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Outsiders in the Circle : Examining the Lived Experiences of Gay Afro-Caribbean Male Immigrants Living in the United States

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OUTSIDERS IN THE CIRCLE: EXAMINING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF GAY AFRO-

CARIBBEAN MALE IMMIGRANTS LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES

A DISSERTATION

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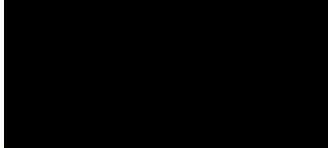Graduate Program: Counseling

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Abstract

OUTSIDERS IN THE CIRCLE: EXAMINING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF GAY AFRO-CARIBBEAN MALE IMMIGRANTS LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES

By Alfonso L. Ferguson

This dissertation presents the findings of a descriptive phenomenological study focused on the intersectional experiences of Afro-Caribbean male immigrants living in the United States who identify as gay, same gender loving, queer, and/or men who sleep with other men. This study also explored the unique experiences of participants' challenges and resilience in the multiple communities to which they belong. Eleven participants who migrated from Anglophone colonized territories in the Caribbean participated in two semi-structured interviews. Data were collected and analyzed using descriptive phenomenology tenets. Findings of this study suggest implications for the counseling profession to better provide culturally responsive services to multiply marginalized communities.

Keywords: Afro-Caribbean, gay, same gender loving, intersectionality, mental health

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family who have loved and supported me unconditionally through all my many endeavors. Most importantly, I am dedicating this dissertation to my husband, Daton, who has been my biggest supporter and cheerleader on this journey. Thank you!

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Immigrants Living in the United States

Chapter One: Introduction

In the last three decades, there has been an increase in the amount research on members

of racial and ethnic minority communities; the importance of multiculturalism; counselor cultural

competence; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) issues (see Cass, 1979;

Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Cross, 1971, 1978; Goldberg & Kuvalanka, 2012; Helms, 1990; Ratts et

al., 2016; Sue et al., 1992; Wolfson, 1994). Despite the increase in research about people from

marginalized communities, there remains little research on the experiences of Afro-Caribbean

immigrants living in the United States (US).

The migration rates of Caribbean (i.e., Afro-Caribbean and Caribbeans of varying racial

heritage) immigrants moving to the US have steadily increased since the 1960s due, in part, to

the ramification of the Immigration Reform Act of 1965 and US companies heavily recruiting

English speaking workers from former British colonies (Thomas, 2012; Zong & Batalova, 2019).

Caribbean people migrating to the US ranged from less than 1 million in the 1960s to

approximately 4.4 million in 2017 (Zong & Batalova, 2019). As migration rates continue to

increase, it is important that counselors, supervisors, and counseling trainees begin to consider

the mental health needs and experiences of this diverse population. Additionally, the current

socio-political climate and current presidential administration's agenda on immigration into the

US further highlights the importance of addressing the needs of this underserved population. As

it appears the current US administration is aggressively managing immigration reform by

suggestions of building a wall, deporting illegal immigrants, and aggressively policing the

immigrant use of public health assistance and access (i.e., public health insurance, housing,

nutrition; Baker, 2019; Gelatt, 2017). The US administrations has also reported viewing the immigrant use of public assistance as a negative factor for immigrants who are applying for legal permanent residency (Baker, 2019; Gelatt, 2017).

Simultaneously, the experiences of African-Americans are often inaccurately viewed as monolithic and inclusive of all Black persons, despite ethnic variations (e.g., Afro-Caribbean, African, Afro-Latinx; Logan, 2007; Waters et al., 2014). The lack of acknowledgment of cultural differences in counseling literature has, in part, resulted in the underrepresentation of Afro-Caribbean immigrants in the US within empirical research, which can contribute to counselors' under-preparedness to work with this unique and growing population (Williams et al., 2007).

Moreover, there is a strong need to develop a greater understanding of the experiences of the LGBTQ community in the Afro-Caribbean immigrant community, particularly gay men. Predictably, the experiences of gay Afro-Caribbean men have been generalized in ways that do not consider their ethnic and cultural differences from gay Black American men in the US (Bowleg, 2013; Hunter, 2010). Researchers have reported that members of marginalized communities, such as LGBTQ persons, are at a higher risk for mental health issues including depression, anxiety, trauma, paranoia, substance abuse, self-injurious behaviors, and suicidality (King et al., 2008; White et al., 2010). Researchers also identified psychosocial stressors (i.e., dysfunctional family relationship, verbal or physical abuse, eviction) as risk factors for mental health issues for LGBTQ persons in the Caribbean islands (White et al., 2010). There are additional risk factors for gay men of color who often navigate the multiple communities they belong to: codeswitching, emotional turmoil, oppression within the community, and isolation (Bowleg, 2013; George et al., 2012; Hunter, 2010).

For this study, interchangeable terms will be used to identify individuals' sexual orientation and ethnic background. For instance, the term gay and same gender loving (SGL) are used interchangeably to identify the target population's sexual orientation. Moreover, individuals are ethnically addressed as Caribbean and West Indian interchangeably. In this chapter, I provide an overview of salient terms related to this study. First, I provide an abbreviated review of existing literature about the experiences of gay, Afro-Caribbean immigrant men in the US. This abbreviated review is organized in three content areas: 1) homosexuality in the Caribbean, 2) gay Afro-Caribbean experiences across the African diaspora, and 3) the Black American (i.e., African-American, Latinx, African) gay experience. Next, I present the problem statement and research question, the significance and purpose of the study, and its theoretical framework. Finally, I briefly present the methodology and methods of this study and provide a chapter summary.

Abridged Literature Review

There are few empirical counseling studies that have documented the experiences of LGBTQ Afro-Caribbean immigrants who originated from Anglophone (i.e., English speaking) colonized countries (see Bowleg, 2013; Calixte, 2005; Couzens et al., 2017; Crichlow, 2004; George et al., 2012; Hunter, 2010; Phillip & Williams, 2013). These countries include, but are not limited to Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, The Bahamas, Saint Lucia, and Grenada. Researchers outside the counseling field (i.e., teaching, sociology, criminology) provided insight about the challenges, trauma, and intersecting identity experiences of LGBTQ Afro-Caribbean immigrants living in Canada and the United Kingdom (UK; Couzens et al., 2017; Crichlow, 2004; George et al., 2012). This study will examine and highlight these various

research study findings to better understand the unique experiences of LGBTQ Afro-Caribbean immigrants.

I critiqued the existing literature in three content areas informing this study. The first area is a historical account of how societal and structural norms have affected LGBTQ people in the Caribbean. This examination included presenting historical and sociopolitical influences that have affected LGBTQ people in the Caribbean, the roles of race and gender influencing attitudes toward members of the LGBTQ community in the Caribbean, and the lived experiences of gay Afro-Caribbean men in their Caribbean countries of origin. The second content area focused on gay Afro-Caribbean peoples' experiences across the African diaspora. This content area highlighted their immigration and acculturation experiences and how they navigate challenges in their sexual and/or romantic orientations across the African diaspora. The last content area focused on the Black gay American experience and examined how it has been inaccurately described as a monolithic experience. This last content area included a presentation of the individual and intersectional nature of having these marginalized identities: race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.

Homosexuality in the Caribbean

There are social constructs and beliefs that reject and/or distance gay Afro-Caribbeans from their sexual identity. As a result of colonialism and Western European influences, there is a strong belief that same-sex attraction is unlawful and incongruent with religious practices in the Caribbean (King, 2006; Lewis & Carr, 2009; White, 2013). Today, many of these Caribbean countries have anti-buggery/anti-sodomy laws that prohibit same-sex male intercourse. Offenses can be punishable of up to 25 years in prison and, in some cases, punishable by death (Crichlow, 2004; Grosclaude, 2014; Haynes-Robinson, 2012; King, 2006; Lewis & Carr, 2009; Maiorana et

al., 2013; White, 2013). Although the laws do not name homosexuality, the gay community is often targeted under anti-sodomy laws in the Caribbean islands (Grosclaude, 2014). Moreover, religious affiliations and rejection of Western European and American culture, in general, continue to be a barrier for Afro-Caribbeans to explore their sexuality freely and openly (King, 2006; Lewis & Carr, 2009; White, 2013). King (2006) conducted a study of 18 participants of which seven male from inner cities and suburban areas of Kingston, Jamaica participated in a focus group. Apart from their residential environments, King did not provide additional demographic information of participants. King's study aimed to explore contributing factors to homophobia in Jamaica. Participants of King's focus group reported their experiences of homophobia in Jamaica. Some participants in King's study reported being prideful in their stance against homosexuality. For example, one participant stated, "Jamaica is known around the world as a very homophobic society, and we take pride in that because it shows that we are not tolerant of things that go against the Bible" (King, 2006, p. 32). King's study participants also shared their perception of homosexuality as a White/western phenomenon and would have been not in existence had Jamaicans not been exposed to Western culture.

In the Caribbean, LGBTQ individuals can experience hardship and trauma because of their sexual identity. The LGBTQ community in the Caribbean regularly receives messages promoting heterosexism in the media, predominantly in the hyper-masculine and homonegative dancehall and reggae music that discourage open expression of their sexuality (Crichlow, 2004; Maiorana et al., 2013; White, 2013). For example, popular dancehall group, T.O.K., released a song called "Chi Chi Man" in 2001. Chi Chi man is a derogatory term for gay in the Caribbean region (Lewis & Carr, 2009). This song encouraged the damnation of gay men by burning, killing, and physically assaulting them because they are suspected to identify as gay and are

gathering in gay affirming spaces (White, 2013). The chorus of the song states, "From dem a par inna chi chi man car/ blaze di fire mek we bun dem! From dem a drink inna chi chi man bar/ blaze the fire mek we dun dem" (White, 2013). These lyrics translate to "because they are together in a gay man's car/ blaze the fire, let's burn them. Because they are drinking in a gay bar/ blaze the fire, let's kill them" (White, 2013, p.15).

Heterosexism is defined as "the acceptance of negative societal, cultural, religious, and familial attitudes and assumptions concerning same-sex attractions" (Szymanski, 2005, p. 75). Gay Afro-Caribbean men are stereotypically depicted as effeminate, weak, and confused in written and in televised media as a form of comedic relief in the Caribbean region (Murray, 2009). This portrayal of gay men as weak serves as the main visible depiction of the gay community, which minimizes the diversity of gay male expression and further oppresses gay Afro-Caribbean males (Murray, 2003). Moreover, the consequences of heterosexist messages received in the media of their home country may result in many gay Afro-Caribbean men experiencing internalized homophobia, self-hatred, mental health challenges, isolations, and promiscuity (Crichlow, 2004; King, 2006; Lewis & Carr, 2009; Maiorana et al., 2013; White, 2013).

O'Donnell, Meyer, and Schwartz (2011) found that Black and Latinx lesbian, gay, and bisexual people were at an increased risk of suicide attempts in comparison to their White, heterosexual counterparts. Researchers have reported increased mental health risk for LGBTQ persons; however, there continues to be scant literature providing clinically sound and culturally responsive mental health services to immigrant gay Afro-Caribbeans (King et al., 2008; O'Donnell et al., 2011; White et al., 2010). A clearer understanding of the historical and mental

health challenges of this population will support counselors in utilizing culturally responsive

mental health treatment and support for their overall wellness.

Gay Afro-Caribbean Experiences Across the African Diaspora

Researchers have studied the experiences of LGBTQ Afro-Caribbeans residing outside

the Caribbean. For example, George et al. (2012) conducted a grounded theory study

documenting the intersectionality of 24 gay, Black, Canadian men as members of the often

separate, but sometimes overlapping, Black and gay communities in Toronto, Canada. Of the 24

participants in George et al.'s study, six were born in the Caribbean. Participants reported how

Black gay men in Toronto defined community and how they navigated their social environments

(George et al., 2012). These descriptions included their intersectional identities of being Black

and gay, attachment to the gay community, and challenges related to their sexual orientation in

broader society and/or ethnic communities (George et al., 2012). The acceptance of participants'

gay identity and connectedness to their ethnic and racial communities varied. For example,

persons who experienced rejection in their country of origin or previous ethnic community may

subsequently demonstrate sexual liberty, gay liberation, and euphoria of living without the threat

of their safety in their new environment (George et al., 2012). The authors failed to report

participants who did not experience rejection in their home country as all participants reported

some hardship due to their sexual orientation in their ethnic communities, home country, and

current country of residence (George et al., 2012).

In a separate study, Crichlow (2004) interviewed 19 men of Afro-Caribbean descent in

the Toronto region who engaged in same-sex sexual relations. Participants of this study

presented with various degrees of outness of their sexual orientation to family members and

friends. The author studied the participants' intersecting experiences of race, nationality, ethnic

identity, and sexuality. Crichlow found that there were many obstacles participants met, including current and past hardship and rejection in their religious, ethnic, racial, and sexual orientation communies. Many expressed challenges in family relationships and in romantic relationships with partners who were culturally or racially different (Crichlow, 2004). Crichlow also highlighted isolative intersectional experiences of the gay Afro-Caribbean in the diaspora, such as feelings of exclusion from multiple groups simultaneously (e.g., gay community, Black community, Canadian community). Calixte (2005) reported potential ways Afro-Caribbeans make meaning of their sexual orientation and sexual relationships, with particular attention to how race and ethnicity uniquely affect the meaning-making process for members of the LGBTQ Afro-Caribbean community. Developing an empirically-driven understanding of the ethnic, racial, acculturative, and emotional challenges experienced by gay Afro-Caribbeans can help effectively prepare counselors, counselor educators, and supervisors to formulate culturally responsive counseling interventions.

The aforementioned studies highlight the need for an increased understanding of Afro-Caribbean gay men's unique experiences across the African diaspora. Although these authors provided insights about the LGBTQ Afro-Caribbean experience in North America and the UK, little research has reported their experiences specifically in the US (Calixte, 2005; Crichlow, 2004; Couzens et al., 2017; George et al., 2012). Phillip and Williams' (2013) conceptual manuscript highlighted the Caribbean immigrant community (i.e., LGBTQ, heterosexual individuals) in the US and their migration experiences, attitudes towards lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) people, and mental health needs. Although Phillip and Williams recognized the increased migration rates of Afro-Caribbeans moving to the US, the authors primarily focused on the general experiences and attitudes towards the LGB subgroup in this community. The authors

further emphasized the need for adequately preparing practitioners to provide sufficient and appropriate psychological interventions for LGB Afro-Caribbean immigrants (Phillip & Williams, 2013). Although researchers have documented the intersectional lived experiences of gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants in the diaspora, to date there is no existing literature specific to our discipline as counselors, counselor educators, and supervisors (Calixte, 2005; Crichlow, 2004; George et al., 2012; Phillip & Williams, 2013).

Black American Gay Experiences

Black gay men's intersecting identities affect how they navigate the various communities to which they belong (Bowleg, 2013; Crenshaw, 1989; Crichlow, 2004; George et al., 2012; Hunter, 2010, Parent et al., 2013). Specifically, Bowleg (2013) and Hunter (2010) focused on the intersecting experiences of Black gay men in the US and how these experiences influenced their racial and sexual identities in their public social identities. Bowleg's participants defined Blackness in the context of being Black in the US, comparatively pointing out that men "born and raised in majority Black regions such as Saharan Africa, the Caribbean or some parts of Latin America, may have a different awareness of Blackness and what it means to identify as Black" (p. 764). Hunter identified patterns of how Black gay men conceptualize their intersecting identities in three ways: interlocking, up-down, and public-private. Interlocking was defined as identities that are united and cannot be separated (i.e., "Blackgay"; Hunter, 2010, p. 85). Up-down was defined as the privilege to choose one identity above the other (e.g., Black first, then gay; Hunter, 2010). Public-private was defined as race being perceived as a public identity while sexuality is a private identity (Hunter, 2010). Hunter's research exemplified the challenges people from multiply marginalized population face when navigating their sexual and racial identities.

Hunter also reported that of the 50 participants, 30% (n=15) identified as Afro-Caribbean, and one was born in a foreign country. This pattern of participant identification is perhaps a microcosm of how Black people are represented in existing literature. That is, despite the shared Black identities of all participants, a substantial amount identified as Afro-Caribbean. Although Bowleg and Hunter reported the various ethnic identities of their participants, they did not expand on how gay Afro-Caribbean male participants reconciled their multiple identities. They did not attend to the ethnic variations of Blackness and, as a result, overlooked how acculturation and immigrant status might affect participants' intersectional experiences. Therefore, this study begins to explore the intersectionality of race, sexuality, and ethnicity amongst Black gay men in order to accurately conceptualize the experiences of this population.

Problem Statement and Research Question

The overgeneralization of gay Afro-Caribbean men in reported literature minimizes how their Caribbean heritage, cultural values, and traditions influence their lived experiences, especially when living in diasporic environments (Bowleg 2013; Hunter, 2010). A monolithic view of Blackness can lead to inadequately treating the unique mental health needs of gay Afro-Caribbean men (Bowleg 2013; Hunter, 2010). Research has been clear about how LGBTQ individuals are at a higher risk for mental health challenges than straight people, and non-White LGBTQ individuals are at even higher risk for similar mental health challenges (King et al., 2008; O'Donnell et al., 2011; White et al., 2010). Moreover, the marginalization that comes as a consequence of their racial, cultural, and ethnic identities, LGBTQ Afro-Caribbean immigrants in the diaspora have an increased chance of experiencing mental health challenges in their lifetime (e.g., depression, suicidality, isolation, posttraumatic stress disorder; Crichlow, 2004; George et al., 2012; O'Donnell et al., 2011; Phillip & Williams, 2013).

In another study, White and colleagues (2010) studied the psychological health and wellbeing of sexual minorities in Jamaica and found that close to one-third of the participants met the criteria for an Axis 1 disorder based on DSM-IV-TR (current iteration at the time of this study), and 85% reported history of some form of abuse because of their sexual orientation. White et al. also highlighted risk factors associated with mental health issues for sexual minorities from some Caribbean islands, such as poor relationships with family, damaging experiences related to sexual orientation (i.e., eviction, verbal or physical abuse), and consequences to their level of openness about sexual orientation (White et al., 2010). Though the authors did not focus on the immigrant Afro-Caribbean men community in the US, counselors, supervisors, and counselor educators are charged to help address mental health needs for members of this population given the growing migration rates of the Caribbean community and documented risks for trauma related to sexual orientation (White et al., 2010; Zong & Batalova, 2019).

The social constructs of masculinity in racial minority communities can also lead to psychological stressors for this population. Researchers have studied the experiences of Black boys and men of color and their relationship with masculinity. Some findings suggested that individuals adhering to rigorous internal and external concepts of masculinity to avoid being labeled as feminine or homosexual may subsequently experience psychological distress due to fear of losing social support and hyper masculine public image (Fields et al., 2015; Plummer, 2013).

Ghabrial's (2017) qualitative study used intersectionality as a framework to study how LGBTQ people of color navigate their multiple marginalized identities. The 11 participants in this study identified with various racial and ethnic heritages, two of whom were of Afro-

Caribbean descent (Ghabrial, 2017). Ghabrial identified four themes among participants: 1) disconnecting from racial and/or ethnic communities due to their sexual orientation, 2) challenges in navigating relationships between marginalized identities, 3) difficulty coming out to family due to homophobia, and 4) experiencing a high level of stress and anxiety. These are important factors for counselors to consider when providing treatment to gay Afro-Caribbean immigrant clients living in the US. Informed by the existing literature and gaps therein, the research question of this qualitative study is: How do Afro-Caribbean immigrant men living in the US who self-identify as gay and/or have sex with men navigate their sexual identity in their various communities?

Significance and Purpose of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. First, the immigrant population in the US continues to grow and this trend is expected to continue. According to the US Population Projection, by 2050 there is expected to be a large increase in the number of people from racial minorities migrating to the US (Ortman & Guarneri, 2009). This experience will change the demographic composition of the US in multiple ways with associated outcomes. For example, the migration increase is expected to reshape the country's size, age structure, growth rate, and racial and ethical composition (Ortman & Guarneri, 2009). Moreover, members of historically marginalized communities, such as the Latinx population, are expected to experience a "majority-minority crossover" (Ortman & Guarneri, 2009, p. 5). Researchers define majority-minority crossover as the experience of the majority group transitioning into the numerical minority, and the minority group becoming the numerical majority (Ortman & Guarneri, 2009).

It is imperative for counselors to be adequately prepared to provide culturally responsive services to people from historically marginalized communities given this predicted demographic

transformation. Although the immigration rates continue to increase, counselors of color continue to make up about 20% of the counseling profession (ACA, 2014; Kreuter et al., 2011; Webb, 2015). In addition, with an influx of people from Caribbean nations migrating to the US (Zong & Batalova, 2019), there is sparse research on the experiences of this population. This study can increase visibility and reinforce a platform for LGBTQ Afro-Caribbean living in the US.

Second, this projected increase of diversity in the US is significant for counselors, counselor educators, and counselors in training. Learning about the gay Afro-Caribbean diasporic experience in the US can adequately prepare counselors in training to effectively serve, advocate for, and support this community. According to the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics (2014), it is imperative for counselors to utilize multicultural competencies and be appropriately equipped to work with diverse and unique populations. Results from this study can provide counselor-trainees and clinicians with an enhanced and more nuanced understanding of the unique experiences of gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants, thereby informing more culturally appropriate counseling practices and interventions. Additionally, this study can be used as a blueprint for studying the experiences of people from multi-marginalized communities and creating culturally appropriate mental health care interventions. This study has the potential to contribute to literature on intersectionality and inform the implementation of multiculturalism and social justice domains in the 2016 Standards for the Council for Accreditation on Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP).

Given the limited amount of research about the lived experiences of gay Afro-Caribbean immigrant men in the US, there are three overarching goals for this study. The first goal is to expand the knowledge base about how members of this population describe unique identity

challenges as they navigate the ethnic, cultural, racial, and sexual orientation communities of which they are members. The second goal is to better understand how their lived experiences influence their mental health. The third goal is to learn how participants identify in public and how they make sense of their intersectional experiences.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

I used queer theory as a theoretical framework and intersectionality as a conceptual framework for this study. Queer theory, a byproduct of feminist theory, started in the mid-1980s and was officially introduced to writers and activists in the early 1990s (Jagose, 2005). Queer theory is rooted in a social constructivist and critical ontological position in order to disrupt and challenge heteronormative structures that oppress members of the LGBTQ community (Butler, 1993). The term queer theory was first introduced by Teresa De Lauretis (1991). Moreover, De Lauretis created a rubric to use queer theory appropriately and effectively. The rubric identified three main functions of queer theory: 1) challenging heterosexuality as a standard for sexuality formation, 2) rejecting beliefs that lesbian and gay studies are a single entity, and 3) focusing on the ways that race affects sexual bias (De Lauretis, 1991). In this study, queer theory can be defined as the exploration of the oppressive power of dominant heterosexual norms that directly and indirectly marginalize the experiences of LGBTQ people (Butler, 1993). One of the main goals of queer theory is to challenge heteronormativity and/or rules that suggest sexual identities outside of heterosexuality are wrong or less than (Butler, 1993; Jagose, 2005).

I used an intersectionality conceptual framework to guide the research process (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Intersectionality is a concept derived from Black feminist theory that acknowledges how women of color and other people are oppressed based on the intersection of their race, sexuality, gender, and class (Crenshaw, 1989; Hunter, 2010; Parent et al., 2013).

Historically, intersectionality was created to provide a theoretical framework and political platform to better examine and understand the complexity of race and gender as social constructs for marginalized women of color (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Nash, 2008). In this study, I used intersectionality as a framework to study the unique impact of participants' multiple identities given the frequent citations in past studies about Black LGBTQ experiences. Similar to Cheshire (2013), I propose the benefits for counselors and counselor educators to adopt core tenets of intersectionality when working with gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrant clients.

Methodology and Methods

This study used a qualitative, phenomenological design. Qualitative research studies aim to provide an in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon or experience that offers insight and awareness (Creswell, 2007; Morrow, 2007; Polkinghorne, 2005). Phenomenological studies focus on the lived experiences of members of a population in an effort to capture and describe the essence of an experience (Creswell, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015 Morrow, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 2005). Specifically, this study was conducted using a descriptive phenomenology research design. This goal was accomplished, in part, by employing data collection methods such as conducting semi-structured, in-depth interviews with participants and analyzing artifacts (e.g., journals, newspaper articles, blogs; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Seidman, 2013). In alignment with the goals of phenomenological interviewing, this study used qualitative methods to examine gay, Afro-Caribbean men experiences with race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender in the US.

Researcher Stance

As a self-identified member of this community, I am obligated to be cognizant of my positionality when conducting research with this population (Berger; 2015; Suzuki et al., 2007).

As a gay Afro-Caribbean immigrant native to Jamaica, I have had my own unique experiences of navigating my sexual orientation with in my racial and ethnic communities. My personal experiences living in the US has influenced my interest in researching the lived experiences of gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants in the US. According to Morrow (2007), qualitative researchers are required to identify their worldviews and biases as they position themselves as researchers. To intentionally monitor and manage researcher bias, I used strategies such as member checking with participants, as well as writing check ins with a critical friends group, my dissertation committee, and a research mentor.

Data Collection

Three forms of purposeful sampling were used to recruit and select participants for this study: criterion sampling, snowball sampling, and stratified sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Palinkas et al., 2015). Criterion sampling involves selecting participants who meet specific criteria to engage in the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Palinkas et al., 2015). Snowball sampling is the practice of relying on study participants to refer others who meet the study criteria (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In addition, stratified sampling, or intentionally diversifying the sample, was utilized in this study (Palinkas et al., 2015). Eligibility criteria for participants in the study included self-identified Afro-Caribbean, adult cisgender men (i.e., 18 years old and older) and have been born in an Anglophone-colonized island in the Caribbean (e.g., Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, The Bahamas, St. Lucia, Grenada). In addition, participants are required to have lived in the Caribbean for at least 7-10 cumulative years during their formative development stages (i.e., birth to 16 years old) and lived in the US for the last five years. The participants must also report to have romantic and/or sexual attraction to the same sex/gender and must self-identify as men who sleep with men (MSM), gay, same-gender loving,

and/or queer. Upon Institutional Review Board approval, participants were recruited through community support agencies, online blogs, email listservs, and social media outlets (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).

Data collection took place with participants engaging in two semi-structured interviews; interviews were conducted in-person or with web-conferencing technology (e.g., Skype, Google Meet, Zoom; Creswell, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The first interview included open-ended questions focusing on the participants' intersectional experiences as gay Afro-Caribbean immigrants in the US (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The second interview served as a member checking interview to thoroughly examine the accuracy of the content captured in the initial interview and an opportunity to provide additional information (Birt et al., 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Young, 2017).

Data Analysis

Qualitative research methodologists have identified four key steps of analyzing data in phenomenological studies, including bracketing (i.e., epoche), phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis (Hays & Wood, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). However, in descriptive phenomenological studies the data analysis process focuses on 1) identifying significant statements and phrases from the transcript, 2) formulating meanings, 3) categorizing clusters and themes, 4) exhaustive descriptions of the phenomenon, 5) fundamental structure, and 6) returning to participants to validate the exhaustive descriptions and fundamental structures (Shosha,2012). Bracketing remains constant in any phenomenological process. I effectively integrated general phenomenological and specific descriptive phenomenological data analysis methods to extrapolate rich descriptive data of participants' experiences.

Bracketing is defined as the act of setting aside biases and preconceived judgment about a phenomenon or participant to leave the data pure and untainted (Moustakas, 1994; Young, 2017). Bracketing was done through journaling before and throughout study (Moustakas, 1994; Young, 2017). Phenomenological reduction was used to analyze and understand what the participants have experienced. The phenomenological reduction process is accomplished through the first three steps of the descriptive phenomenological data analysis process (i.e., identifying significant statements and phrases, formulating meaning, and categorizing clusters and themes; Shosha, 2012) via open coding. Open coding is defined as reducing data to meaning units that may be compared to identify similarities and distinct differences (Saldaña, 2016). I read each transcript and attached preliminary meaning to significant participant statements.

The process of imaginative variation was used to re-examine data collected to gain insight on variations of the phenomenon that may be present (Moustakas, 1994; Turley et al., 2016). Imaginative variation was achieved through the review of all preliminary codes for accurate meaning and context (i.e., chunking, splitting; Saldaña, 2016). The goal of this step was to capture the essence of the participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994) and gain an exhaustive description of the phenomenon (Shosha, 2012) and fundamental structure. The final stage, synthesis, is the act of examining the essence of participants' experiences through the various stages of descriptive phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994; Shosha,2012). To accomplish the final phase of data analysis, I curated the fundamental structure and sought validation from participants to ensure accurate depiction of the data collected.

Trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is defined as a set of various strategies that establish credibility or validity in a qualitative study (Morrow, 2005). Trustworthiness strategies employed to assist in data analysis included manual coding and using computer data analysis software (i.e.,

NVivo) to assist in the organization, analysis, and management of the collected data

(Castleberry, 2014). NVivo was used in the initial coding and throughout the coding process.

Other strategies included member checking and utilizing critical friends. Member checking, also

known as participant validation, is defined as an ongoing consultation with participants and was

used to ensure the accuracy of the findings and interpretations of the data (Birt et al., 2016;

Young, 2017). A critical friend is defined as an individual that can challenge and support the

researcher through consultation (Handal, 1999; Storey & Wang, 2017).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I provided an overview of the research study. This chapter included an

abridged literature review that focused on three content areas: homosexuality in the

Caribbean; gay Afro-Caribbean experiences across the African diaspora; and Black

American gay experiences. I also provided a rationale to address a gap in research about

gay, Afro-Caribbean immigrants to the US through this study by introducing the problem

statement, a research question, and the significance and the purpose of the study. I

introduced queer theory and intersectionality as theoretical and conceptual frameworks to

attempt to answer the study's research question. Lastly, I presented the research

methodological design and research methods which included recruitment, data collection,

and data analysis methods. In chapter two, I provided an in-depth exploration of current

literature on this research topic, including the historical experiences of gay Afro-Caribbean

men in the Caribbean region and in the US.

Definition of Terms in Study

Affectional Orientation: Can be used both alternative to and concurrently with sexual orientation. It is defined by an individual's predisposition to fall in love with someone whether or not they desire them sexually.

Anti-buggery: A law dating back to the European colonial period outlawing sodomy and still used as the legal basis for discrimination and criminalization of homosexual men in various British colonized territories (Kirby, 2011; White, 2013).

Anti-man: The opposite of a "real" man. The term is used offensively to designate an effeminate male and is often used in the Guyanese community (Plummer, 2013).

Batty-boy/Batty-man: A derogatory term in the West Indies that refers to same-sex partners who are the receptive partners during intercourse (Crichlow, 2004).

Bullers: A derogatory term to identify a gay male in the West Indies (Crichlow, 2004; Maiorana et al., 2013)

Chi-chi-man: A Jamaican derogatory Creole term for being gay. This term originated in the Caribbean dancehall culture in the early 2000s (Lewis & Carr, 2009).

Code-switching: The ability to strategically downplay or play up an identity when around opposing and/or similar identities (Hunter, 2010).

Colorism: The intentional positive or negative treatment of someone of African descent due to the amount of pigmentation (i.e., melanin) in their skin (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2014).

Gay: A self-identified male who forms romantic and sexual relationships primarily with other male-identified people.

Homosexual: The sexual attraction to someone of the same-sex. Homosexuality is a term that was introduced in the 1860s by Hungarian Karl Maria Benkert and later introduced into the English language during the 1890s by Havelock Ellis (Grosclaude, 2014).

Homonegative: The description of a negative attitude or behavior toward gay people.

Homopredjudice: Occurs when one is discriminated against because of their identity as a sexual minority (Logan, 1996).

Intersectionality: The interconnection of belonging to multiple marginalized identities (i.e., race, ethnicity, gender, ability, socioeconomic status, class, sexual orientation). The term was coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989.

Queer: An umbrella identity term used by people who do not conform to norms of heterosexuality and/or the gender binary. A reclaimed slur often used with a political connotation.

Same-gender loving: "People with same-sex attraction and sexual behaviors in the African-American community culture" (Lassiter, 2014, p.179).

Sexual minority: An individual who identifies as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered (Van Den Bergh & Crisp, 2004).

West Indies: A large group of islands between southeast North America and Northern South America, separating the Caribbean Sea from the Atlantic Ocean and including the Greater Antilles, the Lesser Antilles, and the Bahama Islands.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter I will provide an in-depth literature review of research that explores various facets of the gay Afro-Caribbean immigrant experience in the US and the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study. I will present and constructively critique research on the following topics in this literature review: historical trends and experiences of same-gender loving people in Anglophone-colonized territories, contemporary research on same-gender loving people in the Caribbean, research about the gay experience in the US, and mental health and counseling implications for gay Afro-Caribbean immigrants. Specifically, I will offer some historical events that have influenced homonegative attitudes in the Caribbean. I will also present research describing how SGL men navigate their intersecting oppressed identities in the Caribbean and the US, challenges and resilience of gay Afro-Caribbean men in the US, and mental health implications for working with this population to ensure they receive culturally-sensitive counseling support.

The terms Caribbean and West Indies are used interchangeably to describe the experiences of the study population in this literature review. The term Caribbean references both the regional location and ethnic identity of the population. The term West Indies indicates the geographical location of the population and West Indian describes the people. In addition, the term SGL was used in place of homosexual. SGL is a culturally-affirming term used to adequately "describe people with same-sex attraction and sexual behaviors in the African American community" (Lassiter, 2014, p. 179). In this study, SGL is modified to culturally affirm all individuals of African descent with same-sex attraction and sexual behaviors.

Historical Research Trends about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer

Individuals

Research on the LGBTQ experience in the US has shifted over the last few decades from the stigmatization and conceptualization of the community to primarily focusing on marriage equality, same-gender adoption, and the nature-versus-nurture argument of sexual orientation development (Goldberg & Kuvalanka, 2012; Wolfson, 1994). Prior to the early 1970s, research on the LGBTQ community described homosexuality as a deviant behavior. Research on homosexuality evolved to focus more on sexual identity development, as well as being viewed as a social role rather than a deviant behavior (Cass, 1979; McIntosh, 1968). Moreover, homosexuality met the criteria for mental illness in the first and second editions of *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders* (*DSM*; Boehmer, 2002). According to Stoller et al. (1973) to properly diagnose an individual the following should be present: syndrome, psychodynamics, and etiology. Researchers argued that homosexuality does not meet the criteria for a diagnosable illness for reasons including "1) there is only a sexual preference, 2) different people with their sexual preference have different psychodynamics underlying their sexual behavior, and 3) different life experiences can cause these dynamics and behaviors" (Stoller et al., 1973, p. 1207). The homosexuality mental illness diagnosis was removed from the third edition of the *DSM* in 1974 (American Psychiatric Association, 1980; Boehmer, 2002).

In the 1980s, much of the research on the LGBTQ community focused on the human immunodeficiency virus infection and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) epidemic by examining risk factors for contracting the disease amongst gay men (Boehmer, 2002). During this time, studies about homosexuality shifted from the psychiatric branch to

being heavily researched within the medical research community (Boehmer, 2002; University of California, 1987).

In the 1990s, some research emerged that focused on risk factors for lesbian women developing breast cancer in comparison to their heterosexual counterparts (Boehmer, 2002). Further, much of the LGBTQ empirical research primarily sampled White gay American men who were affected by HIV/AIDS (Boehmer, 2002). As an indirect result of Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis' (1992) call for cultural diversity and attention to racism in the counseling profession, counseling and allied mental health researchers became more focused on the unique needs of LGBTQ people of color (POC) and how their experiences may or may not differ from the LGBTQ White people (Bowleg, 2013; Ghabrial, 2017; Howard, 2019; Hunter, 2010; Mosley et al., 2019). While there is more research about the experiences and issues of LGBTQ-POC in the US specifically a growing interest in the experiences of gay men of color, there is little empirical research that specifically examines how LGBTQ Afro-Caribbeans in the US navigate their multiple identities (i.e., Black, Caribbean, SGL, immigrant; Bowleg, 2013; Hunter, 2012). Gay, Afro-Caribbean male immigrants have been grossly underrepresented in existing literature.

SGL People in Anglophone-Colonized Territories

The Parliament of England initiated The Buggery Act of 1533, one of the first laws to ban anal penetration with a man's penis, which some interpreted as same-sex intimacy (Grosclaude, 2014). Buggery is defined as anal intercourse or bestiality (White, 2013), which offers insight about how anal intercourse between people was synonymized with bestiality, or sex between people and animals. The act was categorized as criminally deviant, and throughout history sodomy has been treated as treasonous, sinful, or as a symptom of mental illness (Grosclaude, 2014). The policing of sodomy was originally managed by the ecclesiastical courts,

or, the courts of Christians. The ecclesiastical courts held jurisdiction over religious and spiritual

matters in Europe during the Middle Ages (Johnson, 2018). Once the church and English

Parliament separated there was a shift in power and duties (Johnson, 2018).

The Buggery Act of 1533 stated that if an individual was convicted of buggery they

would be sentenced to death (Grosclaude, 2014; Kirby, 2011). Grosclaude (2014) argued that

historically, even though homosexuality was never categorized as a criminal offense in the

United Kingdom (UK) or in any of its colonies, the act of sodomy/buggery was categorized as

criminal. This act was enforced for centuries, with the last recorded execution in England in

1837 (Kirby, 2011). Only in 2012 did the UK ban all anti-gay discrimination laws and enforced

the European Union law to protect all from discrimination, specifically sexual orientation

discrimination (Grosclaude, 2014; White, 2013). However, many Anglophone-colonized

territories continue to uphold anti-buggery laws, making same-sex relations illegal (White,

2013).

The Caribbean region had a unique view on SGL relationships prior to the invasion of the

British Empire. Before being colonized by the Spanish, French, and British Empires, the West

Indies were home to the Taino Indians, a subgroup of the Arawakan Indians. Researchers have

indicated that the Taino Indians viewed gender as fluid and equal, and engaged in polygamous

and SGL relationships (Haynes-Robinson, 2012). After the Spanish invasion of 1492,

Christopher Columbus's doctor, Alvarez Chance, noted in 1495 that the Taino Indians were

"normalizing the rape of men by men, which lead to transsexualism (individuals who identified

as transgendered or two spirited)" (Haynes-Robinson, 2012, p. 363). Consequently, many foreign

colonizers murdered, raped, and starved the Taino Indians to enact colonization and cultural

hegemony. While polygamy was outlawed in Spanish-colonized territories, there was an

emergence of gay and bisexual people (Haynes-Robinson, 2012). By the 1600s, sexual relations

between same-gender individuals were documented in territories such as Santo Domingo,

Dominican Republic (Haynes-Robinson, 2012). These relationships, however, were often kept

secret due to homonegative societal views.

Furthermore, the British invasion in the early 1600s changed the course of sexual

behaviors among West Indians with the emergence of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The slave

trade introduced laws that prohibited certain sexual behaviors between people of the same sex.

The slave trade also introduced privilege and power based on race. For example, slave owners

and overseers had freedom of sexual expression while slaves were expected to only engage in

heterosexual intercourse for the purpose of reproduction. Black male slaves were often

objectified and described as "well-endowed" and "sexually voracious" (i.e., excited and heavily

interested in sexual intercourse; Haynes-Robinson, 2012, p. 367).

The British Empire also instituted their historical perspectives on same-sex romantic

relations. The historical views of the British Empire on same-sex attraction were influenced by

power and privilege, and these ideologies are still prevalent today (Beckles, 2004; King, 2006;

LaFont, 2001). People with power and privilege can choose to have sexual relations with

whomever they want (King, 2006). One frequent example was slave owners using sex to exercise

their power over slaves (King, 2006; LaFont, 2001). While the research of Haynes-Robinson

(2012) provided a detailed review of the British influence on homoprejudicial attitudes in the

Caribbean, there is little that documents the sexual exploitation of male slaves. For example,

slave owners often sexually objectified slaves by raping and impregnating female slaves and

sexually assaulting male slaves (Beckles, 2004; King, 2006). Specifically, when these acts were

done to men, it was intended to emasculate and humiliate them in front of their communities,

further establishing subordination. The act of slave masters raping male slaves is colloquially

known as buck breaking (see Francis, 2019; Johnson, 2018). Researchers have suggested that

this act was heavily prevalent in the West Indies (Beckles, 2004; King, 2006). Lynch's 1712

letter compared emasculating the Black male slave to that of breaking in a horse (i.e., training a

horse to be obedient; Lynch, 2009). Lynch's letter proposed to other slave owners how to break

and emasculate Black slaves to ensure that they did not resist or rebel (Lynch, 2009). Although

the authenticity of Lynch's 1712 letter has been challenged by scholars, it is evident that the

tradition of White slave masters physically and verbally assault Black male slaves in the attempt

to break them is evident throughout history (Foster, 2011).

The abolition of slavery in many Anglophone colonies in the West Indies required former

Black slaves to create an identity separate from their White counterparts. One way Black slaves

reformed their identities was through their morality and sexuality. Haynes-Robinson (2012) and

LaFont (2001) suggested that former slaves made efforts to distance themselves from behaviors

associated with slave owners, including the rejection of same-sex relations. Consequently, many

Caribbean countries view homosexuality as a Western imposition of values inflicted on Black

people during slavery, serving as a reminder of the servitude and sexual exploitation people

endured during this time (King, 2006). The British government ordered the decriminalization of

homosexual or SGL acts done in private between consenting adults in 2001 for the following

five territories: Anguilla, the Cayman Islands, the British Virgin Islands, Montserrat, and Turks

and Caicos. Other islands including Jamaica, St. Lucia, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana,

The Bahamas, and Grenada upheld their anti-buggery laws (Crichlow, 2004; Haynes-Robinson,

2012; White, 2013). The combination of the historical British views on sexuality, the Buggery

Act of 1533, and sexually violent abuse associated with the institution of slavery have all

contributed to the normalization of homonegativity and prejudice towards sexual minorities that persists today. What follows is a presentation and critique of research about the lived experiences of SGL individuals from Anglophone-colonized territories in the Caribbean, offering insight about how the formative experiences of members of this population influence the navigation of their sexual identities in the African diaspora, specifically the US.

Contemporary Research on SGL People in the Caribbean

About 20% of the 35 million people living in the Caribbean region self-identify as non-heterosexual (McDonald, 2012). For SGL individuals in the Caribbean, there are social constructs and beliefs that pathologize their affectional orientation, influencing their experiences with strangers, family, and friends (Crichlow, 2004; King, 2006; Lewis & Carr, 2009; White, 2012). Homoprejudice occurs in many parts of the world, particularly in the Caribbean and other predominantly Black populated regions (White, 2012). Homoprejudice can be described as the discrimination against individuals because of their sexual minority identity (Logan, 1996). For example, there are longstanding laws that prohibit citizens from freely expressing their same-sex attraction or orientation in the Caribbean (Crichlow, 2004; Haynes-Robinson, 2012; White, 2013), many of which are Anglophone-colonized territories once subjugated by the British empire. These countries include Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, the British Virgin Islands, the Bahamas, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago (Crichlow, 2004; White, 2013). In many cases, SGL individuals in the Caribbean are subjected to verbal and nonverbal stigmatization, discrimination, physical harassment, abandonment, and isolation (Bourne et al., 2012). Much of the contemporary research about SGL people in the Caribbean addresses how they live and make meaning while being subjected to various forms of intolerance. The research

can be grouped in four overarching themes: legislation, religion, various forms of entertainment, and socio-economic status and colorism (Bourne et al., 2012; Couzens et al., 2017; King, 2006; Lewis & Carr, 2009; White, 2013). This section of the chapter presents different areas researchers have identified as resistance to SGL people in the Caribbean and in the Caribbean diaspora.

King's (2006) qualitative study on the racialization of homophobia in Jamaica included 18 participants. Of those participants seven males engaged in a subsequent focus group. The author used purposeful and snowball samplings to intentionally recruit participants from various communities in Jamaica. King interviewed participants from uptown and downtown communities, students, religious figures, and vendors at a major market. King's study serves as a landmark for this literature review because she reported four overarching themes as contributing factors of homonegativity in the Caribbean. King also identified five areas of belief that continue to promote the resistance to SGL people in Jamaica: the impact of slavery, Western influence, media, religion, and social class. One major limitation in this study was time. The author spent only five weeks with participants in Jamaica, but encouraged the community to invest more research into understanding how historical systems of domination have informed and influenced contemporary gender constructs and expectations for men and women of African descent (King, 2006).

Legislation

In many Anglophone-colonized Caribbean islands, legislation serves as a major catalyst for resistance to SGL individuals with the endorsement of anti-sodomy laws prohibiting same-sex relationships (King, 2006; Lewis & Carr, 2009; Maiorana et al., 2013; White, 2013). Today, many Caribbean countries continue to have anti-buggery and anti-sodomy laws punishable by up

to 25 years in prison (Crichlow, 2004; Haynes-Robinson, 2012; White, 2013). For example, Jamaica's anti-sodomy law states, "anyone who participates in buggery acts (i.e., anal intercourse) in public or private will be punishable by hard labor or imprisonment for up to 10 years" (White, 2013, p. 5). Although the language of the law does not name homosexuality, gay, or SGL relationships, the gay community is often targeted under anti-buggery laws in the Caribbean. Moreover, because anti-buggery laws still exist, there are no anti-discrimination laws in the Caribbean that protect SGL citizens from overt or covert homonegativity. It is evident that legislation in Anglophone-colonized territories in the Caribbean directly encourages many to resist against equality and acceptance of SGL individuals.

Although the SGL community in the Caribbean experiences hardships and stressors (King, 2006; Lewis & Carr, 2009; Maiorana et al., 2013; White, 2013), there continues to be resilience and progression through advocacy against homonegative laws. For example, organizations such as Equality JA, formerly known as Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All sexuals, and Gays (J-FLAG), a human rights and social justice organization, have served as advocates for the Caribbean LGBTQ community in Jamaica since 1998 (J-FLAG, n.d.). Organizations such as the Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality Incorporated (ECADE), Caribbean HIV AIDS Partnership (CHAP), and CariFLAG are doing similar work on other islands in the Caribbean (Eastern Caribbean Equality, n.d.). Through advocacy, progress towards equity has been made, such as the recent legislative changes in Trinidad and Tobago. On April 12, 2018, the high courts of Trinidad and Tobago ruled some sections of the anti-buggery laws as unconstitutional (Loutoo, 2018). The judge stated, "This law goes against basic human rights of any citizen and freedom of privacy and family life" (Loutoo, 2018, p. 1). Although this law has not been removed from the constitution, it is a testament to the resilience and advocacy of the

gay community in the Caribbean and progress toward equity. Despite this advancement in

legislation in one area of the Caribbean there continues to be a need for progression on other

islands.

Religion

Religion and religious institutions have also been identified as a significant barrier to

equality for SGL individuals in the Caribbean (King, 2006; Lewis & Carr, 2009; White, 2013).

About 90% of residents in Jamaica identify as Christian, while the remaining population identify

as Rastafarian, Catholic, Jewish, and Hindu (King, 2006). Jamaican citizens have reported pride

in their country being recognized globally as "a very homophobic society" (King, 2006, p. 32).

The aforementioned attitude reinforces that the "country [of Jamaica] has morals and would not

tolerate things that go against the Bible" (King, 2006, p. 33).

In alignment with King's findings, Bourne et al. (2012) conducted an ethnographic study

of 23 men living in Jamaica who self-identify as men who sleep with men to identify stigma and

discrimination they experienced. Bourne et al. also identified religious spaces as one of the

environments where homonegative experiences occurred the most. Participants of this study

reported that church stigma and subsequent discrimination were demonstrated through the

shunning of SGL individuals by congregants and religious leaders as well as the doctrine

preached (Bourne et al., 2012). One participant reported overhearing the minister telling a church

member, "I can't imagine if a man in my congregation asked me for couples' counseling and

turned up with another man. If that ever happened what I would do, would certainly send me to

jail." (Bourne et al., 2012, p. 23). The minister's comment further illustrates the deep-rooted

resistance to SGL individuals in religious communities in the Caribbean, specifically Jamaica.

Media

Media is another major influence of Caribbean views against SGL individuals. King's study focus group with seven Jamaican participants reported a strong resistance to the LGBTQ community due to their beliefs that Western culture (i.e., televised gay-affirming programs) has influenced the Jamaican population. This cultural resistance to homosexuality has also influenced popular music in the Caribbean such as reggae and dancehall. As a result, popular reggae and dancehall artists have created and made popular anti-gay lyrics, also referred to as "murder music," which encourages the physical assault and murder of LGBTQ individuals (King, 2006; Lewis & Carr, 2009; Maiorana et al., 2013; White, 2013).

Murder music promotes the physical harm of another human being because of their sexual orientation (Nelson, 2011; McIntosh, 2017). Dancehall artists such as Elephant Man, Beenie Man, T.O.K., Buju Banton, Sizzla, and Vybz Kartel are some of the world's most famous dancehall artists who have recorded murder music, using their platform to promote homonegativity (McIntosh, 2017; Nelson, 2011). For example, T.O.K. released the song "Chi Chi Man" in 2011; this anti-gay song celebrates the damnation of gay men by burning, killing, and physically assaulting them because they identify as gay and are gathering in affirming spaces (McIntosh, 2017; White, 2013). Moreover, world-renowned dancehall artist Buju Banton's famous song "Boom Bye Bye" continues to be one of his highest selling and most frequently played records. This song also fits the criteria of anti-gay dancehall murder music as it promotes the harm and hatred toward gay men in the Caribbean. The chorus of "Boom Bye Bye" states, "Boom bye bye in / in a batty bwoy head/ rude bwoy no promote no nasty man/ dem haffi dead" (Nelson, 2011). The lyrics translate to "Boom (the sound of a gunshot) bye bye/ in a gay man's head/ macho will not promote a nasty man (gay)/ they must die" (Nelson, 2011). Other artists,

such as Bennie Man and Elephant Man, have used anti-gay lyrics in their music to enhance their

platform as international dancehall artists. For instance, Beenie Man's song "Damn" includes

lyrics that state, "I am thinking of a new Jamaica, come to execute all of the gays" (Faber, 2019).

Thus, homonegativity in the Caribbean continues to be encouraged in multiple ways.

A major ramification of murder music is that it continues to perpetuate a narrative that

the lives of SGL individuals are dispensable, worthy of being murdered, and should be seen as

the lowest grade of human. Murder music and the marginalization of SGL individuals in the

media contributes to the larger culture of violence against this population. In recent years,

Equality JA along with other international organizations, have started the Stop Murder Music

campaign to which artists such as Beenie Man, Sizzla, and Capleton have signed the Compassion

Act to refrain from using homonegative lyrics. Though global efforts have drastically reduced

the production of murder music, for many LGBTQ individuals there are lasting memories of

isolation and damnation that continue to affect their emotional and social wellbeing (McIntosh,

2017). Some SGL Caribbean individuals have also reported a continuation of listening to murder

music as a way to reclaim the music and construct their identities as queer and Caribbean (Faber,

2019).

Social Class and Colorism

Researchers have also expressed a difference in tolerance levels of SGL individuals in the

Caribbean based on their socioeconomic class and race (Couzens et al., 2017; King, 2006; Lewis

& Carr, 2009; Maiorana et al., 2013). Couzens et al. studied how color and regional location

influences acceptance of SGL relationships in St. Lucia and found that colorism and

socioeconomic classism are two specific forms of discrimination against the SGL community

there. Colorism is the intentional positive or negative treatment of someone of African descent

due to the amount of pigmentation (i.e., melanin) in their skin (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2014). The participants reported higher levels of tolerance for and lower levels of homophobia against lighter skinned versus darker skinned SGL people (Couzens et al., 2017).

The authors also acknowledged how racial segregation on the island was a predictor of educational attainment and employment privilege (Couzens et al., 2017). Many White and light skinned St. Lucians resided in the northern region of the island and were generally more formally educated and had better employment opportunities than darker skinned St. Lucians, who primarily resided in the southern region. Consequently, participants reported that there is significantly more acceptance and tolerance of SGL relationships in the northern region as opposed to the south (Couzens et al., 2017). Couzens et al.'s findings with St. Lucians aligned with King's findings with participants in Jamaica regarding tolerance levels between uptown gays (i.e., suburban, higher social class, educational privilege, employment privilege) and downtown gays (i.e., urban community, lower socioeconomic status). King also found that the uptown gays also experienced a higher level of tolerance and acceptance of their affectional orientation. On the contrary, downtown gays experienced lower tolerance and were more susceptible to verbal and physical assaults (King, 2006). Researchers suggest that this acceptance of homosexuality based on social class is consistent throughout the Caribbean as it is apparent on multiple islands (Couzens et al., 2017; King, 2006).

Migration of West Indians to the US

According to Zong and Batalova (2016), about four million immigrants migrated from the Caribbean to the US in 2014. People migrate to the US for various reasons including employment opportunities, new beginnings, and political reasons such as seeking asylum (George et al., 2012; Logan, 2007; Zong & Batalova, 2016). Black West Indian immigrants, also

referred to as Afro-Caribbeans, make up the largest subgroup of the Black immigrant population in the US (Phillip & Williams, 2013). Although Afro-Caribbean immigrant communities and African Americans share many similarities (e.g., race, physical features, language), their ethnic, immigration, and acculturation differences are often overlooked in society and in research. This lack of acknowledgment of cultural differences often results in the underrepresentation in empirical research of the Afro-Caribbean immigrant community, which further leads to clinicians being unprepared to work with this unique population (Williams et al., 2007).

Although the Afro-Caribbean immigrant population often faces hardship, some researchers have identified areas in which they are resilient within the Black community in the US (Logan, 2007). For example, Afro-Caribbean are assumed to be more effective employees with better work ethics (Logan, 2007; Thornton et al., 2013). For many Afro-Caribbeans, while they may feel successful as an ethnic community, they also have feelings of failure as Black persons due to feeling disconnected from the African-American community (Logan, 2007). As a result, Afro-Caribbeans in the US continue to battle with feelings of not belonging in society because they are praised by their White counterparts for their hard work and drive while continuing to experience racism, segregation, and discrimination (Logan, 2007; Thornton et al., 2013). There is little empirical research on this population, which may suggest that Afro-Caribbeans are continuously overlooked.

Gay Experience in the US

Like many other countries in the world, the US has enacted discrimination and oppression against sexual minorities that has resulted in both trauma and resilience. Research on the LGBTQ experience in the US has shifted over the last few decades. In the early parts of the 19th century, homosexuality was not accepted and was categorized as sexually deviant and a

mental illness (American Psychiatric Association, 1980; Boehmer, 2002). Same-gender loving individuals in the US during this time had similar experiences to those living in the Caribbean today (i.e., hardships, discrimination, oppression; Crichlow, 2004; King, 2006; White, 2012).

As the society in the US gained a greater understanding of homosexuality, researchers shifted their focus from understanding this identity as deviant and being mentally ill to more affirming and inclusive foci such as same-gender adoption, marriage equality, and sexual orientation development (Goldberg & Kuvalanka, 2012; Wolfson, 1994). According to Goo (2013) support for gay people has been gradually growing. Between 2003 and 2013 14% of all Americans changed their mind in support of gay marriage and rights. In addition, the Pew Research Center (2013) reported that 92% of LGBT adults reported that society has become more accepting of the community in comparison to past decades.

Furthermore, the mental health community has evolved in their conceptualization of same-sex attraction as it is no longer considered deviant (i.e., mental illness) and there has been a decrease in corrective forms of therapy, such as conversion therapy. Since 2013, there has been a steady increase of state-wide bans of conversion therapy (Movement Advanced Project, 2019). There are 18 states to date that have banned conversion therapy for minors. However, it is noteworthy that existing bans cover approximately 44% of all LGBTQ persons; hence, approximately 56% of LGBTQ persons live in states where conversion therapy for minors is legal (Movement Advanced Project, 2019).

Black Gay Experience

Though there have been some improvements in the acceptance of gay and SGL individuals in the US, LGBTQ-POC still experience intolerance and marginalization in ways their White counterparts do not. Black SGL individuals in the US are subjected to similar issues

as those living in the Caribbean, such as affectional orientation-based discrimination and resistance from both racial and religious communities (Crichlow, 2004; King, 2006).

One of the major difference between Black SGL individuals living in the Caribbean versus those living in the US is anti-discrimination laws that support and protect marginalized groups. In the US, there are no federal laws protecting SGL individuals against discrimination, but as of May 17, 2019, the Equality Act was passed by the US House of Representatives and was received by the US Senate for review (Edmondson, 2019). The Equality Act bill add to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (i.e., the prohibition of discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin; U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.) by prohibiting discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, childbirth, and sex-based stereotypes. Despite the movement for extended protections for SGL people, only 48% of the LGBTQ population in the US live in a state with laws that prohibit employment discrimination based on affectional orientation and gender identity (Movement Advancement Project, 2019). The passing of the Equality Act serves as a pivotal moment for LGBTQ rights in the US and would protect millions of LGBTQ individuals, especially those living in states that do not have LGBTQ anti-discrimination laws.

Ghabrial's (2017) qualitative study examined how LGBTQ-POC navigated their multiple identities in their various environments. The author interviewed 11 LGBTQ-POC participants, two of whom identified as being of Afro-Caribbean descent (Ghabrial, 2017). The racial and ethnic identities of the other participants in Ghabrial's study varied from mixed-race, Latin, and Asian descent. Ghabrial identified themes describing how participants navigated their multiple marginalized identities: 1) disconnecting from racial and/or ethnic communities due to their sexual orientation, 2) challenges in navigating relationships between marginalized identities, 3)

difficulty coming out to family due to homophobia, and 4) experiencing a high level of stress and anxiety. Although some themes may apply to LGBTQ persons of any race, themes one and two specifically captured the unique experiences of LGBTQ-POC. In comparison to White counterparts, these themes represent additional challenges LGBTQ-POC individuals experience when navigating their sexual orientation.

There are other American institutions that perpetuate ideologies harmful to Black gay men, such as Black churches. In the US, Black churches are often seen as the cornerstone for Black communities (Avent & Cashwell, 2017; Taylor, Thornton, & Chatters, 1987). Consequently, ideas and perspectives promoted in the Black church are often internalized throughout the Black community, such as the belief that gay or SGL relationships are an abomination. Historically, the Black church in the US has taken a stance against SGL relationships and have exacerbated physical and mental hardships for Black gay/bisexual/queer/ SGL men (Crichlow, 2004). As a result of the Black church view on homosexuality, there is a push for hyper masculinity amongst Black men (Barnes & Meyers, 2012; Battema, 1998; Crichlow, 2004; Totten, 2015). Hyper masculinity in the Black male community can often lead to obscured ideology of gay men, such as the belief that all gay men are feminine presenting (Totten, 2015). Moreover, the promotion of hyper masculinity can result in increased toxic masculinity and internalized homophobia in the Black male community (Barnes & Meyers, 2012; Battema, 1998; Crichlow, 2004; Totten, 2015).

In addition to the exploring views and resistance of homosexuality for SGL Afro-Caribbeans in the Caribbean, Crichlow (2004) explored racial consciousness as another reason for resistance. Crichlow's qualitative study explored how 19 African Canadian and Afro-Caribbean SGL participants navigated their SGL identities within their racial and ethnic

communities in the Toronto region. Crichlow investigated community belonging and

identification by exploring how participating in secular and religious organizations affected

participants' sexual identity development. Crichlow's findings included the following themes:

community belonging and identification, fear and discourses of Black heterosexism, and the

struggle for fun and love. The fear of and discourses about Black heterosexism theme revealed

how Black male discourse has affected their belongingness to the Black community while the

last theme examined how participants negotiated their oppressed sexual identity in the larger

dominant culture (Crichlow, 2004). That is, how are participants reconciling their sexuality in the

Black community and in the larger dominant society? Crichlow also defined racial consciousness

as the preservation of Black masculinity as it struggles against White domination. Crichlow's

study also serves as a landmark for this literature review as it is one of the first and few empirical

research studies that examined the experiences of SGL Afro-Caribbeans males in diasporic

environments.

Gay Afro-Caribbean Immigrants

Researchers have identified trends of how the intersecting identities of Black gay men

affect how they navigate various communities to which they belong (Bowleg, 2013; Crichlow,

2004; George et al., 2012; Hunter, 2010). Specifically, Bowleg (2013) and Hunter (2010)

conducted qualitative studies that focused on the intersectionality of Black gay men in the US

and how their intersecting identities have shaped their social experiences.

Bowleg (2013) conducted interviews with 12 participants who self-identified as Black

gay men to learn how they described and experienced intersectionality, how social processes

shaped their identities, and the challenges and benefits of their intersecting identities. Bowleg's

study included both US born non-Caribbean and Afro-Caribbean men. Bowleg recognized that

the men in her study defined Blackness in the context of Black in the US, but also pointed out

that men "born and raised in majority Black regions such as Saharan African, the Caribbean or

some parts of Latin America, may have a different awareness of Blackness and what it means to

identify as Black" (p. 764).

The concept of different forms of Blackness that men experience in various parts of the

world lends itself to the vast experiences Black men may encounter when disclosing their sexual

minority status. Bowleg (2013) found that participants were able to describe intersectionality;

highlighted how their racial identities were constructed; and identified challenges with racial

microaggressions, heterosexism, masculinity, and stereotypes. Bowleg also recognized the

benefits of their intersectional identities, such as psychological growth, liberation from

heteronormative roles, and options to explore new experiences (Bowleg, 2013). Bowleg's study

highlights the importance of recognizing and addressing the intersectional experiences for Black

gay men, but did not mention the ethnicity of the participants.

Hunter (2010) conducted an ethnographic study with 50 participants. The author reported

30% of participants identified as West Indian or Afro-Caribbean, and, of that group, 5% were

born in a foreign country (Hunter, 2010). Like Ghabrial (2017), Hunter sought out to learn how

Black gay men or MSM navigated constructing their race and sexual identity in different spaces

(i.e., clubs, home, jobs, schools, church, social events). Hunter found that participants reconciled

this challenge by negotiating when and how to present their intersecting identities in three

different ways: interlocking, up-down, and public-private. The author defined interlocking as the

infusion of all identities that cannot be separated (Hunter, 2010). Up-down was described as the

ability to choose to identify as one identity above another, and public-private was explained as

the ability to only present your visible identity (i.e., race) in public while only displaying your sexuality in private (Hunter, 2010).

Hunter's (2010) and Bowleg's (2013) research have expanded understanding of the Black gay experience by acknowledging various cultural and ethnic backgrounds that make up the Black gay population in the US. However, though not the study's intention, Hunter did not explore how acculturation and immigration affected West Indian-born participants but instead provided generalized results of the intersectionality of Black gay men. In addition, Bowleg (2013) and Hunter (2010) did not thoroughly examine the differences or similarities in the disclosure of sexual minority identities between the Afro-Caribbean and African American communities. Essentially, Bowleg (2013) and Hunter (2010) overlooked the ethnic variation of Blackness and, as a result, did not address how acculturation and immigrant status affect participants' intersectional experiences.

George et al. (2012) conducted a grounded theory study that is also paramount for the knowledge base about gay, Afro-Caribbean men's experiences. The authors conducted interviews with 24 gay Canadian Black male participants, including 12 African-born men, 6 Canadian-born Caribbean men, and 6 Caribbean-born men (George et al., 2012). The researchers used critical race theory to identify how Black gay men living in Toronto navigated their sexual and racial identities (George et al., 2012). Participants of this study generally reported that the gay community was predominantly White (George et al., 2012). According to the researchers, while there were no geographical boundaries of racial segregation or miscegenation laws in Toronto, however the social politics and spaces were often marked by racial tensions (George et al., 2012). Moreover, when Black gay men dated interracially, they could not escape how race factored into their daily lives, including their portrayal in the media.

Within the context of Black social and political life in Canada, the experiences of SGL men were complicated by resistance of the general Black community, often reflecting the attitude in their country of origin regarding acceptance of Black gay men as part of their society (George et al., 2012). For immigrant men in this study, their focus included experiences as gay or bisexual men in their countries of origin, often where gay sexuality is not accepted and was dangerous (George et al., 2012). Moreover, gay immigrant men in the study reported experiencing gay liberation and euphoria in Canada after leaving their country of origin (George et al., 2012). However, "these states [of liberation and euphoria] may be temporary or elusive for some, or even seen as destructive (as in having too many choices)" (George et al., 2012, p. 558). George et al.'s study is useful as they explored the unique intersectional challenges and resilience of Afro-Caribbean immigrants. Some limitations of this study include researchers' failure to report individuals who did not experience rejection and hardship in their home country. Also, researchers failed to reach their intended population of "hard to reach men who sleep with men" (George et al., 2012, p. 558).

The aforementioned studies presented in this section provided a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the unique challenges of the gay Afro-Caribbean immigrant population (Bowleg, 2013; George et al., 2012; Hunter, 2010). The studies highlighted the importance of thoroughly examining the intersectional experiences of Black gay men (Bowleg, 2013; George et al., 2012; Hunter, 2010). The reported experiences and findings also emphasized the importance of furthering the research of gay Afro-Caribbean immigrants and the need for this research study. Moreover, it is important to note the research presented in this section took place prior to the legalization of same sex marriage in the US, which may or may not have implications on the experiences of gay Afro-Caribbean immigrants in the US. Further investigation of this

population will provide a more intentional and accurate understanding of the present day, lived experiences of gay Afro-Caribbean immigrant community.

Mental Health and Counseling Implications

Ghabrial's (2017) research demonstrated that the LGBTQ community is more prone to mental illness due to the severe trauma to which they are often subjected. Phillip and Williams (2013) discussed the physical and verbal environmental abuse many lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) individuals are subjected to in countries within the Caribbean. Moreover, gay Afro-Caribbeans living in the Caribbean or in the US are likely to experience internalized heterosexism, or "the acceptance of negative societal, cultural, religious, and familial attitudes and assumptions concerning same-sex attractions" (Szymanski, 2005, p. 75). Homonegativity in the Caribbean has also been linked to higher rates of family disownment, homelessness, loneliness, and isolation (Bourne et al., 2012; Phillip & Williams, 2013). In addition, Phillip and Williams discussed prevalent mental health challenges the LGB population face in the Caribbean and in the US. Several researchers have discussed sexual minorities are at a higher risk for mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, trauma, paranoia, substance abuse, self-injurious behaviors, and suicidality (Bourne et al., 2012; King et al., 2008; Phillip & Williams, 2013).

There are few empirical studies that offer competencies for providing clinically sound and culturally-sensitive mental health services to SGL Afro-Caribbeans. Phillip and Williams' literature review offered recommendations for mental health providers working with the general West Indian population and SGL West Indians. Along with Phillip and Williams recommendations, Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (Manivong et al., 2016), Association

for Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender in counseling (ALGBTIC) Counseling Competencies

(ALGBTIC LGBQQIA Competencies Taskforce et al., 2013), and Association for Spiritual,

Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC) Counseling Competencies (Cashwell &

Watts, 2011)are also useful resources for counselors working with clients from more

diverse/marginalized communities.

According to Jackson and Heatherington (2006), there are many stigmas about mental

illness and their etiology in Jamaica and other Caribbean countries. Many people in the

Caribbean may believe that mental health issues are a supernatural occurrence, a character flaw,

or a punishment for past wrongdoings (Hickling et al., 2011; Jackson & Heatherington, 2006).

Moreover, some may view mental illness as an excuse and see the individual as lazy or

irresponsible (Jackson & Heatherington, 2006). For many SGL West Indians, mental illness

stigma poses an additional barrier to seeking counseling services. Furthermore, mental health

services in the Caribbean are limited due to stigmas associated with mental illness. Hickling,

Robertson-Hickling, and Paisley (2011) conducted a qualitative study with 20 participants in

Kingston, Jamaica to learn about the relationship between stigma and mental health in Jamaica.

The authors reported that seeking mental health care was strongly stigmatized, which can result

in refusing to seek treatment for fear of social isolation, experiencing social isolation after

treatment if utilized, and homelessness (Hickling et al., 2011).

It is pivotal for counselors to address their own biases before, during, and after entering a

counseling relationship (Israel et al., 2003; Johnson, 2012). Israel et al. (2003) conducted a

quantitative study to investigate and comprehensively identify counselor competencies necessary

when working with LGB individuals by sampling both professional experts (i.e., practitioners,

teachers, researchers, consultants) and LGBT-identified experts. Researchers identified three

major components important to adhere to during a counseling relationship: knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Israel et al., 2003). Counselors should have knowledge of the populations with whom they are working, skills to work effectively with these populations, and an attitude which conveys openness and a willingness to learn from their clients (Israel et al., 2003). Additionally, counselors should also be mindful of microaggressive language when working with all clients, specifically marginalized communities (Israel et al., 2003; Johnson, 2012). Although these findings help to inform the counselors on how to best navigate counseling relationships with the LGBT community, authors of this study generically discussed race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and immigration status with little depth (Israel et al., 2003).

When working with the SGL Afro-Caribbean immigrant community it is important for counselors to consider acculturation struggles this population may experience. Acculturation issues for gay Afro-Caribbean immigrants may trigger hardships that may result in unhealthy behaviors (i.e., promiscuity, substance abuse). Bianchi, Zea, Poppen, Reisen, and Echeverry (2004) reported is a positive correlation between healthy coping mechanisms and positive acculturation for gay Latino immigrants.

While it is important to have a general understanding of microaggressions, biases, and the oppressive experiences of this population, it is also critical that counselors recognize that every client is different (e.g., personality type, unique experiences, personal history, LGBTQ identity) and should tailor techniques and approaches to the individual. Therapeutic experiences can, at times, mirror what is happening in the world. In other words, counselors are capable of possessing and demonstrating biases, specifically heterosexist biases (Shelton & Delgado-Romero, 2011). In alignment with Israel, Gorcheva, Walther, Sulzner and Cohen's (2008) study, clients reported unhelpful experiences in therapy where they felt judged or dismissed because of

their sexual orientation. It is important to note that microaggressions can occur even when a

counselor and client have a strong therapeutic alliance. Therefore, in a therapeutic relationship

with clients from marginalized groups, it is important counselors be aware of their own biases

and power difference to effectively work toward decreasing the marginalized experience of this

population (Syzmanski, 2005). Moreover, it is vital that the mental health field continues to place

emphasis on mental health awareness domestically and internationally, and working with this

unique population may come as a challenge for counselors who are not willing to address their

biases and misunderstandings.

While there is an increase in research on LGBTQ-POC in the US and the issues they

face, there is minimal empirical quantitative research that specifically examines how Black gay

men in the US navigate their sexual minority identities and the coming out process. The research

presented thus far provides a foundational understanding of the experiences of SGL Afro-

Caribbean male immigrants. Specifically, several studies provided foundational and historical

understandings of the experiences of SGL Afro-Caribbean male immigrants (Crichlow, 2004;

George et al., 2012; Hunter, 2012; King, 2006). As a result, there are four major inferences

drawn from the research presented. First, it is important to understand the contributing factors to

the homonegative experiences that SGL Afro-Caribbean community encounters in their

homeland and in the US. That is, understanding how legislation, religion, media, socioeconomic

status, and race affects how they navigate their sexuality within their various communities

(Bourne et al., 2012; Couzens et al., 2017; Crichlow, 2004; George et al., 2012; King, 2006;

Lewis & Carr, 2009; White, 2013). Second, there is no current research that examines the

comparative experiences of various cultural and ethnic identities under the Black gay male

umbrella in the US. However, researchers in Canada have conducted qualitative studies

examining the experiences of gay Afro-Caribbean immigrants (Calixte, 2005; Crichlow, 2004; George et al., 2012).

Although there have been some studies on this population, there has been little research on how this population explicitly navigates their sexual orientation identity within their ethnic communities in the US and in their home countries. Third, researchers have attempted to interrupt the normalization of heterosexism within the Black community in order to increase awareness of the challenges faced by Black SGL individuals and promote equity for all sexuality (Bowleg, 2013; Crichlow, 2004; George et al., 2012; Hunter, 2012). Finally, although instrumental, the discussed studies varied in methodological presentation. Some researchers identified specific qualitative research designs while others reported general qualitative methods. The lack of qualitative specificity creates a barrier to fully understanding the research process and guiding tools. Explicitly stating qualitative methods reinforces the importance of identifying the methodology and methods as a guide for researchers and other readers to follow. In addition to the aforementioned points, this literature review also reinforces the need for further examination of this unique population and their mental health needs. Given what has been presented, queer theory and intersectionality is most appropriately served as the lens through which this study was examined.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Queer theory was used as the theoretical framework, along with intersectionality as the conceptual framework for this study. Teresa de Lauretis first introduced queer theory in her 1991 seminal work. Queer theory derived from the feminist movement in the early 1990s and focuses on contesting the dominant discourse of prescribing heterogender and heteronormative behaviors as the standard (Cohen, 1997). An overarching goal of queer theory is to focus on the varying

degrees of power distribution in all sexuality and intentionally deconstructing the standardization of heterosexuality (Butler, 1993; Cohen, 1997; de Lauretis, 1991; Jagose, 2005). According to Cohen (1997), in queer theory, "the sexual subject is understood to be constructed and contained by multiple practices of categorization and regulation that systematically marginalize and oppress those therefore defined as deviant" (p. 439). The three main functions of queer theory are to: 1) challenge heterosexuality as a standard for sexuality formation, 2) reject beliefs that lesbian and gay studies are single entities, and 3) focus on how race affects sexual bias (de Lauretis, 1991).

Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality was the conceptual framework used for this study. Intersectionality emerged in the late 1980s as a response and rejection of the singular focus frameworks that focused on one identity. Crenshaw (1989) coined the term intersectionality, which originally focused on examining the multilayered marginalization people experience based on race and gender. As a product of the Black feminist movement, intersectionality is currently used in research as a conceptual framework for marginalized groups that have multilayered social and cultural identities, including sexual identity, socioeconomic status, gender, and race (Bowleg, 2013; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Hunter, 2010). Core tenets of intersectionality was instrumental in this study include multiple social intersecting identities, intersecting identities that are historically marginalized, and social structures that limit a community (e.g., social discrimination, social inequality, fundamental causes, ecological influences, structural influences) given the nature of the study (Crenshaw, 1989).

Researchers have used intersectionality to investigate the experiences of oppressed communities since the theory was introduced (Bowleg, 2012; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Hunter, 2010; Nash, 2008). For this study, the term intersectionality was used to define the

multidimensional marginalization of race, gender, ethnicity, immigration status, and sexual orientation in the context of gay Afro-Caribbean men living in the US. Intersectionality is a major component of the multifaceted trauma the studied community has experienced, especially given the current political climate in the US.

Chapter Summary

By employing queer theory and intersectionality, this literature review provided an account of the historical experiences of gay, bi, queer, SGL, and MSM Afro-Caribbean males living in the Caribbean region and diasporic countries. The review included research on the unique intersectional challenges individuals in this population are subjected to due to their race, ethnicity, immigration status, and sexual orientation. It also provided adequate insight to the historical contribution to resistance of SGL in the Caribbean region and Afro-Caribbean communities in the US. Additionally, the review provided perspective on the multiple marginalized experiences of this unique and under researched population, further substantiating the need to further examine this population in its totality. What has been demonstrated in the review is that there are various facets to being a gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrant in the US, but there is no current research that addresses this population's unique experiences navigating their same-sex attraction, race, ethnicity, and mental health implications. As shown, gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants have been largely invisible in the literature. Counselors, counselor educators, and counselors-in-training stand to benefit by a better understanding of this population's experiences and developing more effective and culturally-sensitive interventions and language to use when working with them. The next chapter detailed the research methodology and methods to be used in the administration of the study.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology and procedures for how the research question was addressed. In addition, this chapter provides a conceptual lens through which this study was conducted. This chapter is organized into four sections: research method and design, participants, procedure, and limitations.

Prologue

In January 2017, I returned home to Jamaica, a country once labeled as the "most homophobic place on earth" (Padgett, 2006, para. 2), to attend the Beyond Homophobia Conference. The conference focused on the multidisciplinary investigation of the LGBTQ community in the West Indies. This trip was my first-time visiting Jamaica as an openly gay adult male and my third visit since moving to the US in 1997. Upon arrival, I was greeted by my family members at the airport and I distinctly remembered that my posture, demeanor, and dialect immediately shifted to mimic the West Indian/Afro-Caribbean heteronormative display of masculinity by speaking in a deeper voice, using less words, and speaking with a Jamaican accent to avoid being labeled as gay. It was as if my mind and body recognized danger was close and I needed to transform in order to survive. This occurrence served as a pivotal moment for me as it represented the potential psychological stress that gay West Indian males living in foreign countries face in their homeland and ethnic communities (George et al., 2012). Moreover, this experience also served as the catalyst for my research and clinical agenda regarding how gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants experience and/or internalize the heteronormative gender performance in the West Indies (Brockenbrough, 2015; Decana, 2011).

Although no homophobic or heterosexist comments were directed toward me on this trip, there were several experiences that illustrated cultural views on SGL relationships. During my

time with family, they made several homonegative comments to strangers. For example, while walking to a local grocery store my aunt and I were cut off by a male driving a pick-up truck. My aunt's automatic response was to verbalize homophobic slurs to the driver. My aunt stated, "What is wrong with this faggot! See, this is why I can't tek batty-man." Her statement translated to, "There is something wrong with this gay person! This is why I cannot tolerate gay men." In that moment, I was reminded that being gay was unacceptable and considered the lowest of insults. That is, my aunt did not know the sexual orientation of this male driver, but because she felt offended her immediate response was to attack his sexuality, which for her was tied to his masculinity.

During my visit with family, old friends, and childhood community, we spent a lot of time on public transportation. While commuting, I watched and listened to how students of all ages interacted with each other during their commutes from school to home. I observed students using homophobic slurs and degrading terms, such as "faggot," "batty-man," and "anti-man" to address and insult one another. In that moment, it became more apparent that heteronormative societal constructs coupled with homophobic mindset is embedded in West Indian culture and taught to young children from a very early age (Plummer, 2013). This experience served as the impetus for this research study and to further examine how immigrant Afro-Caribbean gay males in the US reconcile their sexual orientation identities in their various communities (e.g., home country, organized religion, work place, ethnic, racial). The overarching research question for this study is, *how do Afro-Caribbean immigrant men living in the US who self-identify as gay and/or have sex with men navigate their sexual identity in their various communities?*

Philosophical Assumptions in Qualitative Research

For this study, I applied a qualitative tradition which draws from a social constructivist epistemological perspective. It is important to outline important philosophical constructs that inform this study. Epistemology can be described as the study of the acquisition of knowledge, or how people come to know what they know (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Steup, 2014). Relatedly, ontology can be described as how that knowledge is described, typically from a subjective or objective position (Creswell & Poth, 2017). For the purposes of this study, my epistemological and ontological stance is grounded in social constructivism, a philosophical position which argues that individuals seek to understand the world in which they live through making meaning of their experiences, objects, and things while emphasizing the cultural context of the environment (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Derry, 1999; Kim, 2001). Social constructivism is often associated with qualitative research designs such as phenomenology and grounded theory (Kim, 2001). Qualitative researchers who align with social constructivism believe there is not one absolute reality, but that there are multiple interpretations of a single event. Therefore, people's experiences are formed and informed through their direct interactions, historical events, and cultural norms (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Two grounding tenets of social constructivism are the beliefs that communication through language is the most influential way humans construct their realities, and that individuals are able to rationalize their experiences through the construction of a model of the social world in which they live (Amineh & Asl, 2015; Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009).

Qualitative research can be described as an inductive process that seeks to achieve a deeper understanding of how people interpret their experiences, attribute meaning to their experiences, and how their view on the world may be affected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The

guiding purpose of qualitative research is to generate knowledge by describing and attending to lived experiences through the researcher's collaboration with the population (Hays & Singh, 2011). Qualitative research traditions are designed to describe and clarify phenomena as well as increase awareness and understanding of the lived experiences of participants in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Morrow, 2007; Polkinghorne, 2005). Given the overarching goals of qualitative research and the limited empirical research about this community and their experiences, a qualitative research study is appropriate for investigating the phenomena of self-identified gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants living in the US. The goal of this research study is to further study the experiences of an under-investigated and consequently misunderstood, community.

Qualitative research draws from four philosophical assumptions and interpretive frameworks: ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological (Creswell & Poth, 2017). While the ontological position examines the nature of reality through researchers identifying different themes that develop in the findings, the epistemological position aims for researchers to collaborate with participants in efforts to acquire knowledge, gain a deeper understanding of experience, and build rapport with participants (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The axiological position seeks out the role of values, whereas the methodological positions drive the process in which research is conducted (Creswell & Poth, 2017). All philosophical positions are important and necessary in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Ontology and epistemology are particularly important as it can provide counselors, counselors in training, and counselor educators with a clearer understanding of the cultural and contextual reality of this unique population (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Although I have presented an overview of philosophical positions of qualitative research, an in-depth presentation of

phenomenology is warranted in order to better understand the rationale for this methodology. What follows is a description of the research design, including sampling and recruitment procedures, data collection, and data analysis methods.

Phenomenological Research Design

Phenomenological research is described as the investigation of people's conscious experiences with a phenomenon and how they derive meaning from those common events (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Phenomenological research is rooted in the philosophy of phenomenology which aims to understand individuals' lived experiences (Finlay, 2009) and draws heavily on the work of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Stewart & Mickunas, 1990). Husserl's ideas were often labeled as abstract, and he often used the term *phenomenology* to describe his work (LeVasseur, 2004; Reiners, 2012). Later, Van Manen adopted the term phenomenology of practice and defined it as a meaning making method (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Phenomenological research design often examines intense and emotional human experiences, which can be fitting for a variety of disciplines, and is popular in social, nursing, psychology, education, and health science studies (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Phenomenological core beliefs are an understanding of participants' view on the world based on their experiences, upbringing, and cultural background (Young, 2017). Moreover, a central tenet of phenomenology suggests that individuals and their worlds are indivisibly connected (Finlay, 2009; Young, 2017).

It is important to capture participants' core beliefs in a phenomenological study since they provide insight about how they experience the phenomenon. *Lebenswelt* also known as Lifeworld, is a German word that means understanding someone's lived experiences and how

their subjective and perceptive view on the world has affected their experiences (Finlay, 2009; Young, 2017). Lebenswelt is an important concept for phenomenological research as it is one of the researcher's duties to preserve the participants' life world (Finlay, 2009; Moustakas, 1994; Young, 2017). In addition, phenomenological research investigators are largely trying to capture the essence of the life world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Moustakas, 1994). To capture the essence of participants' experience with the phenomenon and preserve their life world, researchers must practice *epoche*. Epoche, also known as bracketing, is the act of researchers journaling, writing down, or processing thoughts, feelings, and opinions during the research process (Finlay, 2009; Young, 2017). The goal of epoche is to allow researchers the opportunity to identify and explore preconceived notions, judgments, or biases about the phenomenon in order to ensure that they do not interfere with the data collected and research experiences (Finlay, 2009; Young, 2017).

The aim of phenomenological research is to capture an individual's lived experience with a phenomenon (Finlay, 2009). In this study, I captured the essence of participants' lived experiences through four facets of phenomenology including: 1) focusing on their lived experiences, 2) the phenomenological attitude, 3) seeking rich descriptions, and 4) transformative relational process (Finlay, 2009). Phenomenological attitude is defined as utilizing epoche and suspending theories and judgment in order to view the world with a fresh set of eyes (Finlay, 2009). Rich description is described as the use of voice, media and art "to describe an experience in all its density and richness" (Finlay, 2009, p. 476). Transformative relational process is defined as providing a space for participants and researcher to reflect and examine their values and experiences (Finlay, 2009). In this study, I used Edmund Husserl's (1970) descriptive phenomenology to examine the experiences of the gay Afro-Caribbean

participants in this study. Descriptive phenomenology is often used in social sciences to explore and describe the lived experiences of individuals who have experienced a phenomenon (Reiners, 2012).

Descriptive Phenomenology

Descriptive phenomenology was created by German mathematician and founder of the phenomenology philosophical movement, Edmond Husserl (LeVasseur, 2004; Reiners, 2012). According to Husserl, phenomenology is defined as "the science of essence of consciousness" (Hursserl, 1970; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007, p. 173). Descriptive phenomenology focuses on defining the concepts of intentionality (i.e., perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion) and examining participants' making meaning of their lived experiences through their view point (Reiners, 2012; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

One tenet of descriptive phenomenology is the belief that the meaning of lived experiences is revealed only through direct, one to one transactions between the researcher and participant (Husserl, 1970; Wojan & Swanson, 2007). The transaction must include attentive listening, interaction, and observation (Husserl, 1970; Wojan & Swanson, 2007). Another tenet of descriptive phenomenology is transcendental subjectivity, or, when the researcher develops a level of consciousness and neutrality to effectively abandon their lived reality and openly experience the participant's phenomenon in its purity (Wojan & Swanson, 2007). One way to achieve transcendental subjectivity is through epoche, or bracketing (Wojan & Swanson, 2007). The last tenet of descriptive phenomenology posits that humans are free agents, responsible for influencing their environments and views themselves as one representation of the phenomenon of which they are a part (Wojan & Swanson, 2007; Giorgi, 2000).

Participants

The inclusion criteria for participants in this study included English-speaking adult (i.e.,

18 years old and older) cisgender Afro-Caribbean males born in Anglophone-colonized islands

in the Caribbean (see Appendix A). Participants were also required to have lived in the

Caribbean for at least 7-10 cumulative years during their early developmental stages (e.g., birth

to adolescence) and have also lived in the US for the last five consecutive years (e.g., since or

before 2013; see Appendix A). Participants self-identified as gay, same gender loving, queer,

and/or MSM (see Appendix A). Anglophone-Colonized islands in the Caribbean include

Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, The Bahamas, St. Lucia, and Grenada (See

Appendix A).

Many Anglophone-colonized territories have rigid laws and beliefs against same-gender

loving relationships (Crichlow, 2004; White, 2013) as a consequence of being colonized by the

British Empire. I was interested in learning how members of the gay Afro-Caribbean male

immigrant community navigate their sexual identities given the stronger political support and

laws in the US protecting sexual minorities in comparison to many Anglophone-colonized

territories (Goldberg & Kuvalanka, 2012). To obtain a rich understanding of how their migration

to the US affected their navigation of various identities, it was pivotal for participants to be at

least 18 years old and have lived in the West Indies for 7-10 cumulative years. Also, participants

of this study were required to have lived in the US for the last five years in order to explore how

changes in marriage equality laws have affected their perception of same-sex relationships. I

examined how the shift in the social and political climate to support same-sex relationships (i.e.,

marriage equality) has influenced this population (Goldberg & Kuvalanka, 2012; Hackl et al.,

2012).

Sampling and Recruitment Methods

Participants for this study were recruited through online flyers shared on blogs, private and public online groups, and social media outlets such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (See Appendix B). Additionally, recruitment materials were disseminated through community organizations including, but not limited to, New York City-based LGBTQ advocacy organizations that primarily work with gay Afro-Caribbean males (e.g., Depressed Gay Black Men [DGBM], Caribbean Equality Project, Bloom). These organizations are strong advocates and supporters of the physical and mental health and wellbeing of gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants living in the US and served as a bridge to this community.

Purposeful, snowball, and stratified sampling were used to identify an appropriate sample size for this study (Hays & Singh, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Purposeful sampling requires the researcher to select participants who meet study criteria and are willing to provide in-depth detail about their experiences (Hays & Singh, 2011; Palinkas et al., 2015). Using the purposeful sampling method assumes that a researcher will recruit a sample they believe they can learn the most from about a phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Snowball sampling (i.e., network sampling, referral system) was also used as a recruitment method to identify additional participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Pattern, 2016). Snowball sampling requires researchers to identify key participants who can refer other individuals who meet the criteria for this study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Palinkas et al., 2015). Given the uniqueness of the population, snowball sampling supported the recruitment process. Stratified sampling is described as an intentional sampling of the subpopulations of a population (Palinkas et al., 2015). This study's sample was stratified by age, originating island, region of maturation, time spent in the US, and the sexual orientation with which they self-identify. Stratifying the sample allowed a more

accurate representation of the subpopulation and their various levels of intersectionality within

the research population (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Palinkas et al., 2015). I obtained an average

phenomenological sample size of 11 participants for this study (Hays & Singh, 2011). This

sample size can provide deep and contextually informed answers to the study's research

questions.

Data Collection

The data collection for this study utilized a variation of Seidman's phenomenological

interviewing based on Husserl's description of phenomenology (Bevan, 2014; Seidman, 2013).

Though Seidman (2013) suggested three interviews per participant, for this study I conducted

two phenomenological interviews with each participant. A modified version of Seidman's

interview protocol was essential to recruitment and sampling of this population. Two interviews

minimized the time commitment barriers for potential participants to commit to and engage in

the study. Conducting two phenomenological interviews was essential as the first interview

focuses on life history, the second interview focuses on the reconstruction of the participants'

experiences with the phenomenon, and aims to create a space for participants to reflect on the

meaning of their experiences (Bevan, 2014; Seidman, 2013). Prior to the recruitment and

interviews processes, I obtained approval from the Montclair State University Institutional

Review Board (IRB; see Appendix C). Prior to all recorded interviews, participants reviewed and

signed a university approved informed consent form that described the scope of the study and

how collected data would be used (see Appendix D). Interviews were conducted in person and

through a secure web-based video conferencing tool (e.g., Zoom, Skype). After each completed

interview, the audio-recordings were transcribed verbatim for data analysis and shared with the

participant involved via a secure email.

The first interview functioned as the primary interview. Questions in the first interview broadly inquired about participants' intersectional experience related to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, sexual orientation, and immigration status (see Appendix D). Examples of interview questions included: what are your experiences of disclosing your sexual orientation within your ethnic community?; how have your intersecting identities (e.g., race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, immigration status) affected your belongingness to various communities?; how do you reconcile your sexual orientation in your home country (see Appendix E)? The second interview served as a follow up and was approximately 30 minutes. This interview provided an opportunity for participants to validate the content of the transcripts, explore and reflect feelings about their experiences during and after the interview, and provide any additional information related to their lived experiences as gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants in the US (see Appendix E).

Transcriptions

Each interview was transcribed verbatim by the professional transcription service, Rev. Rev is a secure and confidential web-based transcription company that offers 99% accuracy, verbatim transcription, timestamps, and a standard completion time of 12 hours (Rev, 2019). Communication styles and dialect vary greatly by region and by island in the West Indies. To ensure accuracy of each recording, I simultaneously listened to each recorded interview while reading the transcripts to verify the accuracy of the transcription. Rev also offered a secure and confidential policy that ensures that files are securely stored and transmitted using TLS 1.2 encryptions and are only accessible through password login (Rev, 2019). Moreover, Rev has a policy that allows for documents to be destroyed upon request (Rev, 2019).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in alignment with descriptive phenomenology. Qualitative researchers have identified four key steps to analyze data for descriptive phenomenological studies: bracketing (i.e., epoche), analyzing, intuiting, and describing (Shosha, 2012; Wojan & Swanson, 2007). The first phase of descriptive phenomenological data analysis is bracketing, which is defined as the act of setting aside biases and preconceived judgment about a phenomenon or participant to leave the data pure and untainted (Moustakas, 1994; Reiners, 2012; Shosha, 2012; Young, 2017). Descriptive phenomenologists identified three steps to bracketing: "(a) separating the phenomenon from the world and inspecting it; (b) dissecting the phenomenon to unravel the structure, define it, and analyze it; and (c) suspending all preconceptions regarding the phenomenon, and confronting the subject matter its own terms" (Wojan & Swanson, 2007, pp.173). In this study, bracketing was done before and throughout the study by journaling and creating field notes before or after interviews with participants of the study (Moustakas, 1994; Young, 2017).

The next step in data analysis was analyzing. In descriptive phenomenology, analysis consisted of several steps including reading and rereading interview data, initial coding, formulating meaning and categorizing the data into clusters of themes and validating with original text (Wojan & Swanson, 2007). It also included describing, returning data to participants, and incorporating any changes based on participants' feedback (Colaizzi, 1978; Shosha, 2012; Wojan and Swanson, 2013). Initial coding required breaking data down into discrete parts, closely examining and comparing them for similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). NVivo, a computer based data analysis software, was used to assist in the initial coding process by helping organize, analyze, and manage the collected data (Castleberry, 2014).

The third phase of descriptive phenomenology is intuiting, which was the process of the researcher reaching a level of consciousness and empathy to conceptualize the lived experiences of participants (Wojan & Swanson, 2007). The more data collected the more I understood participants' experiences with the phenomenon. The last phase of descriptive phenomenology was describing, or creating a universal skeleton of the phenomenon through which anyone who has experienced this phenomenon would be able to recognize their own experience in the description (Wojan & Swanson, 2007).

Researcher Positionality Statement

Visiting Jamaica triggered thoughts of how experiences during my formative years in the Caribbean affected my sexual identity development and informed how I minimize my sexuality as a safety mechanism in the West Indies and in the US. For example, when around majority heterosexual and/or Caribbean communities, I present with more stereotypical masculine attributes such as speaking with a deeper voice affliction, walking narrower, and communicating less flamboyantly (i.e., speak less, minimizing hand gestures) in order to downplay my sexual orientation. These experiences ignited my passion to better understand how gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants navigate through their intersecting identities, or negotiate the risks of self-disclosing their sexual orientation in their ethnic communities, racial communities, work spaces, and/or while visiting their home country. Some risks may include loss of housing, harassment, isolation, loss of employment, verbal and physical abuse, and abandonment (Crichlow, 2004; George et al., 2012; White et al., 2010). Withal, how often are gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants living in the US code-switching and performing heteronormative masculinity within their ethnic and racial community as a safety mechanism to conceal their sexual orientation?

These personal experiences have lead me to wonder if these experiences were unique to me or common for gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants living in the US.

As an insider of the gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrant community, I am aware that my worldview is biased as I have lived an experience of social isolation, condemnation, and rejection due to my sexual orientation. I was proactive and mindful of my own experiences and bias throughout this study. As a researcher, I understand that my researcher worldview informs and shapes my assumptions about the potential participants. I participated in supervision with my dissertation committee for guidance and ongoing management of my bias, judgment, and trustworthiness throughout this study.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is defined as a set of various strategies that establish credibility or validity in a qualitative study (Morrow, 2005). The trustworthiness strategies I employed to assist in data collection and analysis included epoche (i.e., bracketing), simultaneous data collection and analysis, member checking, triangulation of the data, and utilizing critical friends (Heppner et al., 2016; Seidman, 2013).

I utilized epoche (i.e., bracketing) throughout the entire research study to ensure that my preconceived beliefs are not affecting the data being collected. Another way to validate the trustworthiness of the study is through member checking. Member checking, also known as participant validation, is defined as an ongoing consultation with participants to ensure the accuracy of the findings and interpretations of the data (Birt et al., 2016; Seidman, 2013; Young, 2017). Member checking was conducted in three ways throughout the study: (1) during each interview to ensure clarity and accuracy; (2) by providing participants a copy of transcribed

interviews for validation and confirmation; and (3) sending participants an executive summary of findings (Seidman, 2013).

Furthermore, I increased the credibility and validity of this study by triangulating the data by concept mapping (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009). Concept mapping is when researchers sort data by creating themes, categories and naming concepts associated with the phenomenon that helps to identify shared participant experiences (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009). This triangulation technique helped to identify unrecognized dimensions of a construct (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009). Critical friends were another trustworthiness strategy used in this study. Critical friends are individuals who challenge and support the researcher through consultation (Handal, 1999; Storey & Wang, 2017). Critical friends were a consultation source, particularly for the data analysis process and to help identify my own biases. I selected three critical friends: the first critical friend identified as an insider and represented the population being examined, another conducted research on intersectionality of multiple marginalized communities, and the last was completely removed from the research and provided an objective lens. The comprehensive nature of these trustworthiness strategies was an instrumental part of demonstrating the study's credibility.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I provided an in-depth examination of the research methodology along with sampling, data collection, and data analysis methods to be used in this research study. I also provided a general description on how findings will be presented and how those findings will be validated through various trustworthiness strategies. In chapter four, I will provide a thorough presentation of the study's findings, complete with themes and potential subthemes, verified by participant quotes.

Chapter Four: Results

In this chapter, I will provide the findings from a descriptive phenomenological analysis of the participants' interviews conducted for this study. The five themes will be used to concisely and accurately describe the experiences of the Afro-Caribbean male immigrants who participated. The findings will provide an overarching description of the experiences of gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants both growing up in the Caribbean and migrating to the US. The findings included descriptions of the participant's experiences with coming to terms with their sexual orientation during their formative years (i.e., birth to 16 years old) in their country of origin. Moreover, participants described their acculturation experiences of understanding and making sense of their intersecting identities after migrating to the US. What follows is a presentation of the five overarching themes that address the research question of how Afro-Caribbean immigrant men living in the US who self-identify as gay and/or have sex with men navigate their sexual identity in their various communities.

Findings

The phenomenological data analysis method used (i.e., bracketing, analyzing, intuiting, and describing) in this study confirmed five themes that describe the lived experiences of this sample of gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants from Anglophone colonized countries living in the US. These themes included descriptions of 1) *Messages Received During Formative Years; 2) Coming Out Culture; 3) Immigrant Experiences; 4) Intersectionality: Navigating Belongingness;* and *5) Mental Health* (see *Figure 1)*. All presented themes include subthemes that capture the essence of the participants' experiences. The theme *Messages Received During Formative Years* focuses on the essence of where the participants reported learning about the LGBT community, their sexual orientation, and how they reconcile their sexual identity. The

second theme, *Coming Out Culture*, highlights the variety of experiences participants reported on when disclosing their sexual orientation to their various communities. The *Immigrant Experience* theme describes the common phenomenon participants shared about migrating and assimilating into American culture. *Intersectionality: Navigating Belongingness* focuses on unique ways participants navigated their multiply marginalized identities while living in the US. The final theme, *Mental Health*, features the different mental health and emotional challenges participants reported throughout their lifespan as well as their suggestions for counselors. Table 1 provides a summary of demographic information of study participants, offering additional insight to participants' self-reported identities when reading various quotes about their lived experiences. All participants in this study provided a pseudonym to keep their identity confidential.

Figured 1

Outsiders in the Circle: GACMI Findings Diagram
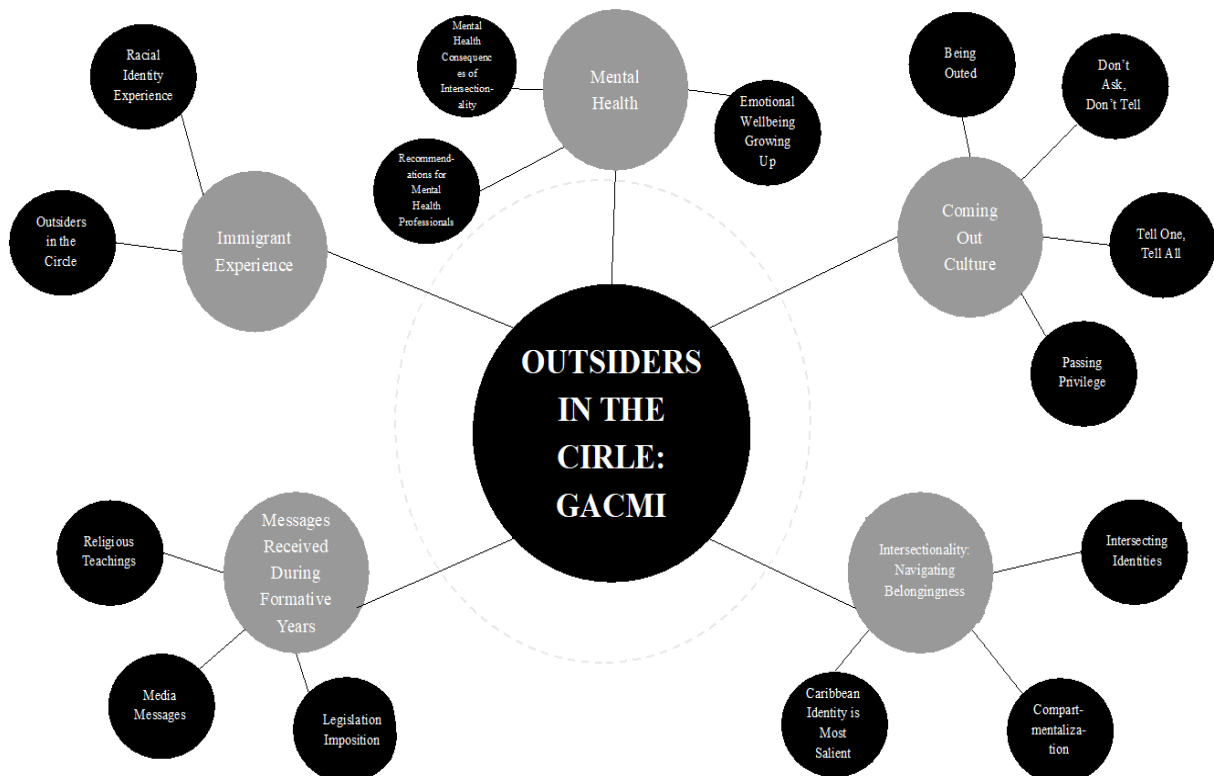
Table 1

Table 1: Participant Overview ($n = 11$)					
Pseudonym	Age	Sexual Orientation	Country of Origin	Region of Maturation	Highest Completed Education
Rodney	35	Gay	Guyana	New York	Master's
Joshua	35	Gay	Trinidad & Tobago	New York	Bachelor's
Dee	40	Gay	Trinidad & Tobago	New York	Doctorate
Elijah	35	Bisexual	Jamaica	Michigan	Doctorate
Mark	35	Gay	Jamaica	California	Doctorate
Xavier	32	Bisexual	Bahamas	Florida	Master's
Tony	28	Gay	Jamaica	Washington, D.C.	Master's
Nick	32	Gay	Jamaica	Washington,	Bachelor's
Aaron	31	Gay	Bahamas	Florida	Bachelor's
Tye	41	Gay	St. Lucia	New York	HS Diploma
Von	36	Gay	St. Lucia	New York	Bachelor's

Theme 1: Messages Received During Formative Years

In this study, participants discussed how they learned about their gay identity and the messages they received about the LGBTQ community. This theme focused on the different forms in which participants received messages and learned about the gay community while they were growing up in the Caribbean. Three subthemes described participants' experiences within their countries of origin that informed their sexual orientation identity: 1) *Media Messages;* 2) *Religious Teachings;* and 3*) Legislation and Impositions.* In the subthemes, participants discussed the various aspects of their upbringing that informed their sexual orientation, internal and external resistance to the LGBT community, and how they navigated their identity growing up and into adulthood.

Media Messages

This subtheme focused on the various messages participants received about sexual minorities (i.e., the LGBT community) through their interaction as children with the media. Participants described learning about other sexual minorities through the dancehall culture and the era of anti-gay lyrics which was a strong part of the Caribbean culture during the 1990s and early 2000s. All participants in this study identified music (i.e., dancehall, reggae) as a major source of the resistance to sexual minorities in their home countries growing up. For example, Nick, a 32-year-old participant from Jamaica, discussed how messages received through dancehall music growing up affected his sexual identity development:

> Growing up queer in the West Indies, specifically in the island of Jamaica, I can see that now, as a person who has been residing in the US for 14 years now, that I was queer growing up, started the identity that I didn't get to align with. I heard a lot of stuff. 'Oh, bon batty man [burn gay men], bun chi chi man [burn gay men],' you know? And things of that nature. And it was a very negative rhetoric surrounding being queer, LGBTQ.

In addition to Nick, eight other participants described having similar experiences growing up in the Caribbean and listening to dancehall music. Xavier, a 32-year-old bisexual man from The Bahamas described his experience with how he experienced reggae and dance hall music and the messages he received:

> Well, with a lot of Islander Caribbean songs, you always had them talk about gays, or batty boys. That was a big thing. I don't know if you remember this song, Chi Chi Man. It was always like, 'Bonfire upon them,' especially going back to the Jamaicans and so it was always, that was the gist of, really, media.

Some participants also discussed print media and news broadcasting also having a prominent role in forming public opinions on the gay male experience in the Caribbean. Participants identified print media as a source of how they made sense of the LGBT community growing up. Mark, a 35-year-old gay man from Jamaica shared

Oh yeah. I think the media is actually… they play an interesting role too [PAUSE] whether it's the print media or the electronic media, right, or even say it's on say TV. But in print media I can say from Jamaican perspective, I can go back into the archives of a popular newspaper in Jamaica… It's called the Jamaica Observer and their cartoonists, you can tell that he's definitely a homophobe because of how he depicts gay people and news stories, right? In almost this girly looking, I don't want to say girly… this exaggerated looking man who has on a short-shorts with a G-string, right, wearing high heels and just not in a good light per se. So you see that in the print. Oftentimes, even in the news stories, even when the person, the LGBT or the gay or the lesbian person is a victim in a situation, the way that they're highlighted, [it's suggested that] tranny fooled man into sex, right, or stuff like that. So even when you're the victim, it's more salacious and it's more to sort of like [PAUSE]. It's kind of like the media and the church people and DJs are one in the same [PAUSE] In a sense, a dance hall artist, for example, will make an anti-gay song just to build up his bona fide [popularity], right, with the community or with the society… 'yeah man, him a galist [i.e., ladies' man], him bun out the gays, etc., right? Print media people might do a salacious story involving gay people just to sell a story, right? For example, and I've seen this in Jamaica where two men were in a parked car somewhere, I guess. The police showed up and call the media or whatever, and the story runs in the paper. Two men caught in a compromising situation in

a parked car, right? So that sort of salaciousness to sell the story on TV or in the press.

You know?

As reflected in the aforementioned block quote, participants also shared how news

broadcasters added to the negative narrative of who gay men were, what they looked like, how

they should be treated, and normalized the lack of protection and support that they may be

offered by countrymen. For example, Von, a 36-year-old participant from St. Lucia stated

> I don't think there was a lot of [PAUSE]. Well, you know what, there would only be
>
> major coverage of a gay person in Saint Lucia, I believe, if something were to happen to
>
> a gay person. The media coverage would essentially justify that as a reason why this has
>
> happened to the person. It gives you a reason to think that, "Yeah, they were hurt or
>
> whatever, but you don't need to be gay and if you were not gay, you'd not be hurt, or
>
> you'd not be killed." So, that's not right.

In addition, some participants described how having access to American television instilled hope

and offered a different perspective of the gay man's lifestyle. Aaron, a 32-year-old gay man from

The Bahamas shared

> I think once I finally got aware and grown, I know I remember the first time I really saw
>
> it was on Jerry Springer. I guess that's probably not the best introductory because they
>
> were fighting and it was hard, but it just made me aware of there were more people out
>
> there like that. I guess that embedded that little thing in my head. Like, 'Oh well. If these
>
> people can live like this, I guess that's the place where I would want to be eventually.'

Religious Teachings

This subtheme focused on the different ways religion was used to inform sexual identity

development, specifically, to promote anti-gay messages. All participants in this study described

growing up in religious households where religious teaching included anti-gay messages. In some cases, participants described experiencing overt resistance toward their sexual orientation from family members, community members, and friends due to religious messages and teachings. For instance, Von described a traumatic experience growing up when he was ambushed by family members and church members to "pray the gay away" after he was confronted by an aunt with accusations of him being gay. Von stated

> Our power [church service] is this service at 5:00 on Sundays where they do deliverance service. So, we get back down there at 5:00 and the same place we met Eli [young gay male in the community] in the morning, there were three women there, dressed in White. I can talk about it now without crying. They dressed in White and they have their little towel, it was a little hand towel and the bottle of olive oil and they soak it up and they grab me and they say, "In the name of Jesus, we ban the spirit of homosexuality! Lord, deliver him, Lord!" And then they grab me and they're soaking me and they're beating me up with oil and they're dragging me up the aisle. It was very dramatic and at that time, that was when the whole church got to know that I was gay. It was very humiliating. I kept my eyes closed for the most part of it. I got to the front of the altar and then the pastor grabbed me, and then there was heavy praying and they were praying around me. And so I just dropped myself to the floor because that's what the boys do. It is an act and that day of my exorcism, I remember after the service they brought me downstairs and they told me, "Now that I'm delivered I have to maintain my deliverance by reading Psalm 91 and Psalm 121," and they were glad to know that I was delivered and I'm laughing in my head. And that's what the boys do all the time. So, this is something that the church community's very much aware of. It is something that the pastors and the

preachers, it is something that they cosign for. And it basically encourages gay boys to just do the act and act it, and just play the role that they have created, that is what delivers you.

In addition to Von, other participants also discussed overt religious teachings they received from their community members (i.e., friends, family, religious figures) about LGBT individuals. Dee, a 40-year-old participant from Trinidad and Tobago, who has done work to reconcile his relationship with religion and spirituality, reflected on the messages received growing up in a religious household and community. Dee shared

I'll start with religion. And that is, so I was taught in church. I think that this is, that this is a sin. That I'm sinning, that every day of my life is a sin [PAUSE] And therefore in order to conform to religion a bit, which indicates to me the strength of the influence of religion on the outlook on my life. I think over time I formed my own beliefs regarding religion, and spirituality, and I was able to reconcile some of the, my really religious teachings, with teachings of my lifestyle. But by and large, in my early years, teenage years and so forth when I was developing, and just finding myself and figuring out that, 'Hey, I'm attracted to the same sex, and not the opposite sex.' That these feelings were incorrect.

Aaron discussed the different messages he received through religious affiliation (i.e., clergy, community members, family members, friends) while growing up and how it affected his sexual identity development and religious identities. He said

I think the first thing obviously is, growing up in the West Indies it's very religious based and growing up in the Bahamas, that's one of the main predominant things. You go to church, you do that, you're very much into god. It was pretty much the LGBT community was going to hell and it was a sin and that makes you sort of think… But it started from a

religious context. I would say that was the messaging that we received and of course,

none of it was positive. That created a struggle. As you're a kid, you start to discover who

you are, but your doctrine, this religion, is telling you basically to hate yourself. You're a

bad person. Not out of the gate, it wasn't a great introductory to LGBTQ people [LONG

PAUSE] It was a big factor because like I said, it was the first introductory point to it for

the most part. That's when it would come up in context. Then as you started to get older

and then you would go to church and there would be messages about really [PAUSE] I

call it the 'easy' sermon that a lot of pastors use where they would just pull out this and

that, the gays, and this and that. Something I think they talk about it a lot there because

that's probably one of the "sins." They don't talk about the adultery and all that other

stuff. But it was just being aware of, you try to discover yourself and then you're getting

these messages of hate. I think that's why now, I don't consider myself a religious person.

I'm more spiritual.

Legislation and Impositions

The last subtheme of *Messages Received During Formative Years,* focused on different

ways legislation (e.g., laws, policies, law enforcement officials) actively contributed to anti-gay

messages in various Anglophone colonized territories in the Caribbean region. Nine of the 11

participants spoke about a variety of messages received through laws, policies, and community

members' interpretations of the law. The participants described how the law is used as a

discrimination and intimidation weapon against gay men in the Caribbean. Some participants

also discussed the discrepancy between the intentions versus enforcement of the law. Tony, a 28-

year-old ex-police officer from Jamaica described his experience of the laws being

misrepresented to him as a child. Tony shared

So I grew up believing the law makers said being gay was illegal until I was older. I

realized, the law didn't say that. It said, to the effect the act of like the anti-buggery and

sodomy it was called in Jamaica, was illegal itself and that can be done by male to

female. So it wasn't the fact that homosexuals it was illegal itself. It was just, people

thought it was illegal. That's what they told the kids, it was illegal. And so you thought it

was illegal, and so just [PAUSE] without a doubt if you are caught doing that, the cops

would be called and you'd probably be arrested and so forth.

Like Tony, other participants grew up learning and believing that the law stated that it

was illegal to be gay. For example, Elijah, a 35-year-old bisexual participant from Jamaica,

reported receiving the same messages growing up about being gay. Elijah stated

Well, the law in Jamaica is that it's not permitted. I can't remember the name of it. I'm

trying to [SIGH] Oh, my goodness. Anyways, maybe you'll hear this side of me when

you were growing up that it's not legal for the same gender to engage in sexual

interaction or sexual intercourse. So, that is widespread. We know that. And a lot of

people fear for their lives.

Similarly, Mark described learning this information growing up in his community members and

in academic journals. Mark emphasized the importance of accurately documenting the anti-

buggery laws as he has read academic journals in which the law is misinterpreted and further

adds to the false narrative of gay being illegal in the Caribbean. Mark also discussed how laws

can be used to discriminate and intimidate gay men in the Caribbean. Mark stated

I've seen as a researcher, academic, I've read many actual public health articles where you

have foreign based researchers who repeat that same misconception and

misinterpretations of the law where you'll read an introduction that says, homosexuality is

illegal in Jamaica or homosexuality is illegal in Trinidad and Tobago, right, or in Guyana.

So then at that age, you're starting to think that too, right, that it's illegal. So your own

very essence, your own identity, you think that you can't engage in sex acts, you can't

explore, you can't do any of that because it's illegal. And as you get older, you realize that

it's not the identity that's illegal, it's the behavior, right? And so you have to differentiate.

And then you realize one thing, and I think you realize that you have to be hidden as a

homosexual, right? So you learn that from a very early age [LONG PAUSE] a lot of

people always say, why do we need to change the buggery law? It's not like they're

arresting anyone, yeah, for buggery these days, right, if it's two consenting adults or

whatever. So you hear those things, and you have to take a step back and think, well, I

guess people are not being arrested in mass, right, because of their engaging in buggery.

However, the law is used to intimidate and to discriminate, right?

Lastly, Rodney, a 35-year-old gay man from Guyana shared his views and experiences of the

Legislation in the Caribbean and the messages he has received growing up about the LGBT

community, especially about gay men. Rodney said,

As a child growing up there, as a teenager, I think there's no presence of the effects of

federal law. Growing up in the Caribbean, even now in the Caribbean, you hear people

talk about the laws, the buggery laws and how you get thrown into jail and stuff. But

actually seeing that effect, I can say definitively that I've experience it or I don't know

anybody who experienced it. Talking with friends that are in Dominique and then when

they had recently the big issue with the tourists that went there and they got arrested and

stuff, the law became a thing then because it was applied. I don't know if I could identify

a person that can say, 'I've seen the law work. I've seen the arrests.' It is there, it is

prominent. It's there to invoke fear. It's like the cops at the end of the block kind of thing.

All participants described receiving messages about the LGBT community, specifically

gay men from a very early age. In addition, participants expressed the different ways they

managed their sexual identity during their formative years. Participants described recognizing

that their sexual orientation was not accepted in their communities, schools, and families. All

participants described a level of withholding their sexual orientation to friends, family members,

or their community until they felt safe enough to share, but one was outed in a forceful way.

These unique experiences resulted in a variety of ways participants negotiated their sexual

identity within their formative years and informed their decision to come out to others.

Theme 2: Coming Out Culture

This theme describes how participants navigated disclosing their sexual orientation to

others during their formative years. Moreover, this theme illustrated how participants'

reconciliation of their sexual orientation informed their sexual identity development and degree

of outness as adults. The subthemes embedded in this theme include 1) *Don't ask, don't tell*; 2)

Tell one, tell all; 3) *Being outed*; and 4) *Passing privilege.* All participants in this study either

described a coming out experience or expressed not having a need to disclose their sexual

orientation with others. In addition, participants described how their internal and external

experiences contributed to their disclosure process. Elijah commented about coming out culture

in the Caribbean and vividly depicted the experiences described by all participants in which they

had to embrace their sexual orientation to disclose to others. Elijah stated

So, just starting to reconstruct my identity as a human, in terms of how I look at

intersectionality of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status. I feel

like I'm at a crossover when it comes around to that, because coming out or accepting, coming out to myself, accepting myself because sometimes people don't come out. You have to come out to yourself. Maybe it's a new concept, coming out to self. You don't accept it, and so there's still the struggle of changing, being a Christian, or be more spiritual.

Don't Ask, Don't Tell

Nine of the 11 participants in the study expressed experiences that represent a *don't ask, don't tell* norm within their ethnic communities growing up and through adulthood. Some participants described the idea of coming out as more Western and European practice. Participants described they did not believe they needed to tell others and they were okay with people not knowing. Some participants found solace in family, friends, and community members understanding their sexual orientation but not confirming or questioning it. Mark summed up the cultural experiences of don't ask, don't tell when he stated

> In the Caribbean, there is no emphasis about coming out like what you see in North America and see elsewhere, right, in Europe. Your family might have an idea, but they don't ask, right? Your friends may have an idea but people are not going to ask, right? Oh, he's just different. So for me, I kind of enjoyed that.

Tye, a 41-year-old participant from St. Lucia discussed his sentiments about *don't ask, don't tell* from his own observations and experiences within the Caribbean and the US. Tye shared

> We never really get to the point where we can, I think our, being West Indian, our coming out, more like, 'I'm going to do what I want to do.' But it's not something that's discussed. I'm still going to continue talking to somebody and stuff. I'm going to be

discreet about continuing a relationship with somebody. But I'm still going to, in my

mind I have already come out. Because I don't feel like I have to explain myself to you.

It's just a matter of you just accepting it.

Aaron also reflected on his personal experience with *don't ask, don't tell* as he discussed not

officially sharing his sexual orientation with his family and community. Aaron shared

It was like a quasi-coming out. I don't think I've ever actually told a whole lot of people

like, 'Oh, this is it. This is who I am.' But I think I just show up in life and be me. By

default, people get the context of who I am per se.

Tell One, Tell All

In this subtheme, participants described having expectations about the coming out

process. Participants shared that if and when they disclosed their sexual orientation to others,

they expected those individuals would share their sexual orientation with others. Some

participants described this fear of being outed, while others used *tell one, tell all* as an

opportunity to share their sexual orientation with a large group of people without having to come

out. For example, Rodney discussed coming out to his brother. Rodney stated, "I told my brother

with the expectation that he will tell everyone in the family". Similar to Rodney, Dee expressed

expectations that if he told someone they would tell others. Dee stated

I thought that once someone found out, they would be very quick to go sharing it, sharing

information with everybody else. And then I would be, they would turn their backs on

me. It didn't happen. My sister showed me acceptance. She respected my privacy, right

up until I was, I think I got married at age 24, and that's when I had the conversation with

my mother, and my brother and my cousins who I'm very close to. And so, yeah. So, that

was my coming out experience.

In a similar experience, Joshua, a 35-year-old participant from Trinidad and Tobago disclosed his sexual orientation with family members, but feared being outed to other family members. Joshua's experience motivated him to come out to other family members sooner than he anticipated. Joshua shared

> Okay going to New York for the first time, I want to have a good time. I want to go to gay clubs. I just don't want him [Joshua's uncle] killing my vibe, so before I landed in New York I called him and I said, 'Hey, I have something to tell you.' And then I told him that I was gay, and he said, 'Thank you so much for finally telling me.' And he was just very accepting. But then once I did that I was like, 'Oh shit. He's definitely going to tell his sister.' Which is my mom. And so I called her before and I said [PAUSE] What did I say? I said, 'Do you want to have grandkids?' And she said, 'Sure. Why not?' And then I said, 'Well you're not going to have any from me.' And then she's like, 'Why?' And then I said, 'I'm gay.'

Being Outed

At various points, all participants discussed or verified to some degree experiencing fear of being outed or being forced to come out. Being outed conceptualizes the essence of not having a choice or voice in who is informed of one's sexual orientation. In many cases, individuals are not prepared to be outed. Four participants described being outed as a factor in their coming out experiences. Elijah described being outed by his ex-wife after sharing his sexual orientation with her in an anticipated safe space. Elijah said, "Since I have told my wife that, or my ex-wife, she has really come out and told a lot of her friends, and I've been shunned by them." In a similar experience with a partner, Tye describes being outed by an ex. He said

I was already here, and it was disclosed, but it wasn't disclosed by me. It was disclosed

to, I think at the time I had a very close coworker of mine. It was disclosed to a cousin of

mine and it was disclosed also to my best friend at the time. And it was through via

email. And I guess it was one of my exes. They wanted to be vindictive. So they stole the

password. My email password, at the time. I mean, I had just had to use the email, so I

had everything written down. They stole my password, they sent emails to both people

they knew that I was closest to. In a way of kind of, I guess they were hoping that it

would be that type of rejection. And still, those people that they send the email to, were

St. Lucians. They still had an opinion as far as that lifestyle was a concern.

In a similar notion, Xavier expressed his fear of being outed and the personal and

professional consequences that may be associated with his being out. Xavier said

Every now and then [fleeting thoughts of being outed]. I mean, not for me personally.

Well, I guess it is personal because a lot of the things I do, like interacting with the frat

and how I'm over at the youth program with [fraternity] or whatever. I think that might be

looked at differently. I mean, again, it's all about perception and it's one thing, people

thinking something and it's another, them knowing for a fact that it's something. I think

that's the only thing because I really love what I do with our youth group and our

mentoring program. And I never want personal stuff, I guess, to influence the impact that

I could have on them. That's the only thing that I'm really always conscious about where

I'm at, if I'm going to see someone's parents out somewhere or whatever the case might

be wherever I go.

Aaron also discussed the consequences and fear of being outed. He described witnessing

the consequences a friend and neighbor experienced after being outed to his family members.

This experience encouraged Aaron to not come out to anyone and do his best to be a great student to earn a scholarship and move to the US. Aaron shared

> I remember this experience when I was about 12, 13 and one of my friends, his parents found out about him and they put them on the streets and he had to go to this older gays' house. I feel like he had to do a lot of things he wouldn't necessarily do, like being in a certain relationship and then he got into a peaceful relationship with an older guy. The other guy knew, while he didn't have any other options, so he took advantage of him and I think he was just in a terrible position and that's what I was thinking about coming out.

Passing Privilege

All participants verified the notion of the privilege associated with one's ability to pass or present as heterosexual. In essence, participants associated passing as one's ability to showcase stereotyped masculine traits or mannerisms. Mark reflected on his passing privilege while recognizing what that meant for gay men who were more effeminate and unable to pass. Mark shared

> I think the other part that I enjoyed too, and it's a sense of privilege, it concerns me though when I see other young people and other men like myself who don't have that privilege and how they're treated by society. But it's a sense of privilege in terms of the politics of passing [PAUSE]. Growing up, I didn't get teased or bullied or anything like that because I wasn't feminine, right, or didn't exhibit that sort of feminine traits. So I enjoy that privilege. Even when I left the Caribbean and moved to the US where I went just to high school, I enjoyed the same, being this masculine macho, had tons of girlfriends, all of that. I enjoyed all of that.

In similar sentiments, Joshua described his observations of how there are a lot of gay men in the Caribbean who can pass, which suggests to the public that all gay men are effeminate. Joshua stated

> But then the ones who can pass, who would be your typical politician, or captain of the football team, they're not going to come out, they're going to just continue flying under the radar. So that people in general society don't understand that homosexuals are not necessarily that flamboyant guy or the drag queen right. That's just one aspect of it. A homosexual is your brother who is sitting across the dinner table from you, or your taxi driver, or your high school teacher, or your doctor. I think all of that is part of the reason why we have those experiences.

Tony shared a personal experience disclosing to a close friend, who reflected on his privilege to pass and his use of don't ask, don't tell throughout his life. Tony mentioned

> And even recently I've had a friend reach out to me and she was saying, and she's really good friends with me since high school, and she's like, 'Oh my God, I did not know you were gay. Why didn't you tell me? I'm so happy for you. I'm so happy that you're happy, I love it. Your boyfriend look cute.' Just positive affirmation. And so I told her that I was not not telling her, it was just not a conversation that I needed to have.

> All participants in this study subscribed to a form of disclosing their sexual orientation to others. The essence of the participants' lived experiences suggested that the act of coming out is a western ideology that is not subscribed to in the Anglophone-colonized Caribbean territories. Participants all described a passive or forced disclosure experience. In addition, there were some participants in the study who believed they still have not had a coming out experience, although people make assumptions about their sexual orientations.

Theme 3: Immigrant Experience

This theme focused on the unique immigrant experiences of participants in this study. Participants shared their experiences migrating to the US and how it informed and affected their intersecting marginalized identities (e.g., immigrant status, sexual orientation, racial identity). Participants in this study discussed an array of experiences about migrating to a new country. Some participants migrated for academic or career reasons, while others migrated with family members. All participants described how their migration informed their intersecting marginalized identities. The subthemes of this theme include 1) *Outsiders in the Circle,* and 2) *Racial Identity Experiences*. All participants expressed a heightened focus on their racial identity when they migrated to the US. For example, Elijah described how his immigrant status has informed how he maneuvered his lifestyle within the US. Elijah said

> As an immigrant, you are always looking at staying under the straight and narrow path, and ensuring that you are doing the right thing because you may not be privileged, like for example, a White gay male who's American. And so, you make sure that you side with people in your community, you try to connect with people who are like you, maybe your similar race, that is like Black or Latino and stuff. But there's a lot of racial discrimination, and so that informs how you interact in the population, because you realize that as an immigrant.

Outsiders in the Circle

Some participants highlighted their experiences moving to the US and the different ways they had to learn and adjust to the existing Black American culture. Eight participants in this study described experiences that made them feel unaccepted socially or not a part of the established Black American community when they migrated to the US. Aaron described

Even though you're Black and that's where people lump you, you still felt like an outsider

because culturally you couldn't connect with them. It was almost like I remember myself

[PAUSE] I was like, okay, well I have to get up on all of these things and watch these

movies, just to be like [PAUSE] So you feel like you belong with a certain group.

Similarly, Tony described having to adjust and assimilate to the culture through inaccurately

being labeled as African American because of racial identity. Tony stated

Being Caribbean you get stuck into Black American and African American situations

because everybody just assumes that you're African American, and it's offensive. It's

almost, seems like if you tell someone, 'No, I'm not African American,' they get

offended by that, and then you're like, 'Oh, I guess I am. I should be African American.'

So for me it's just, I wasn't taught that was my identity.

Elijah also described his own experiences building community within the Black community and

how he has reconciled his belongingness. Elijah stated

So, I feel like I'm accepted there. But there's still an element of, you have not had this

experience as an African American. You are different and sometimes you're not let into a

circle, and sometimes you feel as an outsider. You don't feel like you belong. But I try to

navigate that and know that I have a place here and what I bring to the table, what I have

to offer is from a different worldview, a different perspective.

In similar sentiments, Rodney explained his view and experiences about assimilating into Black

American cultural norms. Rodney shared

In one of my friend groups, I thought somebody threw out [i.e., someone said]. I don't

understand Caribbean people who don't understand the Black struggle in America. Again,

I choose my battles because you've never lived through what a Caribbean immigrant goes

through as a child in the US. It shapes you differently and you look at things differently, not necessarily that you ignore what is going on in America and the White/Black thing. It's not necessarily you ignore it, but you find your place in terms of you find a safe spot because you've always had to do that and you find a place where you could thrive and you thrive and you make it better and you make things better within your reach, instead of being out there picketing and protesting. And that's what I try to explain to people that don't get it.

Racial Identity Experiences

All participants in this highlighted how they reconciled their racial identity as a Black man in the context of American culture. This subtheme illustrates how a few participants recognized and came to terms with their Blackness in the context of racial identity, racism, discrimination, and marginalization. Tony stated

I understand the African American experience and where they're coming from, but it really wasn't my experience because I didn't grow up that way. I didn't grow up in an environment where the majority of people were White. I grew up in an environment where everybody was Black and if you were White, we would just stand there looking at you because you'd be out of place. Coming here, like I never had those. I mean, if someone of a different race does not like me, I'm not going to assume they're racist, I'll just assume they're assholes.

Joshua spoke about his experiences in the US and his realization of the importance of racial identity. Joshua said

The one thing I would say is that when I'm filling out forms here in the US, they always have this long list, and then there's always this part where I have to choose African

American or Black. And I'm always thinking to myself that I'm not an African American.

I don't identify with African. I remember telling a few people, I remember the first time I

realized that I was Black. Not to say that I don't know that I'm Black, I always knew that I

was Black, but I was upstate New York and my aunt and I were the only Black people in

the mall. And I was like, 'Oh my God, this is what it feels like to be a minority.'

Lastly, Mark speaks about coming to terms with belongingness within the Black

community as he recognized that all Black people are members of the African diaspora and are

categorized by their perceived race first, no matter their ethnic identity. Mark stated

I'm pretty much a part of the Black community because Black issues are my issues, right?

As someone that's from the diaspora, right, African diaspora, I know that when a police

officer stop me, there's not a difference in, Oh, you're from the Caribbean, you're not

African American, so I'm going to treat you differently. What they see from their car is

that I'm a Black man, right? When I apply for a job somewhere, they don't see me as a

Caribbean man or a Jamaican man. They see me as a Black man. So for me, as much as

many Caribbean people and African people try to differentiate themselves from African

American people, for me, there's no difference in terms of how White America sees me,

right? I can think of Amadou Diallo, right, or Abdu Louima who were both shot and

killed by police in New York City, right, and the other one viciously assaulted, sexually

assaulted by police just because of the color of their skin, right? They were both Africans,

right, Black Africans. But to the police, there were Black men. So for me, there's no

difference.

This theme exemplified the different challenges and resiliencies gay Afro-Caribbean

males in this study reported experiencing as they migrated and assimilated into the Black

American community. All participants described experiencing at least one of the three subthemes within this theme.

Theme 4: Intersectionality - Navigating Belongingness

This theme focused on how participants described reconciling their identities as sexual minorities, racial minorities, and immigrants living in the US. All participants described the various degrees their intersecting marginalized identities affected their ability to create community and experience belongingness. The three subthemes within this theme included 1) *Intersecting Identity;* 2) *Compartmentalization*; and 3) *Caribbean Identity as Most Salient.*

Intersecting Identities

Participants described lived experiences in which they were able to reconcile their different marginalized identities and live whole and fulfilling lives. For example, Tony described how he navigates his intersecting identities. Tony stated

> No, absolutely. And that's a very interesting question too. I think it's a challenge to start with because I feel like I'm being pulled sometimes in different directions to force to identify as one specific group and it doesn't work that way. You can relate or you have some relation to different groups. So there are times when you have some similarities with that group and that group, and I feel ultimately like I'm a mixture of all that. Now, how does that affect my belonging? I do have those occasions where I feel like I don't belong in America, let me put it that way [PAUSE]. But I don't think that's the responsibility of anyone else but mine. So if I don't belong, I believe that I needed [PAUSE] I need personally to figure out why I think that way and what I can do to fix that.

Nick recognized the importance of his intersecting identities when he began working with an

LGBT advocacy organization catered to sexual minority immigrants from the Caribbean. Nick

shared

> Me joining forces with [Caribbean LGBTQ advocacy group], becoming one of the
>
> leadership team members, becoming the public relations officer, it definitely allowed me
>
> to have all those intersectionalities and still exist, still find community, still have access
>
> to resources, still being mobile, be resourceful myself, and just being able to be flexible
>
> and just have a lot more openness and a lot more transparency.

Xavier also offered a unique perspective about how he has used his intersecting identities in all

areas of his life to live a more whole and complete lifestyle. Xavier said

> I think with all of those different variables, and again, me being the kind of social person
>
> I am, I'm able to use those, I guess, to my advantage to connect on that level with those
>
> people and help with my patients, make their experience a little bit better. With the frat, I
>
> never grew up with my dad so that's one of the reasons I interact with our mentoring
>
> group because a lot of them don't have father figures or men in their home and I can give
>
> them what I feel like I would have wanted at the time or would have hoped for to help me
>
> navigate through school. Same with home. I can help the girls grow and give them that
>
> love and support that I always needed. I use it to my advantage in those different areas.

Compartmentalization

All participants described how much they have compartmentalized their different

identities in various communities. Compartmentalization is a safety mechanism members from

marginalized communities often employ to navigate different environments to protect themselves

from discrimination, intimidation, and mistreatment (Tillapaugh, 2013). In general, individuals

in the LGBT community use compartmentalization to manage their degree of outness, control

their environment, and as a safety mechanism (Tillapaugh, 2013). Many participants described

using compartmentalization as a safety and defense mechanism in their various communities,

such as avoiding non-affirming spaces, being protective and private of romantic relationships,

using comedy for deflection, and code-switching. For example, Dee spoke about avoiding

friends when he came to terms with his sexuality. Dee shared

> I've been very selective with my circle. I primarily, I saw myself once, once I came to
>
> terms with who I was, like I said earlier, I think I knew I had some sense that I was gay
>
> since the age of around nine or 10. But pressures of society force me to struggle with that,
>
> and hide. So once I started becoming confident in myself, and learning about myself, I
>
> saw myself moving away from the friends that I had during my teenage years, the guys
>
> that I would hang out, who were all straight, the girls who I would hang out with, who
>
> were all straight. And I didn't even, and I didn't even give them a chance actually to
>
> decide whether they'd accept me or not.

Tye discussed after making sense of his sexual orientation, his preference has been to be in social

environments that are affirming of his sexuality. Tye described compartmentalizing by mainly

going to affirming spaces which increased his safety and comfort levels at social events. Tye

stated

> So just from the time I kind of figured out, okay, this is [since coming to terms with his
>
> sexual orientation]...I find myself mostly being in the company of, you know [PAUSE]
>
> besides being in school or the way it had to be, a situation where it was guys and girls
>
> most of the time, if I would go out to a party or whatever, yeah. I do go to mixed parties,
>
> but it tends to kind of lean towards going out to an all male party, you know? Yeah.

Similarly, Rodney discussed how he would avoid some environments while growing up because it highlighted his feminine traits and may result in him being targeted. Rodney said

> The way that affected me, like I said, I stayed busy, but I had a very close circle of people who I felt most comfortable with. There's a lot of things I wouldn't do. I wouldn't go to certain sports day because I feel like people would be staring at me for what my reaction and things would be to things. For cricket and things like that with my classmates, I will always go to play because I'm young and we were all playing. But I always felt like people stare at me for more masculine things to see how I react or how I did it. So I avoided it.

Some participants described protecting and keeping their romantic relationships and sexual orientation private. Mark described his observation about how gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants compartmentalize their different identities, specifically their sexual orientation. Mark stated

> I think is also important, because sort of from my experience, you have a lot of men who come here from the Caribbean and they still repress their gay identity or rather suppress their gay identity and choose not to come out or to be seen with a man in public per se, because to some degree there's still a significant connection to that home country. And if someone were to find out, word will get back and then you now will be ashamed or afraid to show your face, right, because you're worried that they might hurt you or something might happen. And I've had a few friends who to this day, they still feel like that. They don't talk about being gay or they don't [PAUSE] you know, if they have a boyfriend, whatever, it's very private because they're worried that if I go home, a family member could

out them or a friend could out them and then they go home and the whole community

knows, etc., right? It's normal.

Elijah echoed the privacy sentiments when he described his ambivalence to share his romantic

interest. Elijah stated

Well, again, you're more private, even though, you're more private with your sexual

orientation. If somebody asked you, I'm not going to deny it. But you still are private in

the United States, you're not going to put things out there on social media, and put labels

on yourself. So, you're very private about your situation, because you live your life in

privacy, and that you guard yourself. So, you just don't come here and just be free.

Furthermore, participants spoke about compartmentalization through code-switching.

Code-switching can be described as to strategically downplay or play up an identity when around

opposing and/or similar identities (Hunter, 2010). For example, Aaron provided an accurate

depiction of his thoughts, feelings, and experiences with code-switching his various identities.

Aaron shared

I would say that it feels like constant work. Because I feel like a lot of times you have to

shift hats and gears depending on who you're with. If you're with fellow Islanders, it can

be like one setting. They're like, 'Oh, you don't have an accent,' or this and that. Then

you have to use more Island lingo, so you can identify more with them. Then it's like oh,

well if you're with African American LGBTQ, so then you have to switch there and

you're like the different lingos and things like that. Even just with regular African-

Americans. I feel like you're constantly having to be aware of your audience and trying to

switch. Not switch who you are, but trying to adjust who you are in a sense and how you

present yourself. For me, even I have a different way that I present myself at work in the

corporate world structure as opposed to how I do on the outside. I think that has a lot of influence in that.

Caribbean Identity as Most Salient

Participants were asked about their connectedness to their various intersectional identities (i.e., Black, gay, Caribbean). Ten of the eleven participants described their most essential identity as their Caribbean identity. Although participants described receiving negative messages, fleeing the country to seek refuge in the US, and experiencing strong resistance due to their same gender loving identity, most participants described their Caribbean identity as their most salient identity. For example, Dee explained his strong connection to the Caribbean when he said

> I feel of course a strong connection to the Caribbean. I was born there. The minute I open
> my mouth, people identify that I'm certainly not, you may not be able to tell which
> country I'm from, but they can tell that I'm certainly not from the United States. I wasn't
> born here. And I guess in recognizing that other people recognize that despite the fact that
> I may look like them, I'm definitely different from them. I would tend to connect and to
> identify more with my Caribbean background.

In a comparable notion, Mark explained how he identifies and connects with his Caribbean identity while living in the US. Mark stated

> Well, I mean, back home I didn't know anything about race because within that cultural
> context being majority from Afro descent, I didn't really know much about race. Race
> was a non-sequitur, right? However, I think in the American context, I consider myself
> Black American. However, when someone asks me ... they always make the assumption
> that I am African American until I correct them. And the best way I can characterize

> myself to answer that question, I always answer that I'm Caribbean American. So I'm not
>
> Jamaican American, I'm not just American, I'm Caribbean American, so I emphasize the
>
> Caribbean culture

Von described the different ways he is reminded how ingrained his Caribbean culture is to his

identity. Von said

> My culture is embedded in who I am. It's not one day that I go without that. That is who I
>
> am. The way I speak, the places I go, the supermarket that I go to, the things that I choose
>
> to cook. Yeah, and how I celebrate my life, but how we celebrate, we celebrate with food,
>
> we celebrate with lots of food. And the way our food is, a lot of my best friends are West
>
> Indian. Yeah, it is influenced in how I dress and everything about me

Lastly, Elijah echoed other participants' sentiments by describing how his identity as a whole is

grounded in his Caribbean culture. Elijah shared

> I feel that I have a strong Afro Caribbean identity and rooted and grounded in African
>
> culture, culture of the Caribbean, like spirituality and drumming, dancing, the food. I
>
> embrace that. It's a part of who I am and it, as a result of me growing up there that is
>
> cemented into who I am today in my identity.

This theme exemplified the different ways participants reported navigating their

intersecting identities. All participants in the study described having made sense of their

intersectionality through understanding their identities as being intersectionally whole, grouping

their identities separately, or prioritizing their Caribbean identity as their most salient.

Participants recognized that their different identities created a unique experience for them living

in the US and had to reconcile their identities in the context of American culture.

Theme 5: Mental Health

The final theme highlights how participants described how the messages they received growing up about the LGBT community, degree of outness, immigrant experiences and assimilation to American culture, and intersecting identities have affected their mental health and wellbeing throughout their lifespan. This theme communicated the different challenges participants reported experiencing throughout their life span as it related to their intersecting identities. Specifically, participants discussed some emotional distress growing up as they negotiated their sexual identity development while receiving messages from various entities (i.e., media, religious community, legislation) about the LGBT community being described as bad or unacceptable. Three subthemes were evident in the data: 1) *Emotional Wellbeing Growing Up*; 2) *Mental Health Consequences of Intersectionality*; and 3) *Recommendations for Mental Health Professionals.*

Emotional Wellbeing Growing Up

Ten of the participants in this study described how the messages (e.g., *media messages, religious teaching, legislation and impositions)* they received growing up in the Caribbean affected their emotional wellbeing during those times. Participants also discussed trying to reconcile how their sexual orientation during their formative years affected their emotional wellbeing. Participants also reported during their formative years people in their community (e.g., family members, friends, community members) referred to their sexual orientation and/or sexual identity before they were able to fully understand it themselves. The direct comments people made towards them combined with ongoing negative external messages often resulted in the participants' emotional wellbeing being negatively affected. This subtheme focused on participants' lived experiences while growing up in the Caribbean and how their emotional

health and wellbeing were at risk due to the impact of community messages. Participants

described experiencing sadness/depression, anxiety, isolation, and loneliness. For example, Dee

described his experiences with depression growing up as he came to terms with his sexual

orientation. Dee shared

> There've been points [LONG PAUSE- thinking] there have been times where as a
>
> teenager I've dealt with depression. [LONG PAUSE- thinking] Extreme sadness perhaps
>
> as an adult… As someone who feels comfortable, I believe I'm comfortable in my own
>
> skin. It's, I don't know, I just, I don't think about hurting myself, or harming myself.

Other participants also described their emotional challenges when making sense of their sexual

orientation. For example, Von described the emotional challenges he experienced with

reconciling his sexual orientation in the Caribbean and the internal turmoil it caused him. Von

stated

> Do I need to come out? And you start judging yourself, you start beating up yourself.
>
> And then you start getting rebellious because now you're 16, you could say certain things,
>
> you could be rude, you could step out on your own and go places that your parents
>
> wouldn't allow you to go because you're getting of age.
>
> In the essence of emotional wellness, two participants described experiencing anxious

symptoms growing up. The two participants linked their anxiety with the fear of being outed to

their communities, and potentially disowned and abandoned by family. For example, Joshua

spoke about battling with depression and anxiety stemming from his religious teaching and

potentially being rejected by god. Joshua shared

> I think I've had the most stress by being gay. Because as a kid I [PAUSE] I won't say that
>
> I was depressed, but I just remember wanting to wake up one morning and be straight.

That's something I really longed for, especially growing up in a religious home. I was

very anxious about it, because a big part of the Seventh-day Adventist faith is the second

coming of Christ. So, when Christ comes the second time, he's going to judge all the evil

people. And we spent a lot of time just being prepared, so that when Christ comes the

second time you will go to heaven. And I just always felt like, "Oh my God, I'm so not

prepared for this." And then there were certain signs you're supposed look out for. I

remember when I was in primary school I thought one of the signs and I thought because

I was like, "Oh my God, I'm gay. I'm still gay and God's coming right now." So it just

made me feel really anxious all the time. Really, really anxious all the time. I spent a lot

of time praying for it to go away and it never did. I thought it would get easier as I got

older and it just never did.

Over half the participants in this study described experiencing isolation in reaction to

their sexual orientation growing up. Some participants described isolating themselves as a safety

mechanism, while others reflected on involuntarily being isolated from their peers. Rodney

described that although he had friends and family, he had compartmentalized his sexual

orientation and isolated that part of him. Rodney shared, "Again, nobody to talk to, nobody ever

to express any of those things to.... So you have to process yourself." Like Rodney, Nick

described an experience where his peers began to isolate themselves from him, in reaction, he

began to close off from others.

Once, when I was walking in high school, there were these people crossing the street and

I'm walking down...People crossing the streets. Once I was coming down the path, even

all that good stuff. It was a hot mess. [LONG PAUSE] It affected my emotional

wellbeing. My self-confidence, sometimes went into the bottle and it caused me to be very closed off, very boxed in, mentally.

Mental Health Consequences of Intersectionality

Eight participants in this study described the emotional and mental health challenges experienced as adult immigrants living in the US. Many of the participants associated their mental health challenges with their intersecting identities. Moreover, some participants described their mental health challenges being connected to the internalization of the negative narratives about their sexual orientation while growing up in the Caribbean. For example, Nick described experiencing a sequence of struggles that contributed to his mental health and wellbeing. Nick shared

> It's had its struggle. There has been some struggle over time. There has been some roadblocks and some hiccups. I've been denied access to certain things, access to certain jobs. I've been browbeaten for certain aspects of my sexuality and my sexual orientation. I've had to put up with a lot of struggles in terms of overcoming, inside the community, inside of the queer community just to start with in terms of overcoming the struggles that continue to separate us and cause us not to be unified. Us people of color, as black people. You understand what I'm saying? It's the general notion in this country, like, white people do things together.

Xavier described his mental health concerns as it relates to his ability to authentically and freely navigate his intersecting identities. Xavier stated

> I think the difficult part for me has always been, I guess, accepting who I am and accepting the situation that I'm in, being married and not being as free or as flexible to be that sexual person that I used to be, so to say. Because I wouldn't say I was a whore in

college, but I was a little bit more out there. I did a lot and I've been around the block.

I've had my time. It's definitely a lifestyle change and I think I'm always trying to find

that medium to where I can be happy. I don't think I've ever been, genuinely, a happy

person. I've had happy times and good times with good people, but I think, mentally for

me, it can be draining trying to keep all of that together at times. I've had good days and

bad days and just tried to make it work until I could find someone or somewhere to be

that outlet, that positive outlet that I think I need right now.

Dee provided a different perspective on how his intersectional identities have resulted in

mental health challenges and fatigue due to injustice in the workplace. Dee shared

I think the only thing I would like to say is that, as a participant within the labor market, I

formed an expectation that we live in the era of equal opportunity and recognize anti-

discrimination laws and regulations and so forth. So that, I have this assumption that

when I [PAUSE] that my ethnicity, my orientation and so forth should afford me certain

privileges. But I haven't seen, I haven't seen that. That hasn't been my experience. Instead

it's been...I haven't come to these under tones, I guess prejudice is everywhere and it takes

different forms and so just that, the prejudice that I assumed I would be protected against

being specifically being gay. I'd actually not. It's certainly much more comfortable living

environment here in United States, here in New York, but there's still those under tones.

Mark also provided an interesting perspective on how one's intersecting identities can lead to

various challenges and mental health wellbeing. Mark examined how gay Afro-Caribbean male

immigrants may be fetishized by their perceived body parts and how this can affect their

emotional and mental health. Mark shared

So and then so now you're an immigrant. And then in the gay community, I can see how

that being fetishized because, 'Oh, Oh wow he's like this cute little Jamaican dude or

whatever.' And you know what they say about Jamaicans and big dicks. Or this cute

Haitian boy or Guyanese boy or whatever, he's some kind of Island boy. That is how you

put it, 'Some kind of Island boy.' And then you're fetishized. It's no longer about you as

the individual, your character, your intellect, your education level so on. It's you the

Caribbean dude or the Island boy that must have a big pipe. So and it doesn't matter if

you're a naturalized citizen or whatever the case may be. Some Black gay men will look

at you like, 'Oh, you're not one of us. You're not American.' That's the way to put it.

Recommendation for Mental Health Professionals

All participants in this study discussed recommendations for mental health professionals

working with this unique and underserved population. The essence of all participants' responses,

directly and indirectly, addressed the importance of understanding individuals' cultural

backgrounds. Some participants focused on the importance of having a general understanding of

the island the client is from. For example, Tye reflected on the unique qualities of the different

islands and how this may add to the unique mental and emotional challenges an individual may

experience. Tye stated

Not the fact of the person's background, per se, but get to know the community, what

kind of environment based on the Island. Even your solution, that the island needs a little

more laid back. Or if they're Jamaican or Trinidadian or whatever, and you should just

get to know the background on the islands, get to know the island's background.

In addition to Tye's sentiments, Xavier echoed the importance of recognizing the unique characteristics of each island but emphasized the importance of providing an open, safe, non-judgmental, and breathable space for potential clients. Xavier stated

> Be open. Be accepting. I think it's great for people who come from different backgrounds, especially from the islands. Not all Islands operate the same, naturally. I think just giving an opportunity to be open and be vulnerable and be accepting is the biggest thing. Letting people think and breathe in between a conversation and not constantly going from question to question to find out more, but especially using those great open ended questions so that you give people that chance to open up about themselves and their experiences and what shape them to be the person they are. See why they're coming to you, seeking that assistance.

A few participants highlighted the complexities of having various marginalized identities and the unique challenges this population may have to go to therapists and opening up. Both Aaron and Joshua both highlight the complexities of this community. Aaron shared

> I would say just, yeah, be very mindful of the complexities that go into this person's background. Like I said, there are so many different facets and the experience. There's different experiences for somebody who is like a Caribbean set, but they grew up in the US. That's a whole different unique experience than somebody who actually actively grew up there.

Similarly, Joshua described the essence of how the marginalized identities of gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants can show up in a counseling environment. Joshua shared

> Okay, I would say you have to be very sensitive to the culture, and just understand that Caribbean people come from a very different culture than Americans do, and therapy is

not something that Caribbean people tend to gravitate to so there may be some kind of

shame in first of all even going to a therapist. And there may also be a lot of hesitancy,

talking, opening up to a therapist. I think that's something that needs to be on your radar

when dealing with West Indians.

Tony further highlighted the importance of focusing on clients as individuals, the importance of

not generalizing ones intersecting identities, but instead listening and understanding the needs of

each client. Tony stated

I think looking at their background is very important and listening to their story, where

are they having problems? And see what kind of solution they want. Because I think there

is no, there's no one-hat-fits-all kind of situation when it comes down to mental health.

Additionally, Mark takes a slightly more in-depth approach as he hones in on the individual

needs as well as focusing on the background and systemic issues the client may be existing in.

Mark stated

I think oftentimes when we think of not just public health practitioners but clinicians, we

tend to look at health related issues like social determinants of health from the individual

level, right, so you the provider taking care of me, the patient. But what I don't look at is

the structural issues, right, the systemic issues that might be influencing me per se and

how I engage you and engage my care. So as a provider, if you think of...One thing that I

like is the social ecological model because the social ecological model pull those

different pieces out, and intersectionality theory does the same, yeah, where you look at

not just the individual, but what are the other system level, structural level factors that are

influencing my healthcare decision making. And as a provider, I think we...As a

healthcare provider, you should be assessing for those things as well.

To conclude, this theme highlighted the emotional and mental health challenges participants experienced throughout their life span, as well as, their recommendation for counseling professions. The essence of this theme highlights the importance of recognizing not only the uniqueness of the population but also the individual needs of clients.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented an in-depth description of the thematic findings of this study. I examined the overarching themes and subthemes that emerged through descriptive phenomenological data analysis. The first theme, *Messages Received During Formative Years,* captured the origin of how participants conceptualized the LGBT community growing up and how they learned and understood their sexual orientation. In the second theme, *Coming Out Culture,* participants described their experiences with disclosing their sexual orientation to friends, family members, and community. Evident in the finding, participants reported a passive approach to disclosing their sexual orientation to their community. Thirdly, *Immigrant Experiences,* addressed participants' unique migration experience as they assimilated racially, culturally, and ethnically to the US Black American experiences. Next, participants explored *Intersectionality: Navigating Belongingness,* in which they shared compelling lived experiences focusing on their living intersectionally fully and/or compartmentalizing their various identities to promote safety. Lastly, this chapter explored the *Mental Health* challenges the participants experienced, as well as recommendations for mental health professionals. In the next chapter, I will provide a discussion on the findings of this study and how it relates to existing literature, strengths and limitations, and implications for the counseling field.

Chapter Five: Discussion

In this chapter, I provide a summary of the study's findings in the context of prior research about the experiences of gay Afro-Caribbean immigrant men in the US along with strengths and limitations of this study. Finally, I will share implications for the counseling profession, including recommendations for counseling practice, counselor education and supervision, and future research.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to better understand the lived experiences of gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants. Over the course of two semi-structured interviews, 11 participants described how their lived experiences growing up in the Caribbean and migrating and living in the US informed their intersecting identities. The findings highlighted participants' experiences throughout their lifespan starting with messages received during their early formative years (i.e., birth to 16) in the Caribbean and how they navigated disclosing their sexual minority status. In addition, this study illustrated how participants made meaning of their racial identity and immigrant experience. Some themes did not have enough supporting data to stand-alone as theme or subtheme, or salient enough to be added into the findings, but were important enough to be acknowledged in this chapter. Lastly, the findings of the current study emphasized how participants navigated their multiple marginalized identities in the communities to which they belong and how this affected their mental health, overall wellbeing, and sense of belongingness.

Knowledge and Navigation of Sexual Orientation Growing Up

In previous chapters I critiqued contemporary research on the SGL community in the Caribbean. Many researchers investigated the challenges this population endured and the resilience demonstrated as sexual minorities. Many SGL individuals living in Anglophone-

colonized Caribbean territories reported experiencing various forms of homoprejudice through

different systems (Crichlow, 2004; Haynes-Robinson, 2012; White, 2013). In the second chapter,

I organized prior research about this topic into four categories: legislation, religion, media, and

socioeconomic status and colorism (Bourne et al., 2012; Couzens et al., 2017; King, 2006; Lewis

& Carr, 2009; White, 2013). Participants from this study reported similar experiences with three

of the same sources of anti-gay messaging: media messages, religious teaching, and legislation

and impositions.

Media Messages. Existing literature has identified media as a major contributor to

resistance within the Caribbean community against the LGBTQ community (King, 2006; Lewis

& Carr, 2009; Maiorana et al., 2013; White, 2013). This finding was supported in the results of

the current study. For example, all participants described how media played a role in learning

about sexual minorities as well as understanding their own sexual orientation. For example,

much of the existing research has reported on the "murder music" phenomenon present in the

Caribbean that encouraged the verbal and physical assault of LGBTQ individuals, specifically

gay men during the 1990s and early 2000s (McIntosh, 2017; Nelson, 2011). All participants in

this study highlighted coming of age during this time of murder music in the Caribbean and

discussed how this experience affected their sexual identity development. Many participants

discussed experiencing isolation, avoidance, and being hypersensitive about their masculinity in

order to manage and conceal their sexual orientation. Moreover, in alignment with prior research,

many participants described a fear of being abandoned, disowned, assaulted, and/or murdered if

their sexual orientation was involuntarily disclosed as dancehall music sent messages that gay

men were dispensable and worth murdering (Bourne et al., 2012; Crichlow, 2004; George et al.,

2012; White et al., 2010).

Participants described how messages from various media sources influenced their sexual identity development during their formative years. In addition to messages about the SGL community in murder music, participants in this study also described news broadcast and print media as major influences on their formulated opinions about the LGBTQ community. Findings of this study corroborated with Murray's (2009) study that highlighted how print and televised media portrayed gay men in the Caribbean as weak, effeminate, and confused. Participants in this study consistently cited how print media often portrayed gay men as cross-dressers, confused, unattractive, and effeminate. Similarly, several participants discussed how television media delivered news in biased ways when describing gay men as deserving victims of abuse and/or murder in their home countries. Participants reported that the messages they received from the news was that to be SGL was wrong, and a natural consequence was to experience assault and hardships.

King (2006) described the general Jamaican population, that is assumed to identify as heterosexual, as resistant to American media for fear that American media was influencing the community to accept SGL individuals. Similarly, some participants in this study described having access to Western media allowed them to reconcile their sexual orientation, as it was more affirming of their SGL or LGBTQ identities. Participants described seeing other SGL individuals in Western media who looked like them gave them hope to migrate to the US and live a more open and authentic life. Interestingly, some participants who are now living in the US continue to struggle expressing their sexual orientation openly in the various communities they belong due to media messages received during their formative years.

Religious Teachings. In alignment with King (2006) and Bourne et al.'s (2012) studies, findings of this study highlighted religious teachings as a major influence for how participants

grew to understand their sexual orientation in the context of their ethnic community. Participants discussed experiencing sadness and anxiety due to their sexual orientation being displeasing to God. Some participants described experiences in which they hoped to wake up one day and no longer be gay or attempting to "pray the gay away" themselves. In agreement with existing literature, participants described religious teachings about sexual minorities as negative and damaging during their formative years (King, 2006; Lewis & Carr, 2009; White, 2013). In some cases, participants described their religious teachings and experiences as internally and externally traumatic. Several participants described being ensnared by family members and religious leaders to perform an exorcism and/or "pray the gay away" in public settings. One participant in the current study described being lured into church and ambushed by church and family members to participate involuntarily in an exorcism. Participants described the long-lasting internalized shame or impact of their religious experiences and how it affected their ability to freely explore their sexual orientation.

Legislation and Impositions. Legislation was consistently discussed by all participants in this study. Participants lived some of their most formative years in Anglophone-colonized Caribbean countries that uphold the anti-buggery/anti-sodomy laws that prohibit anal intercourse. In the countries represented in the study, an act of offense to this law can be punishable by up to 25 years in prison and, in some cases, punishable by death (Crichlow, 2004; Grosclaude, 2014; Haynes-Robinson, 2012; King, 2006; Lewis & Carr, 2009; Maiorana et al., 2013; White, 2013). Grosclaude emphasized that the anti- buggery/anti-sodomy laws do not name the gay community as a target even though that is often the case. The findings of the current study align with Grosclaude's (2014) sentiments that the law applies to everyone, but is often weaponized against gay men or men suspected of being gay. For example, nine participants

in the current study discussed being misinformed about the anti-buggery/anti-sodomy laws

growing up. The findings of this study suggest that the messages participants received during

their formative years in the Caribbean reiterated to them that being gay was, in fact, an illegal

and punishable offense. The participants that validated this notion also made the distinction

between the act of buggery/sodomy (i.e., anal penetration) was never mentioned growing up,

instead the messages received focused on sexual orientation. Participants also shared that they

fully understood the context of the anti-buggery/anti-sodomy laws during their adult years, and

in some cases, after they migrated to the US.

Similarly, participants described different ways law enforcement and lawmakers used the

anti-buggery/anti-sodomy laws as a form of discrimination, intimidation, and blackmail of the

LGBTQ community in the Caribbean. Researchers have indirectly discussed the potential

consequences of living as an openly SGL individual in the Caribbean region but have not

explicitly talked about overt difficulties one may experience from law enforcement (Couzens et

al., 2017; King, 2006; Lewis & Carr, 2009; Maiorana et al., 2013; White, 2013). Findings of this

study call attention to ways in which law enforcement have used their power to further

marginalize SGL individuals. Participants described being harassed and blackmailed by law

enforcement in their home country with threats of outing high-profile, but possibly closeted SGL

individuals if they were not financially compensated to keep quiet. Other participants described

the lack of justice and protection for LGBTQ individuals in Anglophone-colonized Caribbean

countries, which have resulted in an SGL individual being brutally assaulted or murdered with

no consequences to aggressors.

Although prior research has reported social class and colorism to have a strong effect on

peoples' ability to express openly their sexual orientation in the Caribbean, participants in the

current study were not explicitly asked about social class and colorism (Couzens et al., 2017; Crichlow, 2004; King, 2006; Lewis & Carr, 2009; Maiorana et al., 2013). Participants in the current study did not identify colorism and social class as a major influence on their sexual orientation and sexual identity development (Couzens et al., 2017; Crichlow, 2004; King, 2006; Lewis & Carr, 2009; Maiorana et al., 2013).

However, some participants described how their lower socioeconomic status (SES) affected the navigation of their sexual orientation within their ethnic communities. Participants described while growing up, recognizing gay men within their communities in their country of origin with prominent lifestyles, high-paying careers, and an upper social class status were also private about their sexual orientation. One participant discussed how his effeminate mannerisms, and lower SES contributed to interpersonal challenges (i.e., bullying) but did not describe his SES as a barrier to developing his sexual identity. Current study results also implied that gay men of higher SES experienced more instances of blackmail and intimidation from law enforcement officers due to fear of being outed and the potential negative impact on their business and livelihood. Although prior research discussed findings on colorism within the gay Afro-Caribbean male community (Couzens et al., 2017), it is noteworthy that the current study did not focus on colorism with in the gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrant nor was it mentioned in any participant interviews. Furthermore, there were no interview questions that inquired about how colorism affected their sexual orientation development and/or mental health wellbeing. Also, the finding of this study did not explore colorism within the SGL community in the Caribbean region. Participants in this study focused more on reconciling their racial identity.

Coming Out Culture. Ghabrial's (2017) study outlined how participants navigated their multiply intersecting marginalized identities, which mirrored the findings of the current study.

Like Ghabrial (2017), this study addressed difficulties participants faced when disclosing their sexual orientation to members of their ethnic community (i.e., family, friends, community members). Many participants in this study described the act of coming out as a Western experience not frequently practiced in the Caribbean region. Zarrelli (2016) echoed the notion of coming out as a Western phenomenon when she explained this process as a reference to wealthy women "coming out" formally into high society. Coming out was later adopted by the LGBTQ community in the 1920s and 1930s, which, at that time, meant making a debut into the gay and lesbian world as opposed to disclosing to family members and friends (Zarrelli, 2016).

All participants in this study described disclosing their sexual orientation to their ethnic community in three distinct ways: being outed involuntarily, being confronted, and passively outing themselves. Nine of the 11 participants described *don't ask, don't tell* norms with members of their ethnic community by keeping their sexual orientation as private information until they are asked about it. If not directly asked, many participants described being more comfortable with people speculating without confirmation. The *don't ask, don't tell* finding was an important contribution to this study. Researchers have investigated how LGBTQ individuals' disclose their sexual orientation in different racial and ethnic communities, but there are no prior studies that focused on the gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants experiences of *don't ask, don't tell* (Boulden, 2001; Dudley, 2013; Herek, 1996; Jaspal, 2012; Kennamer et al., 2000). Moreover, *don't ask, don't tell* was widely recognized for the systemic marginalization of SGL people in the US military (Aford & Lee, 2016; Borch, 2010, Kesler, 2010; Walters, 2011). The US military enacted *don't ask, don't tell* policies that forced SGL communities to refrain from disclosing their sexual orientation to others or be subjected to serious military career consequences (Aford & Lee, 2016; Borch, 2010, Kesler, 2010; Walters, 2011). In a similar

notion, the *don't ask, don't tell* experiences described by participants of the current study are comparable to the hypervisibility and invisibility of the Black individuals in various communities (Krusemark, 2012; Mowatt et al., 2013). The current research echoed the invisibility and hypervisibility of racial and ethnic minorities in the US.

Several participants described a *tell one, tell all* approach, or disclosing and/or confirming one's sexual orientation to one trusted person with the expectation for that person to disclose the orientation to others in the community. Participants in the current study described the phenomenon of *passing privilege*. Participants described *passing privilege* as the ability to present with traditionally masculine traits and not be suspected of being SGL. This quality allowed participants to mask their affectional orientation when growing up and minimize the likelihood of experiencing associated hardships (i.e., verbal or physical abuse, isolation, disownment). Moreover, the notion of passing as heterosexual for some meant reduced hardship and social turmoil but may lead to challenges with reconciling their sexual orientation (i.e., internalized homophobia). Scholars have recognized the concept of passing within the LGBTQ community across multiple race and ethnicities, but no prior research have explored this notion within the gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrant population (Couzens et al., 2017; Goffman, E., 1963; Yip, 2012).

Results of this study align with prior research about gay Afro-Caribbean men living in the Caribbean in a number of ways, including the different sources of oppression and messages received from their ethnic community (Crichlow, 2004; King, 2006; Lewis & Carr, 2009; Maiorana et al., 2013; White, 2013). It is noteworthy that participants in this study reported experiences that add to the knowledge base. Those experiences include the participants' methods of disclosing their sexual orientation within their ethnic communities. Prior research studies have

discussed similar coming out practices (i.e., not disclosing unless confronted or asked, telling

one individual with the expectation that they will tell others, presenting with transitional

heterosexual behaviors to avoid being outed) on different communities, but none exclusively

examined the gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrant population (Aford & Lee, 2016; Borch, 2010,

Couzens et al., 2017; Goffman, 1963; Kesler, 2010; Walters, 2011; Yip, 2012).

The American Migration

All participants discussed migrating to the US and how this journey affected their social

and psychological wellbeing, as well as their racial identity development. Existing research often

inaccurately conceptualizes and reports on the Black community as monolithic without much

consideration for its ethnic diversity (Waters et al., 2014). Participants in this study described

feeling disconnected from the Black American community at times due to differing values,

cultural and social norms, and views on Black identity (Logan, 2007). Inaccurate assumptions

about monolithic Black communities created internal struggles for some participants as they

reconciled assimilating to Black American cultural norms while experiencing fears of

disconnecting from their Caribbean roots.

In addition, participants described coming to terms with their Blackness in America.

Researchers have reported on assimilation challenges of Afro-Caribbeans acclimating to the

Black American cultural norms in a cursory way, but none have researched the lived experiences

of gay Afro-Caribbeans (Logan, 2007; Waters et al., 2014) and the nuances of their acclimation

experiences. All participants reported a racial identity development experience in which they

reconciled and made meaning of their Blackness in the context of Black American culture. Some

participants described their racial identity being fully developed within an American context,

meaning that they recognized that racism can be a precipitant of mistreatment. Participants also

described recognizing that racism increased the likelihood of police brutality because of their racial identity. In addition, participants confirmed that they better understood the overarching inequity of race through their racial identity experiences.

Participants also described their *Caribbean identity as most salient* when reflecting on their multiply marginalized and intersecting identities. Researchers have conducted studies including the gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrant population in the African diaspora but have not focused on how individuals made meaning of their Caribbean identities in the context of their intersecting identities (Bowleg, 2013; George et al., 2012; Ghabrial, 2017; Hunter, 2010; Phillip & Williams, 2013). Ten of the participants in this study described their Caribbean identity as most salient. Though many participants described experiencing challenges navigating their sexual orientation within their Caribbean countries, most found comfort within their Caribbean community in comparison to the other communities to which they belonged. Notably, the aforementioned experience is not present in existing literature, specifically for gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants living in the US (Bowleg, 2013; George et al., 2012; Ghabrial, 2017; Hunter, 2010; Phillip & Williams, 2013).

Participants mentioned approaching their multiple marginalized identities in two main forms: *intersecting identities* and *compartmentalization*. Similar to existing literature, participants described synthesizing their various intersecting identities and living a life feeling whole and complete (Bowleg, 2013; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Hunter, 2010). Some participants in the current study described how they reconciled their intersectionality within the various communities to which they belong and have had fulfilling experiences. Conversely, some participants described their lived experiences in which they have reconciled their various identities through compartmentalization. The notion of compartmentalization is also present in

prior literature that focused on the intersectional experiences of racial and sexual minority individuals (Bowleg, 2013; George et al., 2012; Ghabrial, 2017; Hunter, 2010; Phillip & Williams, 2013). Participants in the current study described using isolation, code-switching, and avoidant mechanisms to conceal their sexual orientation within their racial and ethnic communities. The findings of the current study were in alignment with prior research (Bowleg, 2013; George et al., 2012; Ghabrial, 2017; Hunter, 2010; Phillip & Williams, 2013). It is important to note that the various behaviors and measures employed by participants to conceal their sexual orientation within their racial and ethnic communities were directly related to the messages about sexual minorities learned during their formative years. In some cases, participants have continued to receive these negative messages as they maintain engagement with their ethnic communities in the US.

Implications

With existing literature highlighting the experiences of gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants in the African diaspora, this study was the first to explore the lived experiences of this population in the US (Bowleg, 2013; George et al., 2012; Ghabrial, 2017; Hunter, 2010; Phillip & Williams, 2013). Existing literature focusing on this population did not approach it from a counseling perspective, which positons the results of this study to make a unique and interdisciplinary contribution to counseling as well as Black Studies, sociology, and queer theory (Bowleg, 2013; George et al., 2012; Ghabrial, 2017; Hunter, 2010; Phillip & Williams, 2013). One limitation about much of the existing literature about this population in the US is the lack of scholars' acknowledgement of ethnic differences between Afro-Caribbean immigrants and Black Americans (Bowleg, 2013; Hunter, 2010). One goal of the current study was to use the findings to inform recommendations for counseling practice, counselor education and supervision, and

future counseling research. Results of participant interviews have informed these

recommendations discussed in the following sections.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

In the current study, I used queer theory as a theoretical framework and intersectionality

as a conceptual framework. Queer theory, rooted in social constructivism and critical ontology,

sets out to disrupt heteronormative structures that are used to oppress the LGBTQ community

(Butler, 1993; De Lauretis, 1991; Jagose, 2005). In the current study, I employed De Lauretis'

(1991) queer theory rubric to understand and normalize the experiences of gay Afro-Caribbean

male immigrants living in the US. Participants described how their sexual orientation challenged

the cultural norms within their ethnic communities. Participants also described various ways they

disclose their sexual orientation to others, that is being outed, don't ask don't tell, and tell one,

tell all. Participants highlighted challenging heteronormative structure by being integrous about

their sexual orientation and not subscribing to western experiences of publically announcing their

sexual orientation. In essence, participants reconciled their sexual orientation as equivalent to

heterosexuality, that is, heterosexuals do not come out as straight, why should the LGBTQ

community. Although this may be true, some participants subscribed to passing privilege, which

highlighted and upheld traditional heteronormative behavior as a way to not be identified as gay

in public. The application of queer theory also challenged and rejected the notion that all Black

gay males were a singular entity. Furthermore, the use of queer theory helped to focus on the

importance of race and ethnicity and how these identities work together to influence participant's

sexual identity development.

Similarly, the current study's findings, that is, coming out culture and intersectionality:

navigating belongingness aligns with Hunter's (2010) finding (i.e., interlocking, up-down, and

public-private) of how Black men reconciled their intersectionality (i.e., race, gender, and sexual orientation) in public through. The coming out experiences and intersectionality: navigating belongingness findings of this study resonates with Hunter's (2010) in that both studies describe participants negotiating how they disclose their sexual orientation to others and how they may compartmentalize or merge their intersecting identities. Also, both studies account for how participant's intersectionality affects their decision to self-disclose about their sexual orientation.

The conceptual framework, Intersectionality focused on the examination of multilayered gender and racial marginalization (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). In the current study, intersectionality is applied to intentionally assess and equally attend to the racial, ethnic, and sexual orientation identities of gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants. The findings of the study suggested clear implications on how this population navigated their intersecting identities to reduce marginalization and increase safety and acceptance. Through an intersectionality lens, participants described concealing, compartmentalizing, and code-switching their intersecting identities as a means of survival. Namely, many participants described difficulty navigating belongingness while reconciling their intersectionality.

Recommendations for Counseling Practice

One key learning from the current study is how counselors may be able to enhance their culturally-sensitive approach when working with this population. Although researchers have historically viewed the Black American gay community and Afro-Caribbean gay immigrant population monolithically (Bowleg, 2013; Hunter, 2010; Waters et al., 2014), the findings of this study suggest that the population in question would prefer to be seen and treated as individuals. Thus, it is important to note when working with this population, with shared racial identities as Black/African Americans, their ethnic identity and country of origin remains a significant part

when reconciling their intersectionality. All participants in the current study highlighted their Caribbean identity as their most salient identity. Though participants of this study discussed challenges in their ethnic communities they still found solace being a member of this community. Past research highlighted marginalized communities being collectivistic (Ng & Van Dyne, 2001), and this value was supported in the findings of this study. It behooves counselors to be mindful of the saliency of individuals' Caribbean heritage, even when they have been subjected to hardship and challenges within their ethnic communities. Moreover, it is pivotal that counselors are cognizant of ethnic and cultural differences when working with clients who come from multiply marginalized communities. Counselor should diligently investigate the cultural and religious/spiritual background of all client during the intake process and throughout the counseling experience. In addition, it may benefit the counselor to incorporate culture and/heritage in the treatment planning process as all participants highlighted the importance of their Caribbean identity.

In alignment with the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics (2014), another crucial learning from this study is the need to provide culturally sensitive counseling services while treating clients as individuals. The American Counseling Association Code of Ethics (2014) highlighted the importance of counselors using multicultural competencies and being sufficiently prepared to work with diverse and unique populations. All participants in this study emphasized the importance of counseling professionals being mindful of the variety between their island of origin and their individual beliefs and practices. Participants stressed the importance of being cognizant of the cultural difference between gay Afro-Caribbean immigrants from different Anglophone-colonized Caribbean islands. Participants suggested that clinicians working with this population should spend time understanding the cultural,

environmental, and energetic differences between the various Caribbean islands, especially

Anglophone-colonized territories. Also, counselors should be intentional about incorporating

cultural assessments to better understand the importance of cultural and heritage for clients. This

may support in reducing the monolithic view on the Black gay male community.

Moreover, it is important for counselors to be equally attentive to an individual's multiply

marginalized intersecting identities when working with this population. That is, equally attending

to the client's needs when reconciling their intersectionality, that is racial, ethnic, gender, sexual

orientation, religion, and SES. Additionally, participants described compartmentalization as a

way of navigating their intersecting identities. The notion of compartmentalization for this

population is pivotal, as the essence of the participant's experiences is to consistently evaluate

who, when, where, and how they can openly and freely express all aspects of their identity.

Compartmentalization also may lead to internalized challenges when clients have to navigate

spaces that are not affirming. It may be important to name, validate, and explore how the client's

compartmentalization affects their mental and emotional wellbeing. Moreover, it is useful to

utilize a sexual orientation identity model. For example, in using Cass' homosexual identity

formation model can support counselors in facilitating conversations about where the client is

developmentally and identifying where they would like to be (Cass, 1979). Using Cass' model

also can be empowering to the client by normalizing his thoughts, feelings and experiences

(Cass, 1979).

All participants in the current study described direct and indirect experiences with

religion and how it affected their identity development. It is important that counselors recognize

and attend to this population's relationship with religion and how it may or may not affect their

mental health and emotional wellbeing. Furthermore, it is important for counselors to explore the

different messages an individual in this community may receive during their formative years through media, legislation, and religion to process how that has impacted their mental health and emotional wellbeing as an adult living in the US.

Recommendations for Counselor Education and Supervision

The findings of this study also offer insight and recommendations for counselor education and supervision. It is essential that counselor educators adequately prepare their students to work with all populations, particularly marginalized communities. The findings of this study highlighted the importance of counselor educators teaching and encouraging counselors-in-training to pay attention to the nuances of racial minority identities. For example, teaching counselors-in-training to be cognizant to not treat the Black gay male community in the US as a monolithic group as it is important to be mindful of their different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, the findings also strongly suggest that it is vital for counselor educators to educate counselors-in-training on being attentive to ethnic and cultural background while still focusing on the client's individual needs. For example, counselor educator may teach lessons on addressing the mental health needs of multiply marginalized populations, while highlighting how one's ethnic or cultural background may influences all aspects of their life. Counselor educators teaching foundational master's level counseling courses such as human growth and development, social and cultural diversity, and counseling and helping relationships should be intentional about incorporating multiple marginalized communities in their coursework. For example, human growth and development instructors can create an ongoing case study class activity of a multilayered marginalized character in the different phases of development and examine the unique racial, cultural, ethnic, and sexual challenges they may experience throughout their lifespan. This exercise can further support counselors-in-training with the necessary tools to

work with diverse populations throughout the lifespan. Moreover, a social and cultural diversity instructor may be able to teach a lesson on the unique challenges of LGBTQ immigrants in the US while learning about their social, developmental, and emotional experiences.

Similarly, counselor educators are also able to highlight this notion in supervision with counselors-in-training who are working with gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants living in the US. Moreover, it is beneficial for counselor educators to participate in continuing education and workshops focused on building curriculum and/or providing culturally-sensitive care for working with multiply marginalized and diverse clients. In addition, counselor educators should also build relationships with community local and national organizations devoted to providing resources, advocating, uplifting, and supporting gay Afro-Caribbean individuals in the US.

It is also critically important that counselor educators and supervisors educate counselors and counselors-in-training on how sexuality is historically rooted in Black and other ethnic communities, specifically within the population represented in this study. Creating a stronger foundational understanding of how this population reconciles their sexual orientation within their various communities is crucial to adequately serving them. It is instrumental that both counselor educators and supervisors acknowledge and stress this distinction to counselors-in-training. Furthermore, having a deeper understanding of the unique challenges, resiliency, and needs of this population can better prepare counselors and counselors-in-training to support this population.

Recommendations for Future Research

The current study's findings lend themselves to various directions for future research. This study yielded findings that will help the counseling profession enhance the level of culturally-sensitive counseling that could be offered to this community. One identified subtheme

that was not salient enough to stand alone but worth noting is how participants' Caribbean immigrant status influenced and affected their sexual orientations. The results of the current study underscored this experience for participants. A few participants described the liberty to express openly their affectional orientation to another male in public and to overcome legal barriers by obtaining access to their spouses' financial assets. On the contrary, one participant described challenges and backlash experienced from their racial and ethnic communities for dating outside of their race. Similar to findings discussed in George et al. (2012), participants described how their immigrant status and migration experiences afforded them more enriched opportunities and liberty to explore their sexual orientation, preferences, and degree of outness. A few participants described being able to date outside of their race and ethnicity and the associated benefits and challenges. One participant discussed the privilege of being able to openly engage in romantic relationships in public through simple gestures such as holding his partner's hand without any immediate fear of being harmed, intimidated, or discriminated against. Similarly, another participant described the privilege of living in a liberal state where he was able to marry his husband and obtain spousal rights. A study investigating the degree in which gay Afro-Caribbean men publically display their affectionate and romantic orientations will help the counseling professional to gain a deeper understanding of the day to day experiences and relational challenges of this population.

Moreover, a few participants described how their experiences during their formative years growing up in the Caribbean and internalized sexuality oppression hindered their ability to express outwardly their sexual and romantic orientation. Although the findings of participants' Caribbean immigrant status influencing sexual orientation was not salient in this study, it is a potential area to explore for future studies. Examining how one's Caribbean immigrant status

influences their sexual orientation is important for future research as this sub-theme illustrates an

internal challenge that appeared to be different for many of the participants in the study, despite

all participants described being in different phases of their journey. Moreover, three of the 11

participants described being married to a woman, while other discussed having serious

heterosexual relationships at some point before coming to terms with their sexual orientation. It

would behoove researchers to further investigate how the internalization of the messages gay

Afro-Caribbean male immigrants received growing up affect how they navigate their sexual

orientation.

Another topic worth studying is a comparative analysis that documents how messages

received about the LGBTQ community during the formative years of African American gay men

and Afro-Caribbean gay male immigrants are similar or different. Participants of this study

described the messages received during their formative years being pivotal in their sexual

identity development and acceptance of their sexual orientation. It is important to examine how

the messages from the different populations overlap, the sources of the messages, and how these

messages affect internal and external experiences. Moreover, this proposed comparative analysis

study could minimize communities from African diaspora being reduced to a monolith (Hannon

& Vereen, 2016), with minimal consideration for their ethnic background and upbringing

(Bowleg, 2013; Ghabrial, 2017; Hunter, 2010).

Finally, another noteworthy topic for research would involve the differences in the

experiences of gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrant community from non-Anglophone-colonized

Caribbean countries, such as Spanish and French colonized territories. Although these countries

were not influenced by the British colonization and legislation that affected sexual minorities

(i.e., anti-buggery/anti-sodomy laws), they also reported strong resistance to the LGBTQ

community. Studies investigating the cultural messages gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants from Spanish and French colonized territories received during their formative years, along with unique challenges and developed resilience as a result of their intersecting marginalized identities would further the counseling profession. The counseling profession would gain a greater understanding of how one's cultural upbringing and messages affect individuals from Spanish and French speaking colonized territories when reconciling their sexual orientation, sexual development and mental health. Additionally, future research could investigate how LGBTQ Afro-Caribbean immigrants from Anglophone-colonized countries who reside in the US navigate their intersecting identities in the various communities to which they belong. This research could inform counselors, counselors-in-training, and counselor educators on the cultural experiences of the LGBTQ Afro-Caribbean immigrant community, which have direct implications for their wellness.

Strengths and Limitations

In this study, there are multiple noteworthy strengths. This study added to the growing body of literature on the experiences of gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants in the US. Qualitative interviews offered participants a platform to share authentically their unique experiences in a context that was hopefully safe and non-judgmental. Furthermore, this study offers the counseling profession a clearer understanding of the experiences of this subgroup within the Black community and insight on how to work with and support multiply marginalized communities.

The phenomenological design of this study increased the probability of accurate representation of the participants' intersectional experiences and reconciliation with their sexual identity development. Furthermore, the research design supported the confirmability of the

findings through trustworthiness strategies, such as member checking, consultation with critical friends, and bracketing (Birt et al., 2016; Heppner et al., 2016; Seidman, 2013; Young, 2017). The composition of the current study sample was also a strength. Participants in this study migrated from five different Anglophone-colonized territories in the Caribbean. Participants in this study reported diversity with age, religion, career, and educational attainment.

With inherent strengths, there were also some noteworthy limitations, primarily related to recruitment and sampling. Nine of the 11 participants reside in one region of the US, seven of whom currently reside in metropolitan cities; a more stratified sample would have aided in the data collection and analysis. Another limitation was the non-representation of participants who migrated to the US from the Anglophone-colonized islands of Grenada or Barbados. Potential participants from the abovementioned islands were contacted, but they did not participate for various reasons. Thirdly, 10 of the 11 participants in this study reported having at least an undergraduate degree, which may have afforded them a certain standard of living. I experienced challenges recruiting individuals of lower educational level and socioeconomic status, some potential participants were nonresponsive, while others expressed concerns around confidentiality and fear of being outed. I believe the educational background of this sample only represented a portion of the gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrant experience in the US.

Another limitation of the current study is the focus on cisgender gay and bisexual men. The study was not open to lesbian, transgender, and queer individuals whom would offer a more in depth and inclusive understanding of the overarching experiences of sexual minority Afro-Caribbean immigrants in the US. Lastly, I aspired to conduct three interviews but given the challenges of access to population I used a modified version of Seidman's phenomenological interviewing based on Husserl's description of phenomenology (Bevan, 2014; Seidman, 2013). I

conducted two semi-structured interviews instead of the three interviews recommended in

Seidman's phenomenological interviewing protocol (Seidman, 2013). The data collection

interview protocol was modified primarily to maximize participation due to anticipated

recruitment and sampling challenges. The modification of Seidman's phenomenological

interviewing protocol was instrumental to the recruitment and sampling process as I experienced

resistance from most participants to engage in a second interview.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I provided a summary and discussion of the results of this study in

relation to the existing literature. I organized the analysis of the findings in relationship with

existing literature through two categories: 1) knowledge and navigation of sexual orientation

growing up, and 2) the American migration. These categories examined the descriptive

experiences of participants throughout their lifespan in relation to existing literature. In addition,

I explored the different implications of this study which include recommendations for counseling

practice, counselor educator and supervision, and future research. The different

recommendations throughout the counseling profession offered a deeper understanding of how to

utilize the findings of this study to better serve multiply marginalized communities. Finally, I

highlighted the strengths and limitations of the study.

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Appendix A

<u>Screening Questionnaire Part 1 of 2</u>

Thank you for your interest in this research study.

In conducting this research study, I intend to learn more about the lived experiences of gay Afro-Caribbean immigrants living in the US. I will explore the experiences of Afro-Caribbean immigrants who have migrated to the US from Anglophone colonized territories (i.e., Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, Bahamas, Grenada, St. Lucia, Barbados, Guyana).

If you are interested in being a participant in this study, please note the following:

- You must be at least 18 years of age

- You must identify as gay, same gender loving, queer, or men who have sex with other men

- Prior to the age of 16, you lived in the Caribbean for at least 7-10 cumulative years.

- You must be an immigrant of Afro-Caribbean descent and have lived in the United States for the last 5 years.

- You must be able to participate in two interviews, approximately 60-90 minutes in duration each, to be conducted within the next 6 months

Although in person interviews are strongly encouraged, web-based (Skype, Google Hangouts, Zoom, etc.) interviews are also acceptable. If you meet the requirements listed and is interested participate in participating in this study, please follow the instructions provided in Part 2.

<u>Screening Questionnaire Part 2 of 2</u>

Please answer the questions provided below to the best of your ability and return the completed

document to Fergusona4@montclair.edu

1) What is your name? _____

2) How old are you? _____

3) What is your gender identity? _____

      a. What are your preferred pronouns? _____

4) What is your sexual/affectional orientation? _____

5) Did you emigrate from one of the following Caribbean islands (Please select one)?
      a. Jamaica____
      b. The Bahamas____
      c. St. Lucia____
      d. Grenada____
      e. Barbados____
      f. Trinidad and Tobago ____
      g. Guyana____

6) have you lived in the United States for the last five consecutive years?_____

7) From birth to 16 years old, approximately how many years did you spend living in the

    Caribbean? _____

8) Do you identify as an Afro-Caribbean (please circle one)?   Yes / No

9) Will you be available for two interviews (scheduled in advance), either in-person or

    digitally, within the next 3 months? _____

Please use the space provided below to indicate any other identities you hold that you believe are

important to your experience, such as your religion, disability status, academic degrees, etc.

_____

Appendix B

Recruitment Flyer

Appendix C

Institutional Review Board

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board
School of Nursing & Graduate School Building
Room 333
Office: 973-655-7583
Fax: 973-655-3022

Jan 6, 2020 1:42 PM EST

Mr. Alfonso Ferguson
Dr. Michael Hannon
Montclair State University
Department of Counseling and Ed. Leadership
1 Normal Ave.
Montclair, NJ 07043

Re: IRB Number: IRB-FY19-20-1613
Project Title: SS The lived experiences of gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants

Dear Mr. Ferguson,

After a full review, Montclair State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this protocol on December 18, 2019. The study is valid for one year and will expire onDecember 18, 2020.

All active study documents, such as consent forms, surveys, case histories, etc. , should be generated from the approved Cayuse IRB submission. (The IRB no longer stamps approved documents.) Should you wish to make changes to the IRB-approved procedures, prior to the expiration of your approval, submit your requests as a Study Modification submission.

Please note, as the principal investigator, you are required to maintain a file of approved human subjects research documents, for each IRB application, to comply with federal and institutional policies on record retention.

After your study is completed, submit your Project Closure.

If you have any questions regarding the IRB requirements, please contact me at 973-655-2097, cayuseIRB@montclair.edu, or the Institutional Review Board.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Dana Levitt
IRB Chair

cc: Ms. Caren Ferrante, Graduate Student Assistance Coordinator, Graduate School

Appendix D

ADULT CONSENT FORM

Please read below with care. You can ask questions at any time, now or later. You can talk to other people before you sign this form.

Study's Title: The lived experiences of gay Afro-Caribbean male immigrants in the United

States

Study Number: IRB-FY19-20-1613

Why is this study being done? This study is being done to better understand the experiences of gay/same gender loving/men who sleep with men African-Caribbean male immigrants in the United States. This community has multiple oppressed identities (e.g. gay, Black, immigrant) that are not always well represented in research studies. When this group is studied, their experiences are not always accurately explored. I plan to learn how this group manage their identities within their different communities (e.g., family, friend groups, spiritual/religious groups). I also want to learn how their mental health can be affected.

What will happen while you are in the study?

- You will fill out a background screening questionnaire.
- You will partake in two Interviews in person or video conferencing depending on your location, and availability. The interview will range from 60-90-minute.
- You will receive a copy of the first interview in written form to review after the interview.
- You will participate in a second for about 30 minutes. During this interview, you may further reflect on your experiences, give more information, and check the accuracy of the first interview.

Time: Including the two interviews, this study will take about two hours to complete.

Risks: You may experience some risks or discomforts during interviews. Risks may include loss of privacy, emotional stress, and negative feelings. If you feel discomfort at any time during the study, you may choose to not answer the anymore question(s) or stop the interview. If you feel discomfort during the interview and want to talk to someone after participating in this study, you may use the list of resources offered by the researchers. The researchers will also assist in finding mental health resources in your area. All identifying information will be removed from the transcription and data. You can choose an alias to replace your actual name. This will further protect your identity. Before sending copies of your interview via email, all identifying information will be removed, and the transcription will be sent to you directly. All recordings will be destroyed after it is transcribed. Your identity will not be disclosed if the results of this study are to be reported in journals or at scientific meetings. You will have the opt-in option of

receiving a copy of the transcript via email. If you choose to receive a copy of the transcript, you can let the researcher know if an email of the transcript is ok or you would like to receive the document another way. There may be low risk in communicating and sending copies of transcriptions over email. Please note that emails are neither private nor secure. Though we will do our best to protect your privacy, you should be aware that information sent through email could be read by a third party. Though we will keep your identity private as it relates to this research study, if we learn of any suspected child abuse we am required by New Jersey state law to report that to the authorities immediately. All information provided during the interview will be stored in a secure location.

Benefits: Benefits from this study may include contributing to a better understanding of how gay/queer/same gender loving /MSM African-Caribbean male immigrants experience their multiple identities in the U.S.

Compensation: There is no financial gain for participating in this study.

Who will know that you are in this study? Your identities will not be linked to any presentations about this study. Any quotes shared in the interview may be used publically after all your information has been removed. We will keep that information private.

Do you have to be in the study?
No. You do not have to be in this study. You are a volunteer! It is okay if you want to stop at any time and not participate in the study. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to.

Do you have any questions about this study? You may contact me directly at Fergusona4@montclair.edu.
 You may also contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Michael Hannon at Hannonmi@montclair.edu.

Do you have any questions about your right as a research participant? Please call or email the IRB Chair, Dr. Dana Levitt, at 973-655-2097 or reviewboard@mail.montclair.edu.

Transcript Email
I would like to receive an email transcript of my interviews:
Please initial: _____ Yes _____ No

Future Studies
 It is okay to use my data in other studies:
Please initial: _____ Yes _____ No

Study Summary
I would like to get a summary of this study:
Please initial: _____ Yes _____ No

As part of this study, it is okay to audiotape me:
Please initial: _____ Yes _____ No

Statement of Consent
I have read this form and agree to partake in the project described above. Its general purposes, involvement, and possible risks and inconveniences have been explained clearly. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. My signature also indicates that I am 18 years of age or older and have received a copy of this consent form.

_____   _____   _____

Print your name here   Sign your name here   Date

_____   _____   _____

Name of Principal Investigator   Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____

Faculty Sponsor   Signature   Date

Appendix E

Interview Protocol 1 of 2:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me and participate in this interview. I have prepared 12 primary questions that may lead to additional follow up questions. I want to encourage you to respond to each question to the best of your ability and with what you are comfortable sharing. At the end of the interview, there will be an opportunity for you to share anything further about the topic. Do you have any questions? Are you ready to begin?

Earlier Experience

1. Growing up in the West Indies, what were some of the messages you received about the LGBTQ community?

    a. Who/ where did you receive these messages from?

    b. How, if at all, did the media influence your views on the LGBTQ community?

    c. How, if at all, did the laws influence your views on the LGBTQ community?

    d. How, if at all, did religion influence your view on the LGBTQ community?

2. When did you learn that you were gay, queer, same gender loving?

3. Can you please discuss your coming out experience?

4. Throughout your life, how has your sexual orientation influenced your social interactions?

    a. Has your sexual orientation influenced how others engaged with you? If so, how?

    b. Did others make assumptions about your sexual orientation before you fully understood it for yourself? If so, how did that affect you emotional wellbeing?

5. How, if at all, has Caribbean culture informed your sexual orientation and sexual identity?

6. What are your experiences of disclosing your sexual orientation within your ethnic community?

    a. Can you share a positive example of when you disclosed your sexual orientation within your ethnic community?

    b. Can you share a negative example of when you disclosed your sexual orientation within your ethnic community?

Immigration Experience

7. How has Caribbean culture informed your racial identity?

8. How has your identity as a Caribbean immigrant affected how you navigate your sexual orientation?

Life as we know it today

9. How have your intersecting identities (e.g., race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, immigration status) affected your belongingness to various communities? For example: in your home, neighborhood, school, social group, and work.

    a. Can you discuss the degree to which you feel you are a member of Black community?

    b. Can you discuss the degree to which you feel you are a member of Caribbean community?

    c. Can you discuss the degree to which you feel you are a member of gay community?

10. Can you talk about how the interaction of your different identities affect your mental health?

Closing out

11. How did it feel speaking about this?

12. Do you have anything else you would like to share regarding this topic?

13. What pseudonym would you like me to use to protect your identity within this study, ongoing?

Interview Protocol 2 of 2:

Thank you for carving time out of your busy schedule to meet with me for a second time. I am grateful for your time and willingness to participate in this research study. This session will consist of three follow up questions.

1. Prior to our meeting today, I provided you with a copy of our first interview transcript. Have you had an opportunity to review the transcript? If so, do you believe the information you provided in the interview was accurately recorded in the transcript?

2. In our first session, I inquired on your intersectional experiences as a sexual minority, racial minority, and immigrant living in the US. In this session, I would like to for you to share information you feel may be relevant this research study.

3. Since our last session, I began to formulate clusters and themes from all the interviews conducted. I would like to hear your thoughts responses to what I have found, thus far.

Thank you again for carving out time in your busy schedule to participate in this research study. If you think of anything else you'd like to share please feel free to email me at fergusona4@montclair.edu.

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