/Educational Institutional Review Board
CURRICULUM VITA

Erica Caton
301 Pelican Lane
Lexington, Kentucky 40511
(859) 576-0334 (voice & text)
erica.caton@louisville.edu

Kent School of Social Work - Ph.D. ~ Expected December 2015
University of Louisville - Louisville, Kentucky

Dissertation:
Standing in the Intersection: Using Photovoice to Understand the Lived Experience of Black Gay College Students Attending Predominantly White Postsecondary Institutions

Hunter College School of Social Work - MSW ~ 1997
City University of New York, CUNY

Herbert H. Lehman College – Sociology, BA ~ 1994
City University of New York, CUNY

ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS

University of Kentucky ~ April 2009 to July 2011
College of Arts and Sciences: Director of Advising
Principally responsible for the daily operation of the college’s student services and academic advising unit (3 assistant directors and 16 academic advisors). Including the coordination and delivery of more than twenty-five annual academic advising conferences, oversight and expenditure of unit professional development funds, assessment and evaluation of service delivery, as well as cultivating and maintaining collegial and effective working relationships with university and community partners.

University of Kentucky ~ August 2007 to April 2009
Gatton College of Business and Economics: Academic Coordinator
Charged with the development and implementation of academic support programs for academically at-risk students. Created a campus-wide information and referral system and in doing so provided academic support to conditionally admitted, academic probation, internal and off-campus transfer students.
University of Kentucky ~ September 2003 to August 2007
College of Arts and Sciences: Academic Advisor
Facilitated the college’s mandatory academic advising program designed to foster the academic and personal development of students with special emphasis on increasing first-year retention and college graduation rates.

State of Kentucky ~ October 2002 to September 2003
Cabinet for Families and Children: Contracts Accountability Analyst
Evaluated state contracted community-based agencies for contract compliance including preparation of corrective action reports and evaluation and refinement of compliance assessment tools.

State of Kentucky ~ October 2001 to October 2002
Department of Juvenile Justice: Juvenile Services Clinician
Responsible for community supervision of youth in state care. Completed case reviews and prepared detailed court reports with treatment recommendations for district court judges and direct service providers. Established family reunification and community re-entry plans for said youth and their families.

BCTCS (Lexington Community College) ~ October 1997 to September 2001
Advising and Assessment Center: Academic Advisor
Facilitated the college’s academic advising program by providing service and support to students working toward various short and long-term goals. Coordinated campus-wide student activities and events and provided support to student organization leaders. Served as supplemental staff support to the college’s Disability Resource Center and a key liaison to our primary university partner.

Supportive Children’s Advocacy Network ~ August 1996 to July 1997
Reach for the Stars Program: Graduate Assistant
Assisted in the implementation of a college preparatory program for middle and high school age youth in the South Bronx and Harlem. Planned and assisted in the facilitation of weekly youth group meetings, Saturday Academy tutoring services and two multi-day college tours for program participants.

BronxWorks (Citizens Advice Bureau) ~ August 1995 to May 1996
Bronx Welfare Advocacy Network (BWAN): Graduate Assistant
Researched and responded to community inquiries received through the United Way Information and Referral line. Provided support to the BWAN Coordinator in the administration of monthly welfare advocacy and policy meetings. Designed and implemented the agency’s citywide voter registration initiative.
Harlem Children’s Zone (Rheedlen Foundation) ~ August 1994 to July 1997
Countee Cullen Community Center: Girl’s Club Coordinator
Developed and implemented weekly youth group meetings designed to help young women, ages 13-18, build healthy self-image and commitment to education. Also provided direct oversight of the center’s evening program activities ensuring a safe recreational and educational environment for community residents and program participants.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Social Work Practice I (SW 604)
University of Louisville, Kent School of Social Work

Human Diversity (SW 603)
University of Louisville, Kent School of Social Work

General Studies Orientation (GEN 101)
University of Louisville, College of Arts and Sciences

Social Perspectives on Racism and Ethnic Prejudice in America (SW 523)
University of Kentucky, College of Social Work

Academic Orientation (UK 101)
University of Kentucky, Office of Undergraduate Education

Introduction to Women’s Studies (WS 200)
Bluegrass Community and Technical College

LEADERSHIP

Convener of General Education Co-Curricular Team ~ January 2009 to May 2009
University of Kentucky, Provost’s Office for Undergraduate Education

Chair-Elect, Chair and Past Chair of Advising Network ~ June 2008 to June 2011
University of Kentucky, Provost’s Office for Undergraduate Education

University Retroactive Withdrawal Committee ~ October 2005 to September 2008
University of Kentucky, Office of the Provost

A&S Staff Council ~ September 2003 to August 2005
University of Kentucky, College of Arts and Sciences
**HONORS and AWARDS**

**Conley Award for Gay and Lesbian Research** ~ May 2015  
University of Louisville, Kent School of Social Work

**“Faculty Favorite” Nominee** ~ September 2013  
University of Louisville, Provost’s Office

**Dr. M. Celeste Nichols Professional Development Award** ~ November 2012  
University of Louisville, Women’s Center

**Graduate of SuperVision Supervisory Training Program** ~ June 2009  
University of Kentucky, Office of Training and Development

**Graduate of UK Advance Leadership Development Institute** ~ October 2006  
University of Kentucky, Office of Training and Development

**MANUSCRIPTS IN PROCESS**

Caton, E. Standing in the Intersection: Exploring the lived experience of Black gay college students using Photovoice.


**PRESENTATIONS**

**Council on Social Work Education** - 2014 Annual Program Meeting  
**Presenter:** Building a Gay Affirmative Social Work Practice  

**National Academic Advising Association** - 2013 NACADA Annual Conference  
**Co-Presenter:** Elevating Students of Color Success through Mentoring  
**Topic:** The CONECT peer-mentoring program, how participation influences mentees and mentors, a presentation of study findings.

**National Academic Advising Association** - 2013 NACADA Annual Conference  
**Presenter:** Gay Affirmative Practice in Academic Advising: An Advisor’s Journey  
**Topic:** A discussion of Crisp and McCave’s (2007) gay affirmative practice theory as it relates to the mission and practice of student services and academic advising.
National Academic Advising Association - 2007 NACADA Annual Conference
Poster: Ask Your Advisor…Before You Walk the Plank!
Topic: Live demonstration of a web-based advising Q&A system- the result of collaboration between academic advisors and campus technology specialists.

SERVICE

Pakistani Fulbright University Representative ~ November 2015
University of Kentucky, International Center, Office of International Affairs

First Generation Dinner Keynote Speaker ~ February 2013, 2014 & November 2015
University of Kentucky, College of Arts and Sciences, WIRED Living Learning Community

First Generation Scholarly Community Member ~ September 2010 to May 2011
University of Kentucky, Office of the President

Interracial/Intercultural Marriage Panelist ~ September 2007 & April 2008
University of Kentucky, College of Communications & College of Social Work

University of Kentucky, Office of Undergraduate Education