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Exploring Black Queer Doctoral Student Experiences with Utilizing Campus Services

Mitchell Everett

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EXPLORING BLACK QUEER DOCTORAL STUDENT EXPERIENCES WITH UTILIZING CAMPUS SERVICES

by

MITCHELL JERRY EVERETT

Under the Direction of Elise Cain

ABSTRACT

This study utilized narrative inquiry to examine the experiences of Black Queer Doctoral Students (BQDS) with campus services and their ability to ameliorate minority stress and establish community with other students minoritized by their sexual or gender identity. I used the minority stress model and intersectionality as frameworks to understand how students minoritized by their race and sexual identities experienced campus services. The minority stress model provided an explanation of the stress BQDS may experience due to their minority identity (Meyer, 2003, 2013). Connecting to community is also an ameliorating factor in reducing minority stress. In addition, structural intersectionality addressed the systemic structures that may have prevented BQDS from utilizing campus services as a means to cope with minority stress and establish community (Crenshaw, 1991). The literature review included discussion on the current state of graduate student mental health (Bekkouche et al., 2022; Myers et al., 2012), Queer and Trans* Student of Color's use of campus services (Waight & Giordano, 2018, McCallum et al., 2022), and the racism and homophobia they may experience while completing their degrees (Dunbar et al., 2017; Johnson & Javier, 2017; Volpe et al., 2020). Participant selection resulted in the constructed narratives of four BQDS. Their stories were collected over two-video recorded interviews. Narratives from the four participants were then constructed using *Bildungsroman*, a genre of narrative inquiry, to focus on stories of personal growth and identity development (Kim, 2016). A subsequent cross-case analysis identified four common themes, 1) community as an ameliorating factor, 2) mixed perspectives on campus services, 3) role of the faculty as advisor, *not* mentor, and 4) separating identities for support. Thus, minority stress may affect BQDS's ability to connect to campus services as they may be reluctant to disclose their queer identity. This stress is magnified since BQDS may also contend with social structures that may prevent them from connecting to campus services. I conclude this study with

recommendations to practice and future research, including enhancing the faculty-student relationship and exploring the role campus organizations might play in helping BQDS cope with minority stress and connect to community.

INDEX WORDS: Graduate Students, Doctoral Students, Mental Health, Campus Services, LGBTQ, Faculty-student Relationship, Queer Students, Black Students, Minority Stress, Intersectionality, Qualitative Research, Narrative Inquiry, *Bildungsroman*.

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CAMPUS SERVICES

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University
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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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DEDICATION

First and foremost, I dedicate this dissertation to any Queer Person of Color who has ever felt unseen. I am one of you. I see you. And I also encourage you to keep going no matter what. You might cry. You might be exhausted. You might want to take a break. All of that is okay. Take the space you need to keep going. The world is brighter with you in it.

To my late Father, Jerry Everett, who lived life on his own terms which set the groundwork for me to pursue my own path. We may not have always understood each other, but in hindsight, I see the love that you had for me. Thank you for the sacrifices you made to make sure I always had the things I needed, and very often the things I wanted. You are my unsung hero.

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CHAPTER ONE: EXPLORING BLACK QUEER DOCTORAL STUDENT EXPERIENCES WITH UTILIZING CAMPUS SERVICES

Introduction

Today's college students have increased mental health needs that may require access to campus professionals, assistance with adherence to medications, and offerings of on-call emergency counseling services; college administrators are struggling to keep up with this demand (Burwell, 2018). These students have also reported experiencing anxiety, hopelessness, and depression that has affected their academic performance (Locke et al., 2016). Given the high academic expectations of advanced-degree programs, graduate student stress is also an increasing concern among administrators since these workers contend with more rigorous academics, career planning, trouble sleeping, and often an inability to pay bills (Van Berkel et al., 2017). Graduate students typically only interact with students in their cohort or department, and as such, their exposure to campus services is different from undergraduate students and requires more specialized programming (Rempel et al., 2011; Waight & Giordano, 2018). Although campus services have been shown to minimize adverse mental health effects (Bourdon et al., 2020; Sontag-Padilla et al., 2016), there is still a very low usage of campus programs designed among graduate students to help with stress and well-being (Waight & Giordano, 2018).

Students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ+) have additional needs. LGBTQ+ people are henceforth be referred to as "queer" as an attempt to reclaim the word with a positive connotation. I also acknowledge that trans* identity is separate from sexual identity. Thus, the term trans* is used to refer to people with a gender identity that is incongruent with the sex they were assigned at birth (Jourian, 2017). The use of the asterisk is to include a range of gender nonconforming identities outside of the traditional male/female binary, such as genderqueer and agender (Tompkins, 2014 as cited in Jourian, 2017). Therefore, I refer to the study population as queer and trans*.

Given those definitions, and as it relates to queer and trans* people, the minority stress model states that queer people experience stress directly related to their identity as a sexual or gender minority (Bockting et al., 2013; Meyer, 2003,2013). This can include internalized homophobia, discrimination, and a fear of being outed (Dunbar et al., 2017). These stressors cause members of this community to report high rates of stress and anxiety.

Students of Color may face additional barriers. Volpe et al. (2020) found that Black college students experienced racism at least once a year. Queer and Trans* People of Color often exist at the intersection of racial discrimination and homophobia due to their multiple-minoritized identities (Johnson & Javier, 2017). Therefore, identifying and connecting to community can help alleviate the stress they experience (Blockett, 2017).

When considering intersectionality, researchers and administrators can better understand how competing systems of oppression that exist within higher education have affected the students (Duran & Jones, 2019). College administrators must ensure that campus services reach the queer graduate student population. It is essential for higher education administrators to assess if this vulnerable group, who tend to report higher stress levels, is using campus resources designed to help them cope. With these ongoing challenges, Queer and Trans* Doctoral Students of Color (QTDSOC) are vastly underrepresented in the research of student stress and their utilization of campus services; thus, a gap in the literature warrants further research. Utilizing both the minority stress model and intersectionality as theoretical frameworks, this study sought to add to current research by examining the experiences of QTDSOC with campus services and their ability to help them cope with minority stress and establish a sense of community with other students minoritized by their sexual or gender identity. Though this study intended to include QTDSOC from diverse backgrounds, the participants were all Black Queer Doctoral Students (BQDS). As such QTDSOC is used throughout this document to refer to supporting all Queer and Trans* Doctoral Students of Color. Alternatively, BQDS is used when discussing the participants and their experiences directly.

Background

This section defines the different areas of concern for BQDS and QTDSOC. This included the current state of graduate student mental health, their use of campus services, and the racism and homophobia they may experience. Please also note that while the focus of this study was originally on the experiences of QTDSOC, the participants of this study were Black Queer Doctoral Students. Wherever possible, I highlight literature that specifically focused on Black and Black queer experiences.

Alternatively, I use People of Color and Queer and Trans* People of Color to discuss all other non-white identities. This section also described how intersectionality, the minority stress model, and narrative inquiry can be used to investigate these concerns.

Graduate Student Stress

The literature presented here defines “graduate students” as students at both the master’s and doctoral levels. The exception to this is when a study mentions doctoral students in its population. In those instances, I use “doctoral students” to define the population. Otherwise “graduate student” is used when the population has been unspecified. The stressors related to graduate students can be similar to undergraduate students and include academic pressures, finances, and interpersonal relationships (Jones et al., 2018; Peer et al., 2015; Van Berkel & Reeves, 2017). These stressors exist simultaneously which often leads to mental health concerns such as anxiety and depression (McCallum et al., 2022; Peer et al., 2015). For graduate students, insufficient financial support, academic overload, and a complicated relationship with their advisor have also been found to have adverse effects on a graduate student’s mental health and well-being (Bekkouche et al., 2022; Mackie & Bates, 2019; Myers et al, 2012; Rummel, 2015). Indeed, the singular nature of graduate school also makes them more reliant on relationships with their advisor, cohort, and fellow students in their graduate programs to survive (Bekkouche et al., 2022). However, Bekkouche et al. (2022) found that lack of socialization and the ambiguity of academic expectations can affect students’ well-being. Graduate students often need assistance in coping with the increased stressors they experience. Campus services are available to them for this purpose but their use among graduate students is low (Waight & Giordano, 2018). The next

section discusses how the link between mental health and campus services that may be of particular use to BQDS.

Graduate Student Use of Campus Services

The term “campus service” can refer to many services offered by a university created to support student success. For this study, campus services referred to multicultural centers, queer student centers or spaces, and counseling services. I chose to focus on the multicultural center and queer student centers and spaces since they are identity-based services which marginalized students may access to establish community with other students of minoritized racial, sexual or gender identity. I also chose the counseling center due to its historic use on college campuses. Indeed, literature on counseling services, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, was more robust than the other services I selected. Additionally, students with multiple-marginalized identities may have an increased need for counseling services due to their experiences and as such, may need this service to develop coping healthy coping mechanisms. This section also includes a discussion of the importance of the faculty-student relationship and its function as a campus service. In general, students often use campus services during times of increased anxiety or to acquire new skills (Dietsche, 2012; Winzer et al., 2018). They may also use them to connect and identify peers and build community (Kane, 2013; Shuford, 2011). This can be important for graduate students who are new to graduate school life – which can include researching, teaching and academic writing – and need services outside of the classroom to help them succeed. This also highlights the salience of an established relationship with a faculty advisor for those students who will be completing a thesis or dissertation (McCallum et al., 2022). In these cases, the relationship with the faculty advisor becomes immensely important as the faculty’s perception of their advisees and the program can affect a student’s perception of their program and campus life.

A small percentage of doctoral students have been found to use available services (Waight & Giordano, 2018). Some students may even believe that campus services are not designed for doctoral students. This could be due to perpetuated mental health stigma from program advisors or personal

networks (McCallum et al., 2022). Campus services, however, are relevant to doctoral students. The proceeding subsections present a review of campus services that may be used by BQDS. It is not intended to be exhaustive or exclusionary of the wide array of campus services available for their use. The services detailed below include the faculty-student relationship, multicultural center, queer resource center, and counseling services. The faculty-student relationship can affect the way doctoral students view their program and campus life. Multicultural centers provide a safe space for underrepresented students, particularly racial and ethnic minorities. Additionally, queer and trans* students may find support and community through the queer resource center and multicultural center. Counseling services may be the most well-known campus service as they tend to provide mental health support for all students, regardless of race, gender, or sexuality. The subsections below discuss these campus services in greater detail. This review reveals a lack of scholarly information on graduate student utilization of the multicultural and queer resource centers. Research populations are mentioned to highlight the need for scholarly articles on graduate student use of campus services where the information was offered.

Faculty-Student Relationships

The dynamic between faculty and a doctoral student is one of the most important relationships a student can have while they complete their program. Doctoral students are dependent on their relationship with their mentor or advisor since this person is the gatekeeper of their academic progress (McCallum et al., 2022). It is also important to note the difference between an advisor and mentor. While an advisor is tasked with ensuring their advisee meets program milestones, such as candidacy exams and a successful dissertation defense, a mentor takes deeper, psychosocial interest in a student's progress beyond those milestones (Kram 1985; as cited in Williams et al., 2018; Schlosser et al., 2003). Both relationships are important. Mentorship was found to be of particular importance to Doctoral Students of Color so that they are adequately acculturated to graduate school norms (Turner et al., 2022; Williams et al., 2018). Both types of faculty relationships are described below.

The nature of advising relationships can differ based on perceptions and experiences of advisor and advisee. A study completed by Knox et al. (2006) found that faculty believe their role as an advisor is to set academic goals that guide their advisees to graduation. When the advising relationship is positive or satisfactory, students can have productive, respectful rapport with their advisors (Schlosser et al., 2003). Schlosser et al. (2003) also found that these relationships become more than just academic transactions. Students were comfortable sharing their personal stories, professional goals, seeking career advice, and experience very little conflict with their advisor. Faculty in Knox et al.'s (2006) study believed that positive relationships were created when the student was goal-directed, intelligent, and appeared committed to the goals of their program. Conversely, when the advising relationship is described as difficult or unsatisfactory, advisees may not be able to connect with their advisor beyond meeting academic milestones (Schlosser et al., 2003). Faculty may characterize a relationship as difficult when they do not believe a student is committed to the program, has poor work ethic, and lacks boundaries (Knox et al., 2006). A positive advising relationship is important to a student's successful completion of program milestones. The same can be said for the mentoring relationship which can help with a student's introduction to graduate academic culture.

Acculturation to graduate school can present unique difficulties for people with marginalized identities (Turner et al., 2022; Williams et al., 2018). The culture can be both individualistic and center white cultural norms (Turner et al., 2022; Williams et al., 2018). The difficulties these students face, are not easily explained as imposter syndrome as these students must overcome systemic barriers to success (Turner et al., 2022). Successful mentoring relationships can bring Doctoral Students of Color from the margins when they are based on trust (Williams et al., 2018). However, difficult relationships can push these students further to the margins which can increase feelings of isolation. Williams et al. (2018) believe mentorship can help bridge cultural gaps and assist students with socialization into graduate school life. Their study also found that mentoring relationships could be in traditional advisor-student dyad, where they receive support directly from their mentor/advisor, or from a self-generated network, comprised of fellow students and faculty (Williams et al., 2018). These self-generated networks were

often created when the student had a difficult relationship with their primary advisor. These networks can also help retention efforts by providing support they might not have otherwise been able to find.

Multicultural Centers

The origins of multicultural centers (MCs) can be traced back to the modern civil rights movement with the founding of Black cultural centers (BCCs; Patton, 2006; Shuford, 2011). Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) started to see an influx of Black students and other Students of Color who demanded administrations provide better social and cultural support to help them navigate campus environments not created for ethnically or racially diverse students (Shuford, 2011). Thus, the BCC was created. These centers provide a safe space and gathering spot for Black students on campus where they also receive holistic support (Patton, 2006). The success of these centers led to the creation of the MCs whose objective was to provide support for students of racially diverse backgrounds (Shuford, 2011). MCs are often looked to from both students and campus administration to provide both safe space to diverse student and facilitate cultural sensitivity and awareness across campus (Malone, 2020; Reid and Ebede, 2018). These centers are not without their challenges. MCs are often created in response to campus cultural issues (McCoy, 2011). As such, their location on campus may be decentral to the main campus hub. MCs can face shrinking budgets as administrators prioritize funding based on other campus needs. Students may also question their relevancy, believing these centers to be a catchall for the concerns of all marginalized identities; they all have their own experience with racism and discrimination (Patton, 2006; Reid & Ebede, 2018). In other words, marginalized groups do not have a monolithic experience with systems of oppression. One center or service cannot be expected to support all identities. This is especially true for MCs who tend to focus on race-related issues. Therefore, MCs may be insufficient to address the needs of queer and trans* students.

Queer Resource Centers and Spaces

Though queer campus centers have been around since the early gay rights movement, they were not widely considered a campus necessity until the death of Matthew Shepard in 1998, who was tortured and murdered because he was gay (Fine, 2012; Kane, 2013). Much like MCs, queer campus centers

support the queer and trans* campus population by creating a safe space for them. These centers are more often found at liberal arts, four-year, non-profit colleges with diverse campus populations (Coley & Das, 2020, Fine, 2012; Kane, 2013). Self and Hudson (2015) also found the purpose of these centers can function to provide a safe space for queer and trans* students, and/or engage diversity work at the campus level.

Queer campus spaces may face challenges connecting to Queer Students of Color and trans*gender student populations (Marine & Nicolazzo, 2014; Self & Hudson, 2015). Self and Hudson (2015) found that these spaces can center homonormative Whiteness where their ideology purports the needs of White cisgender gay men as central to all queer and trans*. This further marginalizes Students of Color and those of trans*identity. Programming for trans* students may also be minimal as those efforts tend to focus on educating the campus on gender identity rather than providing support to trans* students (Marine & Nicolazzo, 2014). Queer campus centers and spaces must work to also meet the needs of Queer Students of Color and trans* students who need a place to belong (BrckaLorenz et al., 2019; Hill et al., 2021). Additionally, research on graduate students and their use of queer campus spaces is virtually nonexistent. Campus administrators need empirical data on this topic if support for queer graduate students is to be expanded. In general, the most abundant scholarly material available on graduate student campus service use relates to counseling services.

Counseling Services

Graduate school can be overwhelming and stressful to students. They often seek counseling services to help manage issues with anxiety and depressive symptoms (Benshoff et al., 2015; Hyun et al., 2006). Indeed, use of this service has been found to increase when students feel overwhelmed by school and need to develop healthy coping skills (Bourdon et al., 2020; Sontag-Padilla et al., 2016). Graduate students may also utilize counseling services to establish community through support group participation (Benshoff et al., 2015). Hayes et al. (2011) also found that counseling services may be of particular use to Students of Color who are at greater risk for psychological difficulties as they cope with racial discrimination and microaggressions.

Despite the importance of counseling services, mental health stigma may prevent students from accessing this service. Sontag-Padilla et al. (2016) found that both graduate and undergraduate students held a negative perceived value of counseling despite nearly 20% of those students self-reporting psychological distress. Doctoral students may also believe that counseling services were primarily designed for undergraduate students, and therefore, not perceive them as relevant (Waight & Giordano, 2018). Waight and Giordano (2018) found that doctoral students may also be unaware of their own mental health status and experience embarrassment in seeking help. It is important for doctoral students to view counseling services as a relevant resource that can assist in managing their mental health.

In conclusion, counseling services may provide an opportunity for graduate students to get support for mental health-related issues while completing their program. A sense of community is also important to marginalized students who may seek the multicultural or queer resource center to connect with other students of a racial, ethnic, gender, or sexual minority. It is important to note, however, that most of the available literature on campus services is based on undergraduate student experiences. This presents an opportunity for researchers to pursue empirical study of graduate student utilization of campus services. This study of graduate students should also explore how queer and trans* graduate students perceive these services given their often-complex experience navigating campus life.

Experiences of Queer Students in Higher Education

Queer and trans* college students might experience higher levels of stress than cisgender heterosexual students due to increased experiences with discrimination, microaggressions and victimization (Dunbar et al., 2017; Seelman et al., 2017). These experiences can affect both their self-esteem, mental health, and ability to focus on their studies; this leads to greater use of mental health services than what has been reported with heterosexual students (Baams et al., 2018; Dunbar et al., 2017; Seelman et al., 2017). This highlights the importance of queer centers and spaces to provide a place for these students to heal from trauma and establish community with other students of a sexual or gender minority (Garvey & Rankin, 2014; Kulik et al., 2017). It is important to note that the studies presented in this section focus on the undergraduate experience. Additionally, many of these do not adequately address

the experiences of Queer and Trans* Students of Color. These gaps in research of queer and trans* graduate student experiences and that of Queer and Trans* Graduate Students of Color, creates a need for researchers to investigate how these students relate to campus life. Administrators will be ineffective in reaching queer and trans* doctoral students without empirical support. Further, the experiences of queer and trans* doctoral students become complex when they are a person of color who face race-based campus discrimination.

Race & Racism in Higher Education

Black students experience racism across multiple levels described by Volpe et al. (2020) as institutional, individual, and cultural. This racism can manifest as inadequate campus services or support, poor treatment from professors or administrators, or cultural microaggressions. These experiences with discrimination can result in higher levels of psychological and physiological distress (Hope et al., 2020; Kim, 2014; Volpe et al., 2020). Students of Color must develop coping strategies well before they enter college life if they are to develop resiliency (Kim, 2014).

Despite the need to develop these coping strategies, mental health stigma may present a significant barrier to Student of Color's help-seeking behavior (Lipson et al., 2018). They may be more reliant on their family, friends, and other social networks for support. Lipson et al. (2018) found that this impeded Student of Color's ability to receive help for mental health challenges. Proper linkage to care is important for them to thrive. Yet, these issues become magnified with racial identity intersects with a queer or trans* identity. Queer and Trans* Students of Color also cope with homophobia or transphobia from their own racial/ethnic group (Lipson et al., 2018). Additional support may be required in these cases.

Experiences of Queer and Trans* Students of Color in Higher Education

Queer and Trans* People of Color are subjected to heterosexism, racism, homophobia, and cisgenderism (Balsam et al., 2011; Johnson & Javier, 2017; Parmenter et al., 2021b). These issues tend to become magnified in smaller communities such as college campuses. Though Queer and Trans* Students

of Color may experience initial excitement at the prospect of a campus with other students of a sexual or gender minority, they often find that queer campus spaces are plagued with racism and lack support for students with multiple-marginalized identities (Blockett, 2017; Duran & Jones, 2019). Belongingness, however, is important to this population if they are to overcome the effects of marginalization (BrckaLorenz et al., 2019; Hill et al., 2021). In fact, Blockett (2017) found that Queer and Trans* Students of Color who did not establish community experienced feelings of isolation and did not fully engage in campus life. Connectedness and belonging are important to creating a self-sufficient community (Hudson & Romanelli, 2020). However, this support should be initiated by the institution rather than created from the labor of these students who contend with stress related to their multiple, intersecting identities (Hudson & Romanelli, 2020). Administrators must develop an understanding of the stress these students experience. Both the minority stress model and intersectionality can increase understanding of this need.

Minority Stress Model – Theoretical Framework

The original DSM classification of homosexuality as mental illness created lasting stigma that prevented researchers from understanding the higher rates of stress-related mental illness found in lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) people (Meyer, 2003, 2013). The minority stress model was developed to explain how stress related to LGB people's minority identity can increase the likelihood of mental health issues (Meyer, 2003, 2013). Meyer provided a conceptual framework for researchers and practitioners to understand how social stress increases mental illness among LGB people and the factors that could assuage the effects of this stress.

Minority stress begins with a person's environmental circumstances, including socioeconomic status, personality, race or ethnicity, and preexisting resilience (Meyer, 2003, 2013). Minority status – in the context of this study, sexuality, or gender – interacts with these environmental circumstances increasing vulnerability to general stressors and, by extension, distal minority stress processes. Distal minority stress processes, influenced by negative experiences, such as discrimination and victimization

based on a person's minority status, contribute to minority identity. Minority identity can include negative self-perceptions because of distal minority stress. This causes proximal minority stress which is comprised of anticipated discrimination, identity concealment and internalized homophobia. Minority stress, which effects can cause either positive or negative mental health outcomes, is influenced by negative social interactions. The positive or negative mental health outcomes may also be directly related to one's perception of their minority identity's characteristics. A positive view of their minority identity can lead to coping and social support which Meyer (2003, 2013) describes as ameliorating factors that act to reduce the effects of minority stress. This is also supported by Williams et al. (2017) who found that an established sense of community ameliorated the effects of minority stress among LGB people.

Though the minority stress model did not originally include trans* and gender nonconforming people, several studies have expanded the model to include these populations (Bockting et al., 2013; Hendricks & Testa, 2012). The model has also been used to assess minority stress in Queer and Trans* People of Color (Balsam et al., 2011). Bockting et al. (2013) found that the trans* population were also susceptible to minority stress in line with the model's tenets on proximal minority stress. The ameliorating factors of social support and coping skills were also found to mitigate their stress. Hendricks and Testa (2012) also found that the model who could be used by mental health service providers assess and treatment mental health in trans* populations. For Queer and Trans* People of Color, Balsam et al. (2011) used the minority stress model to create a measure to study the microaggressions they experienced. They believed that this population must cope with both minority stress and microaggressions within their respective communities. While the minority stress model focuses primarily on stress related one's queer or trans* identity, intersectionality can help administrators understand the overlapping systems of oppression that affect BQDS ability to succeed.

Intersectionality – Theoretical Framework

Intersectionality was originally created as a theoretical concept to address the ways dominant society contributed to the oppression of women of color (Crenshaw, 1991). Popular movements and

theories at the time sought to separate women's experiences by their race and gender. However, Crenshaw (1991) believed women of color face victimization based on both identities, making both identities equally important and inseparable. Intersectionality is also categorized as structural, political, and representational (Crenshaw, 1991). Structural intersectionality is related to the systemic structures and practices that perpetuate discrimination of people at the intersections of their marginalized identities, political intersectionality describes how political ideology serves to silence people with multiple-marginalized identities, and representative intersectionality brings attention to the way popularized notions of people with these identities inform the way others view their culture. Structural intersectionality is the primary focus of this current study since it relates to the barriers BQDS experience in connecting to services that act as ameliorating factors in mitigating minority stress. This use is in-line with Crenshaw's (1991) belief that intersectionality's tenets could be expanded to highlight the experiences of heterosexism along with race and gender. Intersectionality has been used across several disciplines, and as such, been used to increase educational researcher's and practitioner's understanding of the overlapping systems of oppression that affect diverse students (Chan et al., 2017). The experiences of BQDS should be centered in educational research and practice.

Queer and trans* students are silenced in higher education, leading to academic invisibility and further marginalization (Chan et al., 2017; Scharron-Del Rio, 2020). Scharron-Del Rio (2020) also believes this invisibility to be the cause of the historical lack of available scholarly materials available pertaining to diversity work. Available LGBTQ+ research is expected to cover all the experiences of the queer and trans* community when they vary across race, sexuality, and gender identity. Campus spaces tend to focus on one identity over another although all identities influence the way students experience campus life (Blockett, 2017; Duran & Jones, 2019). This creates a need for more inclusive spaces developed from an intersectional lens (Santa-Ramirez et al., 2020).

Studies of race and ethnicity do not present complete perspectives on the experiences of Queer and Trans* People of Color whose identities are heavily influenced by religion, gender norms, and familial connections (Worthen, 2018). Religious views have deep connections to African American and

Latinx cultures who, based on these beliefs, also report higher levels of disapproval of queer and trans* identities (Nadal et al., 2015; Worthen, 2018). Additionally, Nadal et al. (2015) found that gender norms, based on the masculine/feminine binary, led to frustration among their participants. Queer and Trans* People of Color do not often find automatic acceptance in the broader gay community (Parmenter et al., 2021a). Parmenter et al. (2021a) used intersectionality as a framework to understand the discrimination Queer and Trans* People of Color experience in the community. Their participants expressed frustration with discrimination, fetishism, and structural racism. These overlapping stressors exist at multiple levels (e.g., individual, institutional, systemic) can lead to psychological distress.

Using intersectionality as a research methodology can assist researchers develop studies that increase understanding of the experiences of people from multiple-marginalized identities. Intersectionality should be used in every aspect of the study, from developing research questions, creating research instruments or protocols, selecting participants, and data collection and analysis (Agosto & Roland, 2018; Bowleg, 2008; Duran & Jones 2019). This can allow for a thorough examination of systems of oppression that influence identity by paying attention to the way the confluence of systems, such as racism and homophobia, affect the way people relate to society and access services. However, research alone may not be enough to effect change. Duran and Jones (2018) believe that researchers and practitioners should work together to dismantle systems that prevent people from diverse backgrounds from success.

Narrative Inquiry

I used narrative inquiry as its mode of qualitative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is concerned with the stories of study participants (Clandinin, 2013). The primary objective of narrative inquirers, those researchers who utilize the approach, is the context and culture that shapes participants' experiences (Kim, 2016; O'Toole, 2018). Creating narratives often takes a relational approach where the researcher establishes a deeper connection than that of standard qualitative interview (Clandinin, 2013). Rather, the researcher and the participant establish rapport with the intent to construct the strongest narrative possible.

Narrative inquiry has been used in higher education to investigate the experiences of marginalized groups who otherwise might not have been centered in educational research (Azizova & Felder, 2017; Burton & Vincente, 2021; Steward, 2021). While there is precedent for the use of narrative inquiry to study marginalized groups, very little research exists on its use to investigate the experiences of BQDS who have complex stories and deserve to be brought to the center from the margins.

The preceding sections discussed academic literature important to understanding the experiences of BQDS. As graduate student enrollment increases, so will the need for understanding the program-related and life-related stressors that affect their ability to perform academically. The faculty-student relationship sets the tone for how graduate students, especially doctoral students, relate to their program and campus life. Despite the importance of campus services, such as the multicultural center, queer resource center, and counseling services, multiple studies have reported the underutilization of these services. Even more so, there is a lack of research on the use of services by graduate students. BQDS experience minority stress which overlaps with their multiply marginalized identities. Therefore, an understanding of these issues using the minority stress model and intersectionality can assist researchers and practitioners to create better campus services designed to assist BQDS. The relational nature of narrative inquiry may also assist these administrators break down research barriers to connect with these students' experiences in a way that will affect the development of applicable campus services.

Statement of the Problem

Campus services designed for doctoral students are often overlooked in both the allocation and creation of campus resources. These students have complex stressors and needs, and often spend more time on their studies than undergraduates while dealing with the pressures of adult life, such as maintaining relationships and managing finances. Graduate students can also have an isolated academic experience as they typically only interact with students and faculty in their cohort or department. This minimal exposure to campus life creates a need for administrators to develop targeted programming and campus services to reach this population. Campus services could reduce adverse health effects, such as stress, anxiety, or even stress-related illness. However, there is a low use of these services that can be

used to help students cope with stress and promote well-being. Queer and trans* doctoral students are more prone to mental illness and need support. This may be further heightened among Black queer doctoral students, who must not only contend with issues related to their sexual or gender identity – such as internalized homophobia, discrimination, and fear of being outed – but also racism and gender norms from within the queer community. People of Color must also contend with institutional racism from a system that continues to minoritize them. These additional stressors create an environment wherein BQDS can report higher rates of stress and anxiety.

Some campus services have been designed to help students cope with stressors that affect their ability to perform academically. However, college administrators need to create services that reach BQDS. They will need to assess if these services are effective in their ability to combat stress and anxiety. Though queer doctoral students are more vulnerable to mental health-related issues, research on this area lacks volume. I sought to add to the current body of research by investigating BQDS experiences in accessing campus services.

Purpose Statement

Using both intersectionality and the minority stress model as theoretical frameworks, the purpose of this narrative inquiry was to examine the experiences of BQDS with campus services and their ability to ameliorate minority stress and establish community with other students minoritized by their sexual or gender identity. This study sought to determine if the intersection of their racial and queer identities influenced the experiences of BQDS with campus services. Thus, the findings represent the experiences of BQDS with campus services to ameliorate minority stress and establish community with other students minoritized by their sexual or gender identity.

Research Questions

The overarching question guiding this study was: How have Black queer doctoral students (BQDS) coped with minority stress and establishing community among other students of minoritized sexual or gender identity? Additional sub questions I investigated were:

1. How do BQDS utilize campus services to cope with stress?
 - a. How do BQDS utilize these campus services to cope specifically with minority stress?
2. How do BQDS utilize faculty to cope with stress?
 - a. How do BQDS utilize faculty to cope with minority stress?
3. How do campus services assist BQDS establish community among other students of minoritized sexual or gender identity?
4. How do the intersections of their racial and sexual or gender identities influence BQDS experiences with campus services?

Significance of the Study

Current research on mental health and campus services is primarily oriented toward undergraduate students. However, doctoral students have increasingly complex needs. They experience increased stressors related to both their program and life experiences, and require additional support, possibly from campus services, to help them perform academically. The creation of better-informed campus services can help doctoral students develop these skills.

Addressing these students' needs affects multiple stakeholders. Campus administrators must think creatively if they are to reach students with multiple marginalized identities. It is also essential for executive-level leadership to understand these students' complex needs as they are tasked with setting budgets and mission statements that should reflect the diversity of their student population. University administrators who do not address these needs can appear apathetic to the plight of students from diverse backgrounds. Ultimately, BQDS will continue to face systemic barriers that add to an already stressful student experience. The entire campus population can benefit when leadership attends to the needs of students from the most marginalized groups. However, they must also acquire an understanding of the issue's complexity.

Procedures

Research Design

Though the study originally sought to include participants from Queer and Trans* Doctoral Students of Color (QTDSOC) across various racial backgrounds, it storied the experiences of Black Queer Doctoral Students (BQDS) and how they utilized campus services. I used a narrative inquiry to investigate their experiences of campus services to help them cope with minority stress and establish a sense of community with other students minoritized by their sexual or gender identity. Qualitative methods allow the researcher to become the key instrument by collecting data directly from conversations or observations and analyzing their responses for commonalities among the participants (Clandinin, 2013; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). This methodology allowed me to uncover details that a quantitative approach may not have been able to provide. I engaged my study's participants in a series of unstructured and semi-structured interviews to investigate their experiences. I used both the minority stress model and intersectionality as theoretical frameworks to guide this study.

Data Collection Method, Details, and Rationale

Setting

A pseudonym has been used for the research location, Southern Technical University (Southern Tech, STU). STU is a large public four-year research university located in a major city in the Southeast United States. It is primarily a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) focused school with several program offerings in these areas. About half of degrees awarded are Master of Science (MS) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). The interviews took place on Southern Tech's campus in a private location to allow for anonymity and convenience of the participants or virtually as appropriate. Approval from the institutional review board (IRB) at STU, the research site, and Georgia Southern University were obtained prior to investigation.

Participants

I leveraged my professional relationships with the staff in STU's Graduate Education Office, the LGBTQ Resource Center, multicultural offices, and academic departments to recruit study participants. I also recruited by contacting campus organizations that served minority student populations. Inclusion criteria for participants are: (a) a full-time or part-time doctoral student, (b) have been in their academic program for at least one year, (c) an established relationship with a research advisor, (d) a racial or ethnic minority, (e) identify as queer or trans*, and (f) utilized at least one campus service in addition to the relationship with their faculty advisor/mentor, the queer resource center, counseling services or multicultural center). I also used snowball sampling by contacting students who might have had the study's inclusion criteria and asked for names of other students, including themselves, and were interested in participating in the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Interested participants were directed to a screening survey created in Qualtrics to answer questions related to the inclusion criteria. Those students who met the criteria were contacted within one to two business days to schedule a screening conversation. Of the 24 respondents to the survey, five met the inclusion criteria. Of these, four shared the same racial identity as Black or African American. As such, I selected four Black queer doctoral students to be interviewed for this study.

Data Collection and Analysis

Narrative inquiry requires the researcher to establish rapport with their participants (Clandinin, 2013). As such, I met with each of the selected participants for a pre-interview conversation so that we could become better acquainted before beginning the process. Interview data was collected across two phases: a narration interview and a conversation interview, adapted from Kim (2016). Both interview phases were both video recorded with audio and transcribed via Zoom. I also took notes during each phase, making note of any important information, reactions, and body language. Though the participants were provided guiding questions prior to each interview, the narration phase was unstructured. I listened to the participant's stories with minimal interaction except to direct them to the provided guiding

questions. These guiding questions were made available to each participant prior to the start of each interview. The conversation phase was a more in-depth, semi-structured approach, where I asked questions on the participant's story during their narration as a means to construct their individual narrative (Kim, 2016). The guiding questions during the narration phase and semi-structured questions during the conversation phase were designed to capture BQDS experiences and their ability to establish community with other students of minoritized sexual or gender identity. The interview process with both the narration phase and conversation phase, were completed twice with an average duration of 80 minutes per participant.

I selected the Listening Guide (LG) as my method of analysis to construct each participant's *Bildungsroman*. *Bildungsroman* is a genre of narrative inquiry that focuses on stories of personal growth and identity development (Kim, 2016; Roberts, 2018). LG has been used to story the experiences of historically underrepresented groups (Tolman & Head, 2021; Woodcock, 2016). There is also precedence for its used among queer and Queer People of Color (Chmielewski, 2017; Davis, 2015). LG required me to listen to the participants' interviews multiple times. Each listen required an evaluation of different information (Gilligan, 2015, Tolman & Head, 2021; Woodcock, 2016). My analysis plan was based on Tolman and Head's (2021) suggestion of three listens and additional steps for analysis and narrative composition. These steps were completed after both interviews for each participant:

Step One: Observing the Landscape. Here, I took note of anything I found important during the interview such as body language and background noises (e.g., "ums" and pauses; Tolman & Head, 2021). This step also preserved data authenticity by requiring me to take note of my own responses to the answers the participants provided (Woodcock, 2016).

Step Two: Listening for the "I". This involved creating I-Poems which required attention to the use of the first person (e.g., **I** feel...", **You** never know how you will respond...") to understand personal relation to the outside world (Tolman & Head, 2021; Woodcock, 2016).

Step Three: Listening for Contrapuntal Voices. This step called for attention to my research questions. The purpose of this listen was to connect interview data with BQDS experiences with minority stress and establishing community with other students of minoritized sexual or gender identity (Tolman & Head, 2021).

Step Four: Voice Analysis and Assembling the Evidence. I constructed the *Bildungsroman* of each participant's experience during this step. This required a focus on personal growth, tensions between the ideal and the reality, participant's context in the narrative, enhancing the *Bildung*, or personal growth, of the participant and reader, the participant's experiences with questioning, dialogue, and doubt in their journey, and elements of striving through uncertainty, complexity, and transformation (Kim, 2016).

Step Five: Composing the Analysis. This step allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the narrative. Narrative construction took place after interview data had been collected from both interviews. Recorded interviews were analyzed using ATLAS.ti software to efficiently organize data. Once the narratives were constructed, I sent an edited copy of the narrative to each participant via email for their review and feedback. I also offered each participant a follow-up interview to go over the details. This member checking helped to maintain the credibility of the narratives (Clandinin, 2013). Participants were given two weeks to respond to my email and schedule a follow-up before final analysis and inclusion in the study.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness may be obtained through transferability, confirmability, credibility, and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this study, the detailed descriptions of my data collection and analysis plan allowed for transferability. Confirmability is ensured through researcher reflexivity by separating my own voice and biases from the participant's stories through member checks, LG analysis and peer debriefing. Member checks with my study's participants was also a tool to increase dependability of the findings. The LG analysis enhanced confirmability. Dependability was established

through peer debriefing. I identified three colleagues in the field to review the constructed narratives for researcher bias. I received feedback from two of the three peer reviewers.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

Limitations

The data from the study comes from an institution located in the southern United States and is considered a gay-friendly city. Larger universities in liberal states and cities are more likely to have a queer-friendly culture. This has the potential to influence students' ability to openly identify as queer and seek support in the form of campus services. If the current study were conducted at a college within a less gay-friendly area, the findings could vary depending on participants' openness to their identity and the support of the local community. The study also used the minority stress model and intersectionality as theoretical frameworks. Participant experiences with campus services may not have aligned with either framework.

Additionally, I chose a qualitative design. Given this, participants may have underplayed or downplayed their experiences to me since I was employed by Southern Tech. The ability for participants to clearly articulate their experiences can also create a limitation as interpretations can vary. The number of participants was also projected to be below what can be expected in a quantitative approach. This can affect the generalizability of the results.

Delimitations

Participants for the study included Black Queer Doctoral Students currently completing a PhD program on STU's main campus. To this end, students pursuing a master's degree of any variety (e.g., MS or MBA) or students completing a degree in a distance-learning format were excluded from the study. Students at the master's level were deemed less likely to have an established relationship with a research advisor. Additionally, those students in distance-learning, online only, and evening programs do not access campus the same way as those within the inclusion criteria. These differences could have potentially created too many variants affecting the study's outcomes. In excluding undergraduate students

from the study, I was able to investigate experiences particular to that of BQDS who are generally not the focus of research on campus services and their ability to help students cope with stress and establish community. Another delimitation is the chosen definition of campus services. For this current study, campus services were defined as the faculty-student relationship, multicultural centers, queer spaces and centers, and counseling services. A clear definition of campus services is necessary to ensure all participants speak to a similar experience.

Assumptions

I assumed the study's participants were open and honest about their experience with campus services at Southern Tech. I also assumed that BQDS would have encountered homophobia, transphobia and/or racism during their time at the institution.

Definition of Key Terms

The following terms are defined for research purposes:

Anticipated Discrimination – This is a component of the minority stress model which describes the anxiety queer people experience when they disclose their sexual or minority identity (Williams et al., 2017).

Belongingness – It is the sense of feeling included among marginalized groups as part of the larger community in spaces perceived as non-inclusive (Santa-Ramirez et al., 2020).

Bildungsroman – A genre of narrative inquiry that focuses on stories of hardship, resilience, and perseverance over a particular outcome (Kim & Zimmerman, 2017).

Black Queer Doctoral Students (BQDS) – Black Queer Doctoral Students were defined as doctoral students from an African, African American, or West Indian racial background.

Campus Services – This an umbrella term to describe services that were created to provide students with additional support, develop coping skills, and connect to community (Kane, 2013; Shuford, 2011; Winzer et al., 2018).

Counseling Services – Counseling services are campus services dedicated to supporting students who have mental health concerns, such as stress, anxiety, and depression (Sontag-Padilla et al., 2016).

Faculty-Student Relationship – The faculty-student relationship, whether the faculty serve as an advisor or mentor, affects the way students relate to campus life and are socialized into their academic discipline (McCallum et al., 2022). The faculty-student relationship was considered a campus service in the present study.

Identity Concealment – This is a component of the minority stress model in which a person actively hides their queer identity (Williams et al., 2017).

Internalized Homophobia (IH) – Internalized homophobia is the internalized stigma experienced among people of a gender or sexual minority. It has been known to greatly diminish self-acceptance and one's ability to cope (Meyer, 2013).

Intersectionality – Intersectionality is a theoretical framework that describes the experiences of multiple marginalized groups as inseparable from their race, gender, and sexual identities. The overlapping systems of oppression create systemic barriers that prevents marginalized groups from accessing certain resources that might be available to them due to the increased discrimination they face directly related to their identities (Crenshaw, 1991).

Marginalized Groups – Marginalized groups were defined in this study as students from underrepresented racial, ethnic, sexual, or gender backgrounds.

Microaggressions – Microaggressions are intentional and unintentional assaults – verbal, nonverbal, and policy-based – on members of a marginalized group that may be perceived as discrimination by marginalized persons (Sue et al., 2007).

Minority Stress Model – The minority stress model is a model of stressors – identity concealment, internalized homophobia, and anticipated discrimination – that explains the prevalence of mental illness among queer people (Meyer, 2013).

Multicultural Center – These campus centers are designed to support racially-diverse students by providing a safe space and advocating for them across campus (Shuford, 2011).

Narrative Inquiry – Narrative inquiry is a relational qualitative methodology that focuses on the telling and retelling of lived experiences of participant's stories by emphasizing the importance of stories as data (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Queer and Trans* Doctoral Students of Color (QTDSOC) – These are graduate Students of Color that also have a minoritized sexual or gender identity. For this study, Students of Color were defined as Black or African American, Native American or Indigenous, and Hispanic or LatinX descent.

Queer Resource Center & Spaces – These centers and spaces provide support and safe space to queer and trans* students as they complete their academic programs (Kane, 2013).

Racial Identity – Racial identity is a series of events that inform how racial minorities perceive themselves and others (Chan et al., 2017).

Whiteness – A concept rooted in systemic racism that maintains the needs of white cisgender heterosexual people as the societal norm (Patton & Haynes, 2020; Turner, et al. 2022).

Chapter Summary

As discussed, the doctoral student experience is unique and isolating. This also means that the stressors of this group have a dual focus on academic performance and maintaining real-life

responsibilities. Additionally, mental health among these students has become an increasing concern among college administrators. To this end, campus services have been created to assist them in learning coping skills and establishing community. Despite this, there is low use of these services among doctoral students. Those with marginalized identities, such as queer and trans* and/or a person of color, often need the most support. However, as the background has indicated, there is very little research concerning the experiences of BQDS. These students must overcome stress – related to their programs, life, and minority identity – to succeed in graduate school. However, administrators at present have limited research to provide better informed campus services. This current study sought to add to this knowledge base by investigating and reporting on the experiences of BQDS and their use of campus services.

Chapter Outline

From here, Chapter Two contains a review of current literature relevant to BQDS, including but not limited to mental health, campus services, and the theoretical frameworks guiding this study. In Chapter Three, I then discuss narrative inquiry in higher education and my story collection methodology. Thus, Chapter Four features the constructed narratives of the participants and a cross-case analysis of the findings. The study concludes in Chapter Five with a discussion of story findings and recommendations for practice and future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to define the different areas of concern for BQDS. The current state of graduate student mental health and QTDSOC's use of campus services, and the racism and homophobia they may experience are also discussed. This section also describes how the minority stress model and intersectionality can be used to investigate these concerns.

Graduate Student Stress

Higher education burdens students with additional stress that can adversely affect mental health. Four significant sources of stress among college students include school, finances, family relationships, and personal relationships (Peer et al., 2015). Jones et al. (2018) identified similar categories, with academic distress as the most prominent predictor. College students grapple with achievement pressures, including making deadlines, maintaining an acceptable grade point average, and studying for exams. Financial stress has also been correlated with academic distress (Baker et al., 2019; Britt et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2018). Balancing relationships with family, friends, and significant others can also take a toll (Van Berkel & Reeves, 2017). It is essential to recognize that these stressors often overlap with each other (Peer et al., 2015). Students can feel overwhelmed by all these stressors if they do not develop the skills to manage them.

There are key changes in the needs and responses to stress when the focus shifts to graduate students. Graduate students who enter their programs directly after receiving their bachelor's degree are currently members of Generation Z, or Gen Z. This generation is racially and ethnically diverse and openly expresses the need for attention to social justice (Cartwright-Stroupe & Shinnars, 2021). Cartwright-Stroupe and Shinnars (2021) also found Gen Z to show less resilience, efficacy, and optimism than Millennials or Generation X. This leaves them more vulnerable to mental health-related issues.

Graduate school comes with greater academic challenges for these students. This can lead to mental health concerns that are either created or aggravated by stress (McCallum et al., 2022). Stressors related to graduate student life tend to be specific to academic performance, finances, and other real-life matters (Van Berkel & Reeves, 2017). The researchers also found that 54% of their graduate student participants reported perceived stress – along with program-related stress – to be reported most frequently; balancing interpersonal relationships was also a major concern. Gallea et al. (2021) also found that Argentinian graduate students were more impacted by stress than the general working population. Cortisol, the hormone related to stress, was also more prevalent in graduate students than in the researchers' control group. These findings are also relevant to graduate students in the United States who are six times more likely to have experienced this psychological distress than the general population (Evans et al., 2018). Several factors have also been found to increase perceived stress. Kernan et al. (2009) measured 24 health concerns among graduate students and found that physical illness, stress, worrying over a friend or family member, and sleeping problems were graduate students' four major concerns. In addition, they often spent hours well beyond that of a full-time job on their studies. Rummel (2015) reported that psychology graduate students spent an average of 54 hours a week on school-related activities. Motivation can also play an important role in relating to their program and involvement in their education. To this end, in a study of the relationship between graduate student motivation, stress, and satisfaction, Yoo and Marshall (2021) found that a lack of motivation, or amotivation, was positively correlated with stress and negatively correlated with the satisfaction of their program.

Pursuing an advanced degree can also have a significant financial impact. If the student receives financial support from their program (such as a graduate assistantship, teaching assistantship, or research assistantship), it is often not enough to live comfortably (Myers et al., 2012). Those who reported low income compared to their cost of living tended to report more perceived stress (Myers et al., 2012). Financial insecurity, poor relationships with advisors/mentors, and institutional discrimination may also contribute to depressive symptoms in graduate students (Charles et al., 2021). The researchers also found

that sound support systems, institutional policies, and procedures supportive of graduate student mental health, and a generally positive outlook on their programs and life could reduce these negative factors. This research highlights a need for these students to have a sense of belonging at the program level and a need for better professional development and training. These things can positively impact well-being and lead to a decrease in anxiety about life post-graduate school.

A literature review on doctoral student stress echoes these needs and concerns. Researchers are only beginning to fully understand how financial stability, workload, career concerns, research supervision, and lack of transparency affect this group. There is also inconsistency in the terminology used to define these stressors (Mackie & Bates, 2019). There may also be larger systems that affect graduate student mental health. Bekkouche et al. (2022), through an integrative literature review, set out to explore the systemic pressures graduate students might face that affect their well-being. The researcher's analysis found four general systems: 1) an academic culture with burdensome codes and expectations, 2) socialization that exists within the institution and at the departmental level, 3) training and socialization available in their labs and cohorts, and 4) professional standards of achievement as defined by socioeconomic parameters. These systems interact, leaving graduate students vulnerable to academic-related stress, when their expectations and realities conflict. Sound support systems and the ability to cope with these stressors are paramount to their success.

Graduate students' support systems were also important in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (Kee, 2021). Kee (2021) found that the inability to access the support they were accustomed to and worrying over the health and well-being of their family members increased their anxiety. Fear and anxiety also increased in several aspects of their lives. Participants expressed a general fear of the unknown as they had a limited perception of the lasting effects of COVID-19. Additionally, one participant of Asian descent expressed concern about being a victim of a hate crime. International students also experienced anxiety over not knowing when they could return to their home countries as international borders began to close for an indeterminate amount of time (Kee, 2021). Managing the combined stress of the COVID

pandemic and graduate student life will often lead these students to consider campus services to help them improve their quality of life.

The stress graduate students experience can be related to the increased pressure to perform academically while acclimating to graduate academic life and trying to balance concerns related to personal relationships and finances. These complex stressors may require additional support to manage their mental health. Campus services have been designed for this purpose. The next section details services that might be commonly used by BQDS to increase their ability to cope.

Student Mental Health and Campus Services

Campus services provide an avenue for students to receive additional support for their overall well-being. These services can be used as intervention strategies to reduce the effects of anxiety and depression (Winzer et al., 2018). Services can include, but are not limited to, counseling services, multicultural centers, and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer+ (LGBTQ+) Resource Center. Campus services are available to help students thrive in a way that is inclusive of all people. Students who believe they can learn or improve on a skill, whether coping or study habits, are typically more likely to be open-minded about using available programs, thus increasing their utilization (Dietsche, 2012). The same can be said for graduate students who are often new to their campus, a novice to teaching or researching, and lack knowledge of the resources to succeed. To this end, the faculty relationship with (i.e., mentoring or advising) may also function as a campus service to graduate students as their program advisor may hold influence over their perception of graduate school and campus life (McCallum et al., 2022).

Previous research has shown that utilization of campus services among graduate students is relatively low. Results of Waight and Giordano (2018)'s mixed-methods study of doctoral students revealed that only 13% of participants reported use of campus services with only 17% reporting seeking help through their academic unit. Some participants felt that current campus services were not equipped to manage the complex problems related to graduate students' mental health. This is also supported by

McCallum et al. (2022) who also found that, though participants were aware of their mental health challenges, they were reluctant to seek assistance due to fears of mental health stigma and discrimination. Campus services, however, are important to the mental health and vitality of the student body. Thus, the purpose of the proceeding subsections is to describe the purpose of campus services that may be most relevant to BQDS. They include the faculty-student relationship, multicultural center, queer resource center, and counseling services. Review of the extant literature on these services revealed a dearth of published articles on graduate student utilization with multicultural and queer resource centers. Given this, research populations are expressly mentioned to bring attention to this gap in the literature.

Faculty-Student Relationships

A key contribution to the success of a doctoral student's education is reliant on their relationship with their advisor or mentor (McCallum et al., 2022). It can also create a positive environment where mental health and work-life balance are prioritized. There is also a difference between an advisor and a mentor. An advisor is charged with the academic progress of a student (Schlosser et al., 2003). This includes ensuring advisees accomplish key milestones through their time in the program, such as approving programs of study, preparation for any qualifying or candidacy exams, and assistance with research in completion of the student's final dissertation. Mentorship involves both career support and psychosocial support where the mentor coaches and challenges their mentee while providing role modeling behaviors and expectations that will result in student's success in the field (Kram, 1985, as cited in Williams et al., 2018; Lechuga, 2011). Mentors may also support mentees by becoming a listening ear for both positive and negative experiences. Additionally, while an advisor is traditionally assigned to a doctoral student, the same cannot be said for a mentor (Williams et al., 2018). Both are important in different ways. This section includes a discussion on both the advisor and mentor relationship, and the importance of mentors to Doctoral Students of Color.

Advisor-Advisee Relationships

The perceptions and use of the advising relationship can vary from advisors to advisee. In a study completed by Schlosser et al. (2003), the researchers investigated graduate student perceptions of the advisor-advisee relationship. A few years later, Schlosser coauthored another study exploring faculty perceptions of this relationship (Knox et al., 2006). Advisee perspectives of these relationships were categorized as satisfactory or unsatisfactory (Schlosser et al., 2003). Satisfied students characterized their advisors as easy to work with and respectful. They also had regular meetings with their advisors, received career advice, and had easy conflict resolution between themselves and their advisor when it arose. Conversely, unsatisfied students reported a more transactional relationship with their advisor and found it difficult to build a positive relationship beyond academic milestones and expectations. These unsatisfied students did not meet with their advisors regularly, seldom received career advice, and had unresolved conflicts with their advisor. While both groups of students expressed reticence in disclosing personal information with them, only satisfied students felt comfortable discussing their professional goals (Schlosser et al., 2003).

At the doctoral level, advisors are traditionally faculty, and thus, have more control over the advising relationship than that of the student (Knox et al., 2006). The overall purpose of this relationship, as described by faculty, is to provide the support necessary to guide an advisee to graduation. They are to take responsibility and have enough initiative and to complete this primary goal. Providing clear, concise, and honest communication with an advisee was described as beneficial to guiding students through any difficult experiences. Although some participants of Knox et al.'s (2006) study reported receiving some financial compensation for their time, and was described as a time-consuming commitment, these advisors described seeing their student accomplish their goals as the greatest benefit of the advising relationship. Advisors also described either positive traits or negative traits that contributed to the quality of the relationship. Positive traits were goal-direction, intelligence, passion, and hard-working and contributed to a positive relationship. Difficult relationships were described as having negative traits such

as laziness, entitlement, poor work ethic, and a lack of boundaries. Advisors also only described these negative traits in difficult relationships. The degree to which advisees had a positive or difficult relationship affected both the level of mutual respect and open, honest communication. Research difficulties were only reported in the difficult relationships. These types of relationships were also reported to be influenced by specific conflicts between the advisor and advisee that severely affected their ability to communicate (Knox et al., 2006).

While advisors expressed a strong desire to see advisees succeed, Knox et al. (2006) reported that advisors served the role without formal training; they learned from their personal experience as a graduate student or informally watching a more experienced advisor. Thus, the researchers suggested advisors receive professional development to strengthen their skillset.

The Mentor-Mentee Relationships and Doctoral Students of Color

Mentoring relationships are not monolithic and no two may look the same (Lechuga, 2011). Lechuga (2011) found that faculty mentors may think of this role as a mix of advisor, employer, instructor, and agent of socialization. The role of advisor goes beyond assisting a student with completing academic milestones. Rather, the mentor will also show concern for their mentee's mental health and well-being (Lechuga, 2011). As an instructor, faculty aim to develop skills, such as interpersonal communication, that will help their students be successful in the workplace. As an employer, a mentor seeks to develop their mentees into productive, competent researchers who can work independently towards the completion of research goals. The socialization role is concerned with introducing students into the norms and values of their academic discipline. The mentor may introduce their students to well-known faculty in their field or even emphasize the importance of public speaking by encouraging their mentees to present at conferences to gain exposure and experience (Lechuga, 2011). This provides students with perspective on the activities that can make one productive part of academia. Acquiring the latter may be important to Graduate Students of Color.

Graduate education can promote a culture of individualism where navigating power dynamics and creating publishable research are the norm (Turner et al., 2022). These cultural norms often center Whiteness which further marginalizes Graduate Students of Color making it harder for them to persist in their programs (Turner et al., 2022; Williams et al., 2018). This highlights the need for mentorship for these students who often have trouble in adjusting to graduate school culture. While these feelings are not entirely unique to this population, and commonly categorized as imposter syndrome, Turner et al. (2022) assert that this is an oversimplification of the issues and does not adequately address the systemic inequities these students must overcome to be successful. Having mentors who can assist marginalized students in their socialization into academic culture are paramount to their success (Lechuga, 2011; Williams et al., 2018). To highlight the experiences of Black Doctoral Students, Williams et al. (2018) also sought to center their experiences with socialization into graduate school. Their needs can also be based on past social and emotional experiences brought into their programs. These past experiences influence their ability to navigate academia and future career.

Black Doctoral Students must often manage their expectations of their programs when those expectations do not align with reality (Williams et al., 2018). Advisors may also expect developed research competencies from their advisees that often take years to acquire. The fear of being labeled lazy or incompetent might also impede students' ability to ask for help. They are often navigating multiple-marginalized, and intersecting difficulties in space that centers Whiteness. Concurrently, any negative experiences with Black faculty will have a greater impact on these doctoral students as there may be an expectation of greater concern or care from faculty of the same minoritized racial background (Williams et al., 2018).

Williams et al. (2018) also found two types of mentoring relationship were discussed by the study's participants: the traditional advisor-student dyad and self-generated networks of support. Self-generated networks can be comprised of faculty and students, and can help assuage graduate student frustrations, creating both a sense of community and facilitating persistence in their programs to

graduation (Williams et al., 2018). Trust was also revealed as a salient factor in the traditional advisor-student relationship. Productive advising relationships of people with the same racial identity can provide a guide to navigating racism in academia. However, in difficult relationships, students may not be able to connect with their mentors in a way that provides this guidance. These difficult relationships can also lead to further isolation and marginalization. In lieu of strong mentoring relationships, networks created helped fill the gaps (Williams et al., 2018).

Race and racism's position in academia can affect Graduate Students of Color's ability to acclimate to program culture (Williams et al., 2018). This further highlights the necessity of mentors for these students. However, faculty of color should not bear the burden of mentorship alone; all faculty should work to address their own discomfort and biases, both implicit and explicit (Turner et al., 2022). Additionally, a colorblind approach to mentoring can serve to further marginalize Graduate Students of Color. Turner et. al., (2022) and Williams et al., (2018) suggest this may be addressed by campus-wide opportunities, if not mandates, or professional development aimed at strengthening mentorship skills and addressing implicit and explicit bias.

Multicultural Centers

Beyond faculty-student relationships, higher education institutions have campus services that provide students with support. Multicultural centers (MCs) are one such campus service. The history of MCs can be traced back to the founding of Black cultural centers (BCCs) at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) which were of result of the modern civil rights movement of the 1960s (Patton, 2006; Shuford, 2011). Specifically, Affirmative Action allowed for race to be considered as part of admission criteria which opened the door for more diverse students across the country (Wood, 2022). Despite the increased presence of Black students at PWIs, it became clear that campus administrators were unprepared to handle the social, cultural, and academic needs of these students (Mingle, 1981 as cited in Patton, 2006). PWIs lacked the structure necessary to support their success as students were expected to assimilate to campus culture even though these campuses were not built for diversity (Shuford, 2011).

This blind equality was met with resistance from these racially diverse students (Shuford, 2011). BCCs were created as a response to demands for cultural representation.

In a study of Black undergraduate students at one PWI on their perceptions of BCCs, Patton (2006) found that these centers were a meaningful safe space where Black students felt they belonged. The BCC was seen as a place where these students could come and feel supported by center staff who showed concern for their overall wellbeing and support for their acclimation to campus life. The center was also deemed to be an important meeting spot that represented the Black historical and cultural presence on campus and brought together students from across the African Diaspora. Thus, BCCs were considered successful by campus administrators. As such, their framework was used to create multicultural centers (MCs; Shuford, 2011).

The purpose of MCs is to provide a safe space for students from racially diverse backgrounds (Shuford, 2011). They may also be used as a recruitment and retention tool to showcase diversity (Shuford, 2011). Malone (2020) found that MCs are often responsible for developing advocacy programs and cultural support across the institution. These centers are also seen as the university cultural hub, providing student support, facilitating cross-cultural communications, and furthering awareness of issues related to social justice (Malone, 2020). Student perceptions of MCs are also important to these causes. In a mixed-methods study of undergraduate and graduate students from diverse backgrounds, Reid and Ebede (2018) found that its participants believed the primary purpose of MCs were to provide support to minority students and promote campus diversity. These students also believed their relevancy was also linked to their ability to increase diversity awareness and provide a safe space to those minority students that otherwise felt unwelcome on campus.

Despite the great purpose of MCs, there are also several challenges that have been mentioned in extant literature. MCs' physical locations are important (McCoy, 2011; Patton, 2006). However, since these centers are often created because of a campus climate issue, they tend to be small and decentral to the core of campus design and lack departmental resources to move or build a larger office (McCoy,

2011). Indeed, MCs often have limited departmental funds to update their marketing and promotions and provide relevant programming and support to meet campus needs (McCoy, 2011). This may cause centers directors to be spread thin as they try to remedy campus diversity issues. Reid and Ebede (2018) also found that students believed that center reform and restructuring were necessary to ensure these centers' future on campus. In truth, the structure of MCs can vary depending on the size and needs of the campus (Malone, 2020; McCoy, 2011). Campus perception of the center may also present a challenge. Stakeholders invested in the dominant culture may view any attempt at campus diversity as white erasure (McCoy, 2011). Conversely, MCs may be viewed as a catchall to represent the diversity of all students. This was a concern of the Black undergraduate students in Patton's (2006) study. They believed that the combining the aims of BCCs into MCs would be taken as an attempt to centralize the experiences of all minoritized people when they have their own unique experiences with racism and discrimination. This fear was not unfounded as the increased push for campus diversity caused some institutions to expand the mission of BCCs to MCs (Hefner, 2002; Patton, 2006). Indeed, the continued progression of MCs to attempt to accommodate all campus diversity issues have led to a muddled purpose (Shuford, 2011). This highlights the necessity of spaces dedicated to populations such as those designed for queer and trans* students.

Despite attempts to locate scholarly literature on the role MCs may play in supporting graduate students, no such research could be found. This dearth of scholarly material further highlights a need for literature on the subject of MCs and graduate student support. I reached a similar conclusion in my attempt to locate research on the ways queer resource centers and spaces support graduate students when the search yielded no results. Thus, the information presented in the next section represent relevant research findings on how queer resource centers and spaces generally support queer and trans* students.

Queer Resource Centers and Spaces

Although the first queer campus center dates to as far back as 1972 at the University of Michigan, the death of Matthew Shepard in 1998 was the genesis of the LGBT movement on college campuses

(Fine, 2012; Kane, 2013). Shepard's death shook the nation and ushered in antidiscrimination and hate crime laws inclusive of sexual orientation (Fine, 2012). The general purpose of a campus queer resource center is to support the campus queer population – inclusive of faculty, staff, and students – by providing a safe space for them to gain emotional, academic, and social support as they navigate their way through campus culture (Kane, 2013). In interviewing queer resource center directors and primary leaders, Self and Hudson (2015) also found that the safety, legitimacy, and advocacy for the campus queer population to be the primary role of these centers. These centers have also been a starting point for queer-related activism and have been a major component for education and development of the queer campus population (Fine, 2012).

Multiple factors contribute to the presence of queer resource centers (Coley & Das, 2020; Fine, 2012; Kane, 2013). Coley and Das (2020) found that 62% of U.S. four-year, not-for-profit institutions had a queer student group of some kind. Additionally, institutions with larger student populations are also more likely to have a center for the queer campus population; these campuses tend to be more diverse, and as such, will have a need for such a space (Coley & Das, 2020; Fine, 2012; Kane, 2013). Colleges and universities with greater campus resources and budget are also more likely to have a queer center or space (Fine, 2012). States associated with more liberal social movements are also more likely to have a queer campus center than their conservative counterparts (Coley & Das, 2020; Fine, 2012). Gender may also play an important role. Coley and Das (2020) found that campuses with higher populations of students identifying as women were more likely to have such spaces. Institutional context (i.e., campus politics and mission), were also found by Kane (2013) to be important to center presence. Universities with antidiscrimination policies and a campus location approximate to a large off-campus queer community were also more likely to have a queer campus center.

Despite the purpose and presence of queer campus centers and spaces, they often have a difficult time connecting to both Queer Students of Color and trans* students (Marine & Nicolazzo, 2014; Poynter & Washington, 2005; Self & Hudson, 2015). A campus community is often perceived as a place where

people from all backgrounds are both wanted and represented, but often campus stakeholders do not take the time to properly understand students from diverse backgrounds (Poynter & Washington, 2005). Campus administrators are charged with addressing student needs across various populations with overlapping, and often competing concerns. This can be especially difficult when queer student groups have a history of being deemed a single-interest group (Poynter & Washington, 2005). However, in essence, the same can be said about fraternities, Bible groups, and athletic clubs.

Much like the larger LGBT+ community, queer campus spaces often center homonormative Whiteness (Self & Hudson, 2015). Self and Hudson (2015) define homonormative Whiteness as “the regulating norms that center queer norms in the context of white and male, and centers static and polar ideas of Whiteness and masculinity as normal” (p. 218). The reinforcement of these norms in queer campus centers further marginalize Queer and Trans* Students of Color, making these spaces an active participant in the systems of oppression that exist in larger society (Self & Hudson, 2015). Addressing this notion is also important to these students since they contend with both religious-based homophobia from their race/ethnic group and experience racism from the LGBT community (Poynter & Washington, 2005). To combat this, queer campus spaces must go beyond survival efforts and into the developmental and transformative. According to Self and Hudson (2015), survival efforts are those that perpetuate heteronormativity with a central purpose of satisfying the base needs for the presence of a queer space by the campus community. Their purpose is to provide the bare minimum to preserve space. Centers and spaces that are more developmental and transformative actively create space for those with multiple intersecting identities. They also become a place of respite for all queer identities and serve to challenge homonormative Whiteness by engaging in diversity work at the institutional level and beyond (Self & Hudson, 2015). These spaces, however, are not without their difficulties in addressing the needs of trans* students.

Marine and Nicolazzo (2014) sought to determine the challenges queer center staff experienced in reaching trans* students. The researchers found that inclusion of the “T” in “LGBTQ” resource center

was often added to names of these centers after center establishment. Those centers who did not have the “T” also did not have a defined focus on gender identity. This practice is similar to the gay rights movement of the 1960s – it initially centered trans* identities, but those efforts were often pushed to the margins when queer cismen and ciswomen adopted heteronormative standards (Marine & Nicolazzo, 2014). Most programming efforts that focused on trans* identities were concerned with educating people on these identities rather than for trans* students. For example, the objective of safe space training was referenced as a means to educate the campus population on how to be an ally. However, programs, such as support groups for trans* students, were virtually nonexistent (Marine & Nicolazzo, 2014). Support is necessary for students to thrive. Counseling services may also provide this to all students.

Counseling Services

Much like the multicultural center or queer resource centers or spaces, counseling services can provide useful tools for students to cope with the stressors of campus life. The use of counseling services often increases when students report active coping skills in times of hardship, stress, and anxiety, and overlapping health concerns (Bourdon et al., 2020; Sontag-Padilla et al., 2016). These services are designed to help students cope with mental illness, can help decrease self-stigma, improve ability to cope, and increase confidence in the disclosure of difficulties (Conley et al., 2020). This is especially important as one study found that an early diagnosis of depression can lead to better treatment and care (English & Campbell, 2019). Vidourek and Burbage (2019) also found that positive mental health increased undergraduate students’ coping ability. This decreased the barriers to care and increased help-seeking behavior. Decreasing stigma by introducing education and understanding of mental health needs created an environment where students could access care. One longitudinal study of the effects of an intervention program found that it helped boost undergraduate students’ GPAs and increased help-seeking behavior (Parnes et al., 2020). Indeed, the use of counseling services has seen steady increase over the years which could be attributed to the decrease in mental health stigma (Hernandez et al., 2022; Xiao et. al., 2017). Students may also understand the roles these services play in their matriculation.

Graduate students often experience stress that overwhelms their ability to meet program-related goals and deadlines (Hyun et al., 2006). This stress can also lead to anxiety or depression while they are trying to complete their programs. These issues may lead to use of the on-campus counseling services to help manage these issues (Benshoff et al., 2015). Often, graduate students have competing responsibilities. When they seek help from this service, it is to resolve or get assistance with managing mental health issues such as depression or anxiety (Benshoff et al., 2015; Hyun et al., 2006). They may also be able to establish community by participating in support groups, whether led by a counselor or graduate student, with other students who might be experiencing similar challenges – including stress management, study skills, or challenges specific to academics (Benshoff et al., 2015). Counselors may also have the opportunity to employ advanced intervention strategies for these students as they may be more cognitively developed than that of an undergraduate (Benshoff et al., 2015). Such intervention strategies may also be useful to queer and trans* students.

The need for counseling services can increase for queer students. In a study that compared the mental health needs of queer and non-queer undergraduates and graduates, Dunbar et al. (2017) found that the former was more likely to report mental health issues that impeded on their academic performance. Any negative experience related to their sexual identity, such as discrimination or harassment, were also named as factors that led to the increase in mental health concerns. An increase in these concerns also meant that queer students were more likely to use counseling services than non-queer students. Despite this, 61% of queer students who might have required counseling services did not use them (Dunbar et al., 2017). Mental health stigma, a lack of awareness on how to access services, and cost were commonly mentioned barriers to accessing care. Queer students should be made aware of the relevancy of counseling services in helping them overcome mental health concerns that decrease their ability to cope. The same can be said for Students of Color who may experience discrimination due to their race or ethnicity.

Counseling services may also be of greater use to Students of Color as they cope with racial hostilities in addition to academic-related stress (Hayes et al., 2011). Hayes et al.'s (2011) study of counseling services utilization for the general student body revealed that, while use of the counseling center did not differ across different races or ethnicities, Students of Color were three times more likely to have been hospitalized for psychological difficulties. They were also more likely to engage in non-suicidal self-harm or suicidal ideation. In fact, about one in six of this study's participants reported attempted suicide. These issues make utilization of the counseling services particularly important for Students of Color. To this end, Hayes et al. (2011) also found that ethnic or racial diversity among counseling services staff increased the number of clients of color seeking help. A lack of diverse counseling staff is but one barrier that exists to students' access to care.

In developing the Barriers to Seek Mental Health Counseling (BMHC) scale, Shea et al. (2019) found six types of barriers that prevented students from seeking assistance from counseling services. They include negative perceived value, discomfort with emotions, in-group stigma, lack of knowledge, and cultural barriers. Of these, the negative perceived value was a persistent indicator of lack of use of mental health services. This negative perceived value is important since 19% of graduate and undergraduate students in Sontag-Padilla et al.'s (2016) study self-reported psychological distress. Of that, 10% reported that distress affected their academic performance. They also found that only 20% of participants reported use of on- and off-campus counseling services. Perceptions of these services can impact their use. Policies that do not effectively target mental health, mental-health related stigma, and the lack of resources student-facing faculty and staff receive for training or professional development can also adversely affect their perception and use (Diplacito-DeRango, 2016). In relation to psychological barriers, Waight and Giordano (2018) found that approximately 28% of doctoral students were not aware of their own signs of depression and anxiety; 23% were too embarrassed by their difficulties to access care. Lack of knowledge and relevancy of campus services are also a common barrier among graduate students. McCallum et al. (2022) found that graduate students were often unaware of campus services available to them. One

participant of this study highlighted the importance of awareness of counseling services since they can be more affordable than those off-campus options.

In summary, the faculty relationship between graduate students and their advisors or mentors is important to the students' ability to accomplish their academic goals towards a successful career. These relationships can be complex, but often frame the way students view their programs and other campus services. A common campus service utilized by graduate students is counseling services. Graduate students are often more cognitively advanced than undergraduates and come to counseling to resolve a particular issue. They may also find community through support groups with other students experiencing similar difficulties. Community can also be found through connecting to the multicultural or queer resource center. Much is unknown about how graduate students, or specifically queer graduate students, connect and experience campus services. This presents an opportunity for researchers to explore those connections as queer youth of the current generation are more likely to self-harm and develop issues with drug dependency (Painter et al., 2018).

Experiences of Queer and Trans* Students in Higher Education

As mentioned in the previous section, Dunbar et al. (2017) also noted that queer college students experience higher stress levels than their cisgender heterosexual counterparts. They perceive greater instances of discrimination and report a higher rate of unmet mental health needs (Dunbar et al., 2017). Seelman et al. (2017) also found that queer and trans* students' self-esteem, stress, and anxiety were adversely affected by the microaggressions and victimization they experienced. Trans* undergraduate students were also found to have a negative association with victimization and self-esteem (Seelman et al., 2017). This could be attributed to the often-disproportionate experiences with anti-trans sentiments of violence.

However, a campus environment with anti-discrimination policies inclusive of LGBTQIA+ students and includes queer student groups has been found to have lower instances of microaggressions which, in turn, leads to fewer reports of perceived stress (Woodford et al., 2018). This is especially

important to understand since Dunbar et al. (2017) found that queer students are at a greater risk of experiencing trouble with their studies that are related to mental health, exhibit signs of a mental break, are subject to discrimination, and report high stress. To this end, queer college students have utilized mental health-related resources at higher rates than their heterosexual counterparts (Baams et al., 2018). Garvey and Rankin (2014) found that an unwelcoming campus climate can also lead to higher use of campus services among trans* students. This highlights the importance of on-campus programming designed to create safe spaces for students and empower their allies to confront homophobia and transphobia (Bardhoshi et al., 2018). Queer and trans* students need a place to heal from the victimization they may have faced, such as safe spaces and support resources (Kulik et al., 2017). Awareness of these programs is especially important for this student population. This often starts with college counseling centers, as these centers play a large role in linking queer students to their necessary outlets (McKinley et al., 2015). However, data have shown that a very low number of centers provide easy access to these resources (Wright & McKinley, 2011). Queer and trans* students may use campus services as a springboard to connect with other students of minoritized sexual or gender identity (Garvey & Rankin, 2014). Indeed, Hill et al. (2021) found that the connections queer and trans* undergraduate students made with other students of the similar identities increased their ability to thrive.

Concerning queer graduate students, there is sparse research available examining how stress affects this growing population. Administrators need this information to help these students thrive within and beyond the classroom. Research is even more scarce for graduate students who are Queer and Trans* People of Color who often require even more specialized support than their white counterparts.

Race & Racism in Higher Education

People of Color in higher education contend with stressors unique to their race or ethnicity. In particular, Black students experience perceived racial discrimination (PRD; Jones et al., 2014). Lee et al. (2020) found that the prevalence of PRD varied depending on socio-ecological factors such as education, income, and the racial/ethnic demographics of their neighborhood. In a study of African American male

graduate and undergraduate students, Smith (2007) found that they were portrayed as violent, incompetent predators, and incapable of success, rather than productive members of society. Racism is also present in the belief that African Americans are less intelligent than white people, and thus, unable to achieve in higher education (Harper et al., 2009). These beliefs have created systemic barriers that have prevented African Americans academic achievement. The negative perception of being labeled an intellectually inferior predator can lead to poor mental health and increased stress with an inability to cope.

Perceived racism has a profound impact on a persons' stress processes. In a review of the literature, Kim (2014) cited that the perception of racist stimuli affects the coping strategies of racial/ethnic minorities, which in turn can produce negative health outcomes due to modified responses to stress, both psychologically and physiologically. Thus, discrimination can also result in chronic stress, which can be detrimental to mental health. Coping strategies and solid support are required to mitigate the negative impact of perceived racism, lowering the linkage between discrimination, stress, and depression (Kim, 2014). Additionally, early experiences with anticipated racism may create social activism that can affect how People of Color develop their worldviews. It was found that youth who are exposed to racial oppression will have a predisposition to social action to fight against inequality (Hope et al., 2020). Hope et al. (2020) also found that anticipated racism had both a physiological and psychological effect on Black male youth's involvement in activism. Experiences such as these can help inform one's racial identity.

Black students experience with racism may be multilevel with the worst experiences coming from various sources, such as professors, police officers, and service providers (Volpe et al., 2020). Volpe et al. (2020) also found that this multilevel racism exists at the institutional, individual, cultural, and online levels. Institutional racism was the most prevalent form in receiving varying service levels in businesses. This can also include being racially profiled by the police and being graded more harshly by professors. In this study, students reported being excluded or rejected by their peers or being the target of racial slurs or statements at the individual level. Negative statements about work ethic or literacy were identified as proponents of cultural racism. This level of racism was also found to include jokes about regional accents

and unwanted touching and comments about physical attributes. Online or vicarious racism included overhearing jokes or being subjected to derogatory comments in an online format. These experiences with racism can cause undue stress on the individual (Volpe et al., 2020).

For Students of Color, perceived mental health stigma also adds difficulty to help-seeking behavior. In a study completed by Lipson et al. (2018), the most reported barrier to accessing treatment was the preference to cope with the issues on their own. This led to a low prevalence of treatment of mental illness among racial minority groups. These groups were also found to be more commonly meet the criteria for mental health problems (Lipson et al., 2018). Additionally, the researchers noted these criteria included measures of depression, anxiety, self-harm, suicidal ideation, acknowledged mental health problems, impairment, and flourishing. Students of Color also tended to create their own support system of family, friends, and informal networks. Given this, there is an increased need for mental health awareness within these communities. Additionally, Burton and Vicente (2021) reported that support systems may be beneficial to Students of Color in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) environments.

In exploring the experiences of underrepresented groups in an undergraduate minority training and research program at a southern doctoral degree granting institution, Burton and Vicente (2021) found mentoring along with belonging and inclusion among the results of the training program's ability to advance STEM degree attainment and advancement to graduate school. Mentoring was described as a landing spot for students to ask technical questions that only faculty involved in STEM could answer. Students with mentors were able to receive personalized advice and incentives that pushed them to greater success. These findings are also in line with research on the importance of mentoring to Doctoral Students of Color (Turner et al., 2022; Williams et al., 2018). These mentoring structures have helped these students become acclimated to the graduate academic environment.

Azizova and Felder (2017) sought to address the racially sanitized culture of STEAM (science, technology, engineering, agriculture, and mathematics) programs among minoritized doctoral students. In

this context, a racially sanitized culture refers to the way STEAM doctoral programs center white hegemony in the socialization of its students by expecting minoritized students to assimilate to norms held as the only acceptable means to exist within these environments (Azizova & Felder, 2017). Students who do not adapt to these norms are often considered undesirable and find themselves feeling further marginalized and isolated by the department and faculty. The participants reported feeling excluded from the white middle-class cultural norms of the educational environment (Azizova & Felder, 2017). These students also felt their existence and persistence in this culture did not increase belongingness. Thus, primary motivations for degree attainment were related to the acquisition of certain skills, such as research competency. Degree completion was also seen as leveraging their education as a professional steppingstone that certifies their accomplishments. Participants also wanted to attain a terminal degree so that they could give back to their respective communities (Azizova & Felder, 2017). This section reveals the need to provide adequate support for Doctoral Students of Color as they complete their programs and become socialized to academic culture. However, much is unknown about the experiences of QTDSOC in these environments. The following section reviews literature pertaining to Queer and Trans* Students of Color in the college environment.

Experiences of Queer and Trans* Students of Color in Higher Education

While both People of Color and queer people remain the most targeted groups for hate crimes, Queer and Trans* People of Color remain disproportionately affected (Johnson & Javier, 2017). In the development of the LGBT People of Color Microaggressions Scale, Balsam et al. (2011) found that participants reported racism in the LGBT Community, heterosexist views in their racial/ethnic group, relationship and dating problems, concerns about immigration status, and rejection by other Queer and Trans* People of Color, to be the most reported problems within this multiply marginalized group. Participants in the study completed by Parmenter et al. (2021b) reported feelings of alienation, exploitation, and often invisibility in the broader queer community. Though their queer identity gave them access to community, they often faced discrimination and exclusion due to tokenism, fetishism, and

gatekeeping. Self-established community served as an important, ameliorating factor in combating the marginalization they encountered. This connectedness increased their ability to cope and become empowered.

Queer and Trans* Students of Color are often victimized based on race as well as their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression (Johnson & Javier, 2017). In the presence of queer-specific campus services, their needs can be overlooked by college administrators. Queer and Trans* Students of Color often arrive at college campuses searching for supportive networks within these formalized opportunities to build support and establish community. For most, this is the first time they have access to a plethora of individuals who may share their identity (Duran & Jones, 2019). Aguilar-Hernández (2020) found that having queer faculty of color serve as mentors benefitted Queer and Trans* Students of Color by boosting representation. They were able to see themselves reflected in their instructors.

However, racism within white queer spaces is ever-present. These queer spaces can also lack racial diversity. Black Queer Students are not protected within this context and face marginalization (Blockett, 2017). This can lead to feelings of isolation as they begin to withdraw from campus social life. To find support, the onus is often placed on Black Queer Students to establish and maintain their own community even if the resources have not been provided (Blockett, 2017). These students who often feel unwelcomed on campus, may begin to distrust the administration's ability to provide support (Stewart, 2021). As Duran and Jones (2019) also found, this distrust can lead to queer and trans* student populations to develop their own sense of community among those with similar interests and goals.

Further, this speaks to a need for belongingness among Queer and Trans* Students of Color; there is a need to feel validated among their peers. Finding community that affirms multiple identities are also important to their ability to thrive (Hill et al., 2021). BrickaLorenz et al. (2019) also found that coping with racism may have adversely affected these students' ability to feel as though they belong in the broader queer community. The importance of validation was highlighted in Hudson and Romanelli's

(2020) study, which found that communities that foster acceptance, safety, and support allow for emotional well-being. Participants reported strong feelings of connectedness, understanding, and being part of something bigger than themselves. This created a network by which community members could rely on each other for resources to improve their health. However, for Queer and Trans* Students of Color, this belongingness is tied to smaller communities built by the students rather than what has been provided by the institution (Hudson & Romanelli, 2020). This labor challenges the commonly held belief that higher education is consciously diverse when students with multiple identities are not affirmed through available programming. This also reaffirms the need for college administrators to develop more specialized, creative approaches if they are to reach BQDS (Wright & McKinley, 2011).

To program effectively, college administrators must have a clear understanding of intersectionality. Queer theory exists to challenge labels and binary thinking (Chan et al., 2017). Since it is linked to disruption, Queer and Trans* People of Color can often find social support for their racial/gender identity but encounter limited support as they develop their queer identity. Garvey et al. (2019) found that graduates of PWIs reported feeling the pressure of reconciling their racial, sexual, and gender identities as all were in constant conflict. This can lead to the concealment of Queer and Trans* People of Color's identity to thrive within their race. The use of an intersectionality framework can help assuage stereotypes and assumptions that are part of society (Chan et al., 2017). Queer and Trans* People of Color identity is a complex, fluid process of self-understanding. Groups dedicated to reaffirming their multiple identities are necessary to their development (Blockett, 2017). However, the existence of these spaces is not easily found within the institutional context. These students intersecting identities need to be further understood to provide the best resources to assist them with success in graduate school, including managing stress.

Minority Stress Model – Theoretical Framework

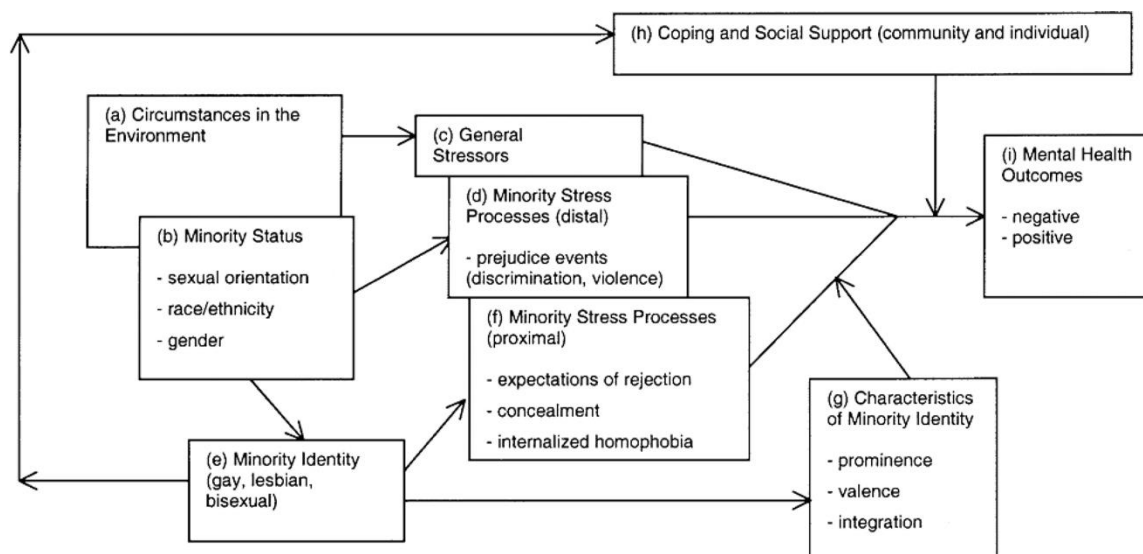
Queer people are more susceptible to negative mental health outcomes and distress than their heterosexual counterparts (Baams et al., 2018; Dunbar et al., 2017; Kelleher, 2009). A negative

association with one's queer identity can also contribute to minority stress (Griffin et al., 2018). The minority stress model posits that excessive exposure to negative stimuli is likely to cause an increase in mental health issues. It was created to conceptualize the higher prevalence of mental health issues among LGB persons due to social stress (Meyer, 2003, 2013). Meyer (2003, 2013) also set out to determine factors that could help decrease these concerns. This section details the major components of the model, its history, updates, and modifications of the model.

Creating the Minority Stress Model

Major Components

Please refer to Figure 1 for a diagram of the minority stress model (Meyer, 2003, 2013). Minority stress' effect on mental health can create either a positive or negative mental outcome (box i). The origin of minority stress often begins with the circumstances in the environment (box a). These environmental circumstances are affected by advantages or disadvantages present in a person's background – to include socioeconomic status, personality, race or ethnicity, and preexisting resilience (Meyer, 2003, 2013). Minority status (box b), such as sexuality or gender identity, are an important part of the circumstances in the environment. The result of these circumstances makes one more susceptible to stress, general stressors (box c), such as the choosing to go to graduate school or financial worries, and distal minority stress processes (box d) that are directly related to one's minority status – including violence and discrimination based on race, sexuality, or gender. Minority identity (box e), such as a person's sexual identity, can also be a result of minority status. Minority identity may also include negative self-perceptions as a result of experiencing marginalization (Miller & Major, 2000, as cited in Meyer, 2003, 2013). Proximal minority stress (box f) then, is formed from a confluence of these negative self-perceptions, and is operationalized as anticipated discrimination, identity concealment, and internalized homophobia. This minority stress is experienced at an individual level which can include expectations of rejection, concealment, and internalized homophobia (Meyer, 2003, 2013; Williams et al., 2017).

Figure 1**Minority Stress Processes in Queer People**

Note. The figure is reproduced from Meyer (2003), p. 8.

Additionally, while Meyer (2003, 2013) points out that minority identity may not be the only stressor, characteristics of minority identity (box g) can be perceived by the individual as either be a source of strength or weakness. When this identity is viewed as a source of strength, coping and social support (box h) are developed as a result. Developing healthy coping mechanisms and community inclusion are considered ameliorating factors (not in figure), in mitigating minority stress (Meyer, 2003, 2013).

Minority Stress Model Origins and Use

The origin of the model is rooted in the need to understand higher rates of stress in LGB people. Meyer (2003, 2013) argues that this gap is directly related to the classification, and later declassification, of homosexuality as a mental illness. Though homosexuality no longer appears in the DSM, the effects have been long-lasting. The stigma of this classification prevented researchers from effectively studying higher rates of stress among LGB people. The most popularized explanation of this was related to the stigma, prejudice, and discrimination they faced. These factors created a social culture that led to an increase in mental health issues among a group who experiences higher rates of stigma (Meyer, 2003,

2013). Using meta-analyses, Meyer reviewed research that claimed LGB persons were more susceptible to mental illness than heterosexuals. The minority stress model was conceptualized to understand the stressors they experienced. His research explored several areas: the conceptualization of stress, minority stress, minority stress as it applies to the LGB populations, and stress-ameliorating factors (Meyer, 2003, 2013).

The conceptualization of stress suggests that social structures could also be sources of stress and, as such, could lead to negative health effects. In relation to this, social stress could have a strong influence on the lives of those with a stigmatized existence, i.e., lower socioeconomic status, race, gender, or sexuality (Meyer, 2003, 2013). In extending social stress theory, minority stress explains the stress experienced directly by stigmatized individuals. This complexity allowed the minority stress model to evolve from several sociological and social psychological theories (Meyer, 2003, 2013). Social theories are focused on alienation from social structures, norms, and institutions; social psychological theories give context to intergroup relations and the impact of minority status on health.

Minority stress, then, has three components: it is 1) unique to the stigmatized group, 2) chronic, in that it is sustained by maintained social structures, and 3) socially-based – stemming from social processes and institutions that occur in society that characterize a person or group (Meyer, 2003, 2013). For the LGB population, Meyer (2003, 2013) also made a distinction between distal and proximal experiences of minority stress for the LGB population. Distal stressors are objective events and conditions; proximal experiences are personal and subjective to the individual and their perceptions. The LGB minority stress process is therefore operationalized – from distal to proximal – as 1) external stressful events, occurring over time and in the moment, 2) what is expected in those circumstances and the attention they require, and 3) the internalized negative attitudes of society. Given this, Meyer (2003, 2013) argued that the LGB minority identity could be linked to vigilant interactions with others (anticipated discrimination), withholding identity for fear of violence (identity concealment), or internalized negativity (internalized homophobia).

Williams et al. (2017) found a relationship among self-reported health, distress, and these vigilant interactions. This stress can be ameliorated by establishing a sense of community among the population. As its presence increases, there can also be a decline in the use of services designed to help queer people thrive in society. Anxiety history is also greatly impacted by dealing with anticipated discrimination, internalized homophobia, and identity concealment (Griffin et al., 2018). This anxiety is social in creation, placing queer people at a distinct disadvantage when developing coping mechanisms (Williams et al., 2017). This can affect how they interact with the world around them. A sense of community can serve as an ameliorating factor by allowing queer, stigmatized people to connect to social support in an environment where stress may be less impactful (Meyer, 2003, 2013). This is supported by Salfas et al.'s (2019) findings that community involvement predicted fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety among gay and bisexual men. However, these effects were only shown to impact men who expressed low internalized homophobia. Seelman et al. (2017) also used the minority stress model as a framework to examine the correlation between both victimization and microaggressions and psychological distress – perceived stress and anxiety – among queer and trans* undergraduate students. In line with the model, the authors found that experiences with victimization were often correlated with low self-esteem. This underscores the need for access to care to help queer people resolve issues related to their identity. Indeed, internalized homophobia can have a lasting impact on a person's ability to access community support. It is discussed further below.

Internalized Homophobia. Internalized homophobia refers to a queer person's internal struggle to accept their own sexuality or gender, and the external process of excluding and rejecting other queer people based on queerness (Yolac & Meric, 2021). It has been described as the most problematic tenet of the minority stress model (Meyer & Dean, 1999 as cited in Frost & Meyer, 2009). Internalized homophobia can be self-driven and does not necessarily require outside stressors. To this end, Russell and Bohan (2006) believe that internalized homophobia “is grounded not in the interior but in an intersection between interiority and social and political contexts” (p. 346). In other words, internalized homophobia is

first created externally by societal views of sexuality and gender. Both queer and heterosexual people participate in society, but whereas heterosexuals experience homophobia from an external vantage point, queer people internalize these views which often lead them on the path to self-destruction if not adequately addressed (Russell & Bohan, 2006).

Multiple studies have linked internalized homophobia with higher levels of depression and negative effects on relationship quality (Bissonette & Szymanski, 2019; Frost & Meyer, 2009; Yolac & Meric, 2021). Yolac and Meric (2021) evaluated internalized homophobia and its relation to depression in the queer population of Turkey. They found it had negative health effects on its study participants with bisexuals indicating the highest prevalence. Additionally, queer participants who were experiencing financial insecurity also exhibited greater levels of internalized homophobia. Sense of community also proved to be an important factor in managing internalized homophobia as it was also found to be greater in those who were not out to their family or friends (Yolac & Meric, 2021). Internalized homophobia was also suggested to have profound impact on depression as it was found in higher levels of queer people who were struggling with their sexuality or gender identity (Yolac & Meric, 2021). These findings are supported by Frost and Meyer's (2009) study of New York City residents which found that internalized homophobia may contribute to depression. In fact, their results also suggest that these depressive symptoms, that might have been brought on by internalized homophobia, can be detrimental to relationship quality, both romantic and platonic (Frost & Meyer, 2009). Overall, internalized homophobia was found to have to be positively correlated with relationship problems of its participants (Frost & Meyer, 2009). Both Yolac and Meric (2021) and Frost and Meyer (2009) focused their studies of the topic on the general queer population of either a country or city. However, internalized homophobia may also impact queer college students and underrepresented minorities (Bissonette & Szymanski, 2019; Moradi et al., 2010).

In their study of the relationship between minority stressors and depression among LGBQ college students, Bissonette and Szymanski (2019) wanted to determine if peer group involvement served to

mitigate the relationship between internalized homophobia and depression. It was found that a sense of community was important to the reduction of depressive symptoms in its mostly undergraduate study population (Bissonette & Szymanski, 2019). These support systems can lead to developing better coping skills that be used to combat internalized homophobia (Bissonette & Szymanski, 2019).

Despite the perception that racially or ethnically minoritized lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) people experience internalized homophobia at higher rates than their White LGB counterparts, Moradi et al. (2010) found no significant difference in internalized homophobia between White and non-White LGB people. This finding suggests that discourse that characterizes LGB minorities as more prone to internalized homophobia may not be accurate. Nonetheless, Moradi et al. (2010) did find that the LGB minorities reported lower levels of outness in a group of people where familial and religious communities are of an increased importance. This highlights the need for greater community among queer communities of color. Use of the minority stress model with queer communities of color is but one of several updates it has seen since its creation. Some of those are reviewed in the next section.

Significant Modifications and Updates to the Minority Stress Model

Several studies have advanced the minority stress model by studying its components, such as internalized homophobia or anticipated discrimination. Burns et al. (2012) used minority stress to study how the attributional styles of self-identified gay men can affect their resilience when faced with anticipated discrimination. Attributional style can be described as a person's tendency to infer the cause of an event or behavior based on their own behavior or actions, those directly to the event, or a larger social order (Sam, n.d.). The study's findings suggested that attribution theory adds context to the minority stress model by examining the way discriminatory events added to gay men's social fears. In another study, Puckett et al. (2018) studied the effects of decentering on internalized heterosexism, or internalized homophobia. Decentering is the ability for a person to view thoughts and feelings as events rather than the ones' truth (Safran & Segal, 1990, as cited in Puckett et al., 2018). The researchers found that decentering helped decrease the psychological distress of internalized heterosexism by reducing the

emotional toll of participants' negative experiences with their sexuality. The model has also been adapted to study minority stress in other members of the LGBTQ+ community beyond those who identify lesbian, gay, or bisexual people.

Trans* and gender nonconforming people were not included in the original design of the minority stress model. However, several studies have updated the model to be more inclusive (Bockting et al, 2013; Hendricks & Testa, 2012; Testa et al., 2015). Bockting et al. (2013) used it to assess the relationship of minority stress and ameliorating factors in a large sample of the trans* population in the US. Their findings were in line with the model's original prediction of reported stress and stigma. The study also found that support systems, such as peer support and pride in one's trans* identity, helped to moderate psychological distress related to their identity. Additionally, the minority stress model was used by Testa et al. (2015) to create the Gender Minority Stress and Resilience (GMSR) Measure to address the gap in a reliable measure to assess the minority stress and resilience factors in trans* and gender nonconforming people. Hendricks and Testa (2012) also stressed the necessity of the minority stress model in providing culturally competent assessment and perspective of the trans* experience to mental health clinicians involved in their care. These updates to the minority stress model are critical to understanding stressors and experiences of all queer people.

As its related to Queer and Trans* People of Color, the minority stress model was the basis for the creation the LGBT People of Color (LGBT-POC) Microaggression Scale (Balsam et al, 2011). According to Balsam et al. (2011), LGBT-POC are multiple marginalized and must often contend with microaggressions related to racism and heterosexism. Their research is important as this group must contend with both the components of minority stress and experiences of racism and microaggressions within the community. The scale was created to bridge gaps in the literature to address the unique stressors of this population. The minority stress model can also be used to explain stress in queer and trans* students.

Intersectionality – Theoretical Framework

Origins of Intersectionality

The original purpose of intersectionality was to describe the experiences of women of color as inseparable from their race and gender (Crenshaw, 1991). Crenshaw contended that both antiracist and feminist theories rendered women of color's experiences invisible by either their race or gender identity. However, both identities influence women of color's ability to maneuver in the world, and are therefore, equally important. Intersectionality allows for the critical examination of racial and gender hegemony that is based in the belief that these identities must be separated (Crenshaw, 1991). While the theory was originally used to interrogate the aforementioned identities, Crenshaw (1991) also reasoned that intersectionality could be expanded to highlight the experiences of classism, heterosexism, and ageism.

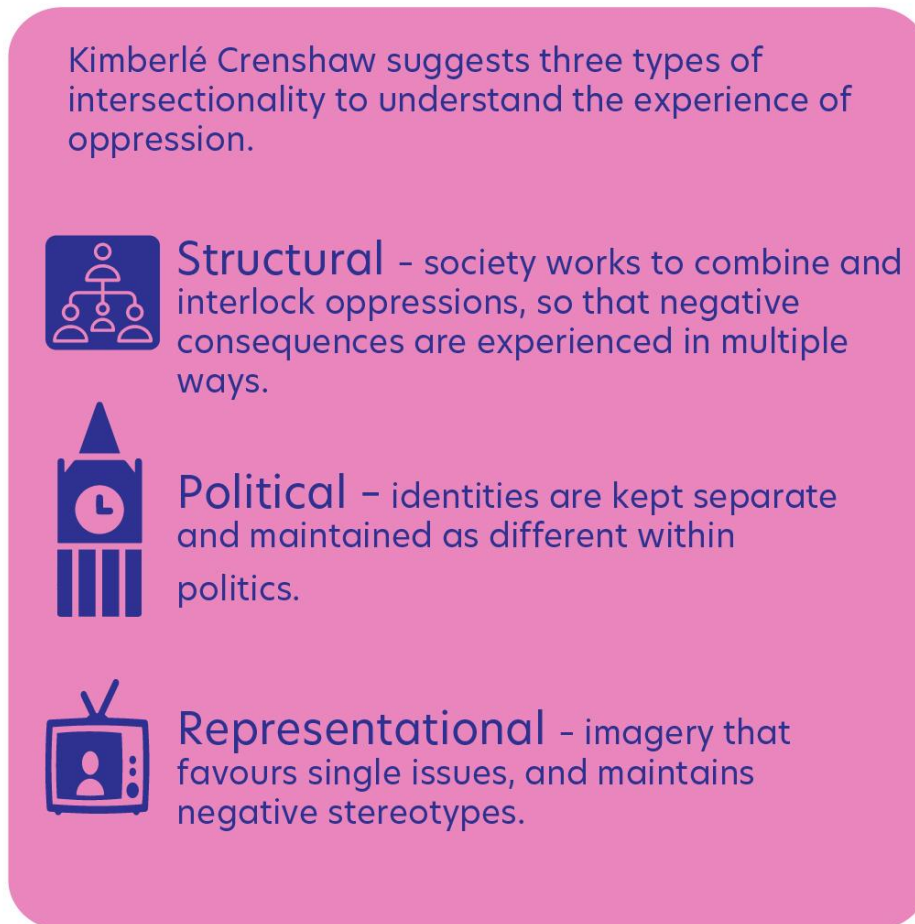
Crenshaw (1991) detailed three categories of intersectionality: structural, political, and representational. A visual representation of the three categories can be found in Figure 2. Structural intersectionality is related to the systemic structures and practices that perpetuate discrimination of people at the intersections of their marginalized identities. Political intersectionality details how certain politics designed to silence one or more identities have caused people with them to be further marginalized, and therefore more vulnerable to violence and subjugation. Representational intersectionality focuses on how the dominant thoughts and ideas inform the way popular culture views marginalized people. Thus, further disempowering them at the intersection of their identities (Crenshaw, 1991). Although all three categories are important to the experiences of underrepresented groups, I believe structural intersectionality is most relevant to the current study since it directly influences the experiences of Black Queer People both in and outside of higher education. Further examination of structural intersectionality reveals that multiple systems of oppression influence the experiences of underrepresented groups (Crenshaw, 1991). This means that common services designed to help the whole of society will be rendered ineffective to alleviate their struggles. Experiences of underrepresented groups, such as Black Queer People, interact with existing societal burdens that creates further marginalization. The services created for them are often

in direct competition for resources as those dedicated to white, cisgender people (Crenshaw, 1991).

Crenshaw also believed reformation of the current system to be inadequate in addressing these concerns.

These inadequacies must be fully realized and acknowledged if they are to be resolved.

As a theoretical framework, intersectionality acknowledges that, though systems can overlap for people with multiple-marginalized identities, no single theory can explain them all (Harris & Leonardo, 2018). Harris and Leonardo (2018) also believe that intersectionality has ushered in new perspectives on issues that require attention by inspiring scholars to take a more nuanced approach to understand the role of hegemonic society in silencing identities that have been historically overlooked in scholarship. This includes, but is not limited to, sexual minority oppression, critical disability theory, and Asian American jurisprudence. Additionally, the framework has allowed for a more critical, intentional lens into how competing oppressions often systematically interlock and compete for attention (Harris & Leonardo, 2018). Social justice, therefore, is constantly moving, providing endless possibilities for research and practice of intersectionality. An oppressed group will always face systemic marginalization and will require attention. In this way, intersectionality lends well to a postmodernist view that new oppressed groups will continue to populate and present a need for recognition and support, and thus, the cause for social justice is never-ending (Harris & Leonardo, 2018).

Figure 2**Three Categories of Intersectionality**

Note. Retrieved online from the Alliance for Inclusive Education.

Intersectionality in Higher Education

The use of intersectionality in higher education allows for practitioners to take a more critical approach to the lived experiences of people from multiple-marginalized groups since they are often silenced and unheard (Chan et al., 2017). Specifically, focusing on a single aspect of a Black Queer Person's identity, such as their race or gender, does not allow understanding of one category over another (Bowleg, 2012). Further, these multiple-marginalized identities build on systems of oppression and are

important to development (Santa-Ramirez et al., 2020). At the collegiate level, institutions need to be more inclusive of multiple identities. Based on their findings, Santa-Ramirez et al. (2020) suggested this be done by focusing on intersectional identities, the creation of culture-based programming – paying particular attention to matters of diversity, inclusion, and equity in all aspects of the university, and ensuring that the campus is a safe space for all students. These suggestions are even more salient for those with a queer or trans* identity. Scharrón-Del Río (2020) reported feelings of academic invisibility for people with multiple-marginalized identities in spaces where they seek to be reaffirmed by the academic community. This invisibility results in a lack of safe space for Queer and Trans* People of Color, including Queer Black People. Academic invisibility is also evident in major publications' historical lack of diversity-related articles (Scharrón-Del Río, 2020). This sends a message that ethnocultural and intersectional scholarship does not have value in the academic world. For example, the author described how LGBTQ research is used as an umbrella term to cover all people within the queer community. However, the current body represents a dearth of research that speaks to topics of interlocking oppressions.

An analysis of the literature presented in this subsection revealed links to either structural or representational intersectionality. Life at the margins presents challenges that be explained through structural intersectionality. This is addressed through Bowleg's (2012) study of Black queer men found that the majority of participants perceived their lives to be more complicated as a direct consequence of interlocking oppressions, such as racial microaggressions in the mainstream and white queer communities and heteronormativity in the Black communities.

Chan et al. (2017) also provides an overview of how intersectionality can be used through a social justice lens, at both the micro and macro levels. At the microlevel, the framework can help foster a welcoming and inclusive environment for Queer and Trans* People of Color. This meant being intentional about creating diversity statements that represent sexual orientation and gender identity as more than just lifestyle choices, encouraging college mental health professionals to have a greater sense

of empathy and awareness of the structural oppressions that affect Queer and Trans* People of Color's ability to cope, and encouraging faculty and staff to create supportive environments that are more culturally sensitive to sexuality and gender identity. At the macrolevel, Chan et al. (2017) also suggests that an intersectional framework be used to address the extent to which higher education policy is structurally aligned to uphold or tear down systems of oppression.

The authors also mention how multiple marginalized identities may render a person invisible:

Although it is common for unique lived experiences of [Queer People of Color] to appear less frequently, the evidence from the empirical and conceptual literature details the constant invisibility in discriminatory experiences at the microlevel and the lack of protections and safety at the macrolevel – both serving as a function of the historical origins of hegemonic structures constructed by members of privileged groups. (Chan et al., 2017, p. 24)

This concept of academic invisibility can be reasoned to be linked to representational intersectionality since invisibility can serve to silence Queer and Trans* People of Color in higher education. Scharrón-Del Río (2020) addresses the issue of representation she experienced at a national conference when she did not see herself reflected any of the provided diversity groups, "I longed for a community where all parts of myself could be affirmed, and I found that home did not seem to exist" (Scharrón-Del Río, 2020, p. 296). The lack of representation can also be found in the academy's aforementioned tendency to use "queer" as a monolith to define the experience of all queer and trans* people. This invisibility makes Queer and Trans* People of Color feel unsafe in academic spaces and serves to push them further into the margins (Scharrón-Del Río, 2020) These representational difficulties can also affect one's sense of belonging as evidenced by Santa-Ramirez et al. (2020) who found that first-generation undergraduate Students of Color's perception of non-inclusive campus culture served as an impetus for them to create informal spaces where they could be supported.

Intersectional Experiences of Queer and Trans* People of Color

Race and ethnicity were not found to add understanding to queer-specific perspectives; the complete picture could be found in religious, gender, and family experiences (Worthen, 2018). Heavily religious cultures, such as African American/Black and LatinX, tend to report higher disapproval of queer identities. Christian beliefs of friends and family members were reported as the primary reason for disapproval of one's sexuality (Nadal et al., 2015).

In interviewing gay and bisexual Black men, Bowleg (2012) found that the advantages of their male identity did little to assuage the disadvantages of being both Black and queer. Black queer men reported working harder than their white male counterparts to achieve success. Additionally, most participants expressed the need to prioritize being Black over their queerness with some even going as far as to conceal the latter. On a broader scale, society operates under gender-based stereotypes of lesbian and gay men, where lesbians are assumed masculine and gay men feminine (Nadal et al., 2015). Gay men reported being especially frustrated by this as their sexual identity did not necessarily define their interests. Thus, people with multiple marginalized identities are more likely to report higher microaggressions than those with one marginalized identity. The multiple stressors of being queer and a Person of Color can overlap and create distress.

Perceived or anticipated discrimination has been one focus of intersectionality study in queer people. Parmenter et al. (2021a) used intersectionality to investigate the experiences of queer emerging adults, ages 18-25, with discrimination in the queer community. Participants expressed frustration with the gatekeeping and discrimination they experienced in the broader queer community. Those from gender and sexual minorities also reported issues, such as queerphobia, cisgenderism, and feelings of exclusion if their identity was not deemed as important to the broader queer community. Additionally, queer participants of color experienced discrimination, fetishism, and structural racism. The centering of white cisgender gay men contributed to a lack of Queer People of Color representation in the community (Parmenter et al., 2021a).

Using intersectionality to explain the experiences of Queer and Trans* People of Color has been applied from a representational or structural perspective. Queer and Trans* People of Color were found to have strong feelings of disappointment in the queer centering of Whiteness and lack of representation of Queer and Trans* People of Color in the media (Parmenter et al., 2021a). This was attributed to structural racism where multiple systems interact to purport White hegemony as normal. In terms of structural intersectionality, Bowleg (2012) highlights the need to explore intersectional identities as whole identities rather than separate from one another. For example, a Black queer man's perspective is influenced by being Black and queer and a man as opposed to Black or queer or a man. The social structures interlock so that his experience is influenced by the confluence of those identities. Similarly, Nadal et al. (2015) found that people with multiple marginalized identities might experience microaggressions and discrimination that were more complex based on social structures at play – such as religious ideology, gender roles, and racism. Additionally, Worthen (2018) sought to address the ways in which gender, sexuality, race, and other structural forms of oppression and privilege effected students' perceptions of queer and trans* students. They found that multiple systems, including race, ethnicity, religion, and family affected the way college students either accepted or dismissed queer and trans* issues. Much like Chan et al. (2017) from the previous section, the study recommended support for campus policies and programs that addressed multiple systems of oppression (Worthen, 2018).

Intersectionality as Research Methodology

In using intersectionality as a research methodology, Bowleg (2008) uses the challenges she encountered in her studies of Black women identifying as lesbians to offer best practices for measuring intersectionality as well as analyzing and interpreting data with the framework. According to the researcher, this starts with constructing questions that go beyond collecting demographic data. These questions should be intentional in addressing issues common for people with multiple marginalized identities such as minority stress processes, racism, prejudice, and discrimination (Bowleg, 2008). Indeed, these questions should be addressed by all aspects of a person's identity rather than focusing on one at a

time. An intersectional analysis of the Black queer experience should focus on the intersections of these identities even when those experiences are implicit, rather than explicit, in participants' responses (Bowleg, 2008). The analysis should bring the underlying structural inequities that exist in society from the margins to center. Interpreting data then should focus on those underlying implications and connect them to intersectionality (Bowleg, 2008). Intersectionality should also be intentional in all aspects of a study, including theory selection, methodology, recruiting participants, data collection, and analysis (Agosto & Roland, 2018; Duran & Jones, 2019). This focus centers the origin of the framework on the Black women and women of color responsible for intersectionality's proliferation, emphasize an interrogation of the overlocking systems of oppression that exist, and influence broader systems of power that influence identity. Duran and Jones (2019) also emphasized that scholarship alone will not always lead to change. Researchers must work alongside practitioners to confront these interlocking power structures, so these changes are effective for all they affect.

Investigating BQDS's Experiences Using the Minority Stress and Intersectionality

The minority stress model and intersectionality are similar in that they both focus on the unique experiences of minoritized groups. The minority stress model contends that the stress experienced in relation to queer identity are both distal – related to society – and proximal – related to perception. Minoritized people shape their identity through those experiences. Access to resources and support groups serve as ameliorating factors by establishing community among people of a similar sexual or gender minority. Intersectionality brings attention to the overlapping systems of oppression the prevent marginalized people from accessing resources due to structural, political, and representational challenges. These challenges may be specific to race, gender, and sexual orientation which is only the partial focus of the minority stress model. The minority stress model's primary aim is to assist sexual and gender minorities to accept their minority status, so they are better able to cope with those related stressors. Intersectionality interrogates those systems of oppression unique to marginalized groups and provides a guide to changing them.

Using both the minority stress model and intersectionality can help administrators and practitioners understand the difficulties BQDS encounter while trying to complete their programs. Coping with stress – related to their programs or identities – is equally important as addressing the overlapping systems of oppression that prevent multiply marginalized people from accessing service to help them succeed (Duran & Jones, 2020; Meyer, 2003, 2013). The minority stress model creates an understanding of the stressors and circumstances that cause higher levels of stress, thus aiding in their ability to cope and establish community. The broader queer community centers Whiteness which pushes racial and gender minorities to the margins. Multicultural centers position heteronormativity which also pushes sexual and gender minorities to the margins. Intersectionality can assist both researchers and practitioners interrogate these spaces to create an environment where all identities are supported. This is important to BQDS who have complex stressors and experiences directly related to their intersectional identities and the placement of these multiply marginalized identities within systems of power.

Both the minority stress model and intersectionality were selected as theoretical frameworks since they can address the needs and experiences of marginalized and underrepresented students. The minority stress model emphasizes the importance of community to ameliorate minority stress. Whereas intersectionality is used to address how the campus experience of BQDS is impeded by systemic barriers that may lead to greater discrimination and a lack of use of campus services. Use of both theoretical frameworks was evident in both the research questions that guided the study, and the construction of interview questions that addressed the participants experience with campus services and minority stress as multiple marginalized people. Full details regarding the use of the minority stress model and intersectionality in this study can be found in Chapter Five.

Summary

In summary, the prevalence of graduate students coping with mental illness will continue to increase as graduate student enrollment continues to rise. These students will inevitably turn to their program advisor and other campus services for support. However, the literature states that there is a low

use of these services among those who need them the most. This is further complicated by a lack of institutional policy that properly directs these students or that combats mental health stigma. Universities need to create such a focus especially when we consider the stressors that people with marginalized identities must combat to be successful. Graduate students of an underrepresented minority must also overcome the fatigue of racial discrimination. They are trying to exist in spaces that were originally designed for the white elite. Students with a queer identity must also confront homophobia, both internal and external. However, BQDS have multiple marginalized identities and must contend with stressors related to being queer or trans*, their program, and race. Using an understanding of intersectionality and the minority stress model can help college administrators develop programming designed to help BQDS cope with these multiple stressors to achieve success.

CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

Overview

Narrative inquiry was my chosen method of qualitative inquiry for the present study. Below, you will find an overview of the methodology and its use and relevance in education. It is also my belief that the stories of BQDS deserve to be brought to the center of research. As explained below, the biographical nature of narrative inquiry is but one way to tell these stories. To this end, I have selected *Bildungsroman*, a genre of narrative inquiry, to story four BQDS experiences with campus services to help them cope with minority stress and establish a sense of community with other students of minoritized sexual or gender identity. The Listening Guide aided me in the creation of each participant's narratives. My positionality statement, member checks with participants, and peer debriefing were also selected to enhance the trustworthiness of my results.

Purpose Statement

Using both intersectionality and the minority stress model as theoretical frameworks, this narrative inquiry examined the experiences of BQDS with campus services and their ability to help them cope with minority stress and establish a sense of community with other students of minoritized sexual or gender identity. This study also intended to determine if the intersection of their racial and queer or trans* identities influenced the experiences of BQDS with campus services. Thus, the findings represent the experiences of BQDS with campus services to ameliorate minority stress and establish community with other students minoritized by their sexual or gender identity.

Research Questions

The overarching question guiding this study was: How have Black Queer Doctoral Students (BQDS) coped with minority stress and establishing community among other students of minoritized sexual or gender identity? Additional sub questions I investigated were:

1. How do BQDS utilize campus services to cope with stress?

- a. How do BQDS utilize these campus services to cope specifically with minority stress?
2. How do BQDS utilize faculty to cope with stress?
 - a. How do BQDS utilize faculty to cope with minority stress?
3. How do campus services assist BQDS establish community among other students of minoritized sexual or gender identity?
4. How do the intersections of their racial and sexual or gender identities influence BQDS experiences with campus services?

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry takes a storyteller's approach to honor the lived experiences of participants (Clandinin, 2013). This qualitative approach provides structure and helps researchers to identify patterns in those experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In addition, narrative inquiry takes a diverse, interdisciplinary methodological approach to tell those stories and is specifically important to social science fields due its method of characterizing experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Kim, 2016). The biographical nature of narrative inquiry is also what defines its difference from other qualitative methodologies (O'Toole, 2018). To understand narrative inquiry, the researchers must also understand the difference between a story and a narrative (Kim, 2016). While the former is a presentation of narrative events in chronological order, a narrative can tell a story in a way that frames a particular point of view or experience. It may also present part of a story as part of the telling. To this end, the primary concern of narrative inquirers, those researchers who utilize this qualitative methodology, is how participants shape their own worlds through their stories. The way these stories are constructed by participants may also depend on their culture and cultural resources (O'Toole, 2018). O'Toole (2018) also believes that this interaction between existing cultural narratives and the creation of new ones is what can make their construction interesting to researchers. Narrative inquirers may create narratives through listening, observing, living alongside participants, and analyzing texts or artifacts (Clandinin, 2013). They may also

take a relational approach with participants where the stories of both parties are represented in the research. This is most effectively achieved when the narrative inquirer and participant become acquainted beyond the surface interviewer-interviewee relationship. This places special emphasis on the relationship itself to make sense of the important elements of the story and its context.

In designing a study that uses narrative inquiry, inquirers must address personal, practical, and social justifications (Clandinin, 2013). Personal justifications allow inquirers to understand their investment in the research problem so they can effectively identify the story presented in the research relationship. Attention to these justifications allows narrative inquirers to provide finished constructed narratives. Practical justifications allow for flexibility as the story shifts through telling and then retelling. This is important due to education's tendency to change focus over time. Finally, social justifications are related to social justice initiatives or the creation of new methodology, and as such, can be theoretical or social action justifications. Those that are theoretical stem from the creation and advancement of disciplines and methodologies whereas social justifications are rooted in social justice goals and actions (Clandinin, 2013).

There can be two starting points when creating a narrative (Clandinin, 2013). The first begins with the lived experience where the inquirer engages in conversations with participants who tell stories of their experience. Alternatively, inquirers may begin with telling stories by coming alongside the participant to create a comprehensive representation of their lives. I have come from the starting point of telling stories as a means to fully understand my participants' point of view. This starting point is important to my study since it lends well to one-on-one semi-structured interview protocols where BQDS were asked to engage in dialogue about their experience in coping with minority stress and establish a sense of community amongst other students minoritized by their sexual or gender identity (Clandinin, 2013).

Use of Narrative Inquiry in Higher Education

Narrative inquiry has been important to educational philosophy. Stories can provide necessary insight into pertinent background information that can inform how we view education (Dunne, 2016 as cited in Kim, 2016). According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), such a view is important for understanding ourselves and the experiences of participants. Narrative inquiry has also transformed the field of education by advancing research methods, teaching, learning, and teacher education (Kim, 2016).

Narrative inquiry design has been used to explore the experiences of traditionally marginalized groups as well as the racialized experiences of doctoral students in STEM programs (Azizova & Felder, 2017; Burton & Vincente, 2021; Stewart, 2021). Burton and Vicente (2018) wanted to explore the experiences of underrepresented students in an undergraduate minority training program at a large predominantly white doctoral degree-granting institution located in the Southern United States. Their multiple case study design used extensive narratives to story their participants' experiences using the triangulation of data – interviews, archival program data, and reflexive journaling. The interviews were the narrative contribution of the study. This was accomplished by using an unstructured interview style to story the experiences of the 10 participants. These interviews were guided by one broad prompt, “Tell me about your college experience,” as a way to encourage the participants to tell their stories (Burton & Vincente, 2018, p. 193). The participants were then asked additional follow-up questions as a means to construct the narratives. The narrative analysis was later completed using cross-case analysis of codes and themes from video recordings and audio transcripts. The themes of the study, confidence as scientists, family influence, mentoring, and belonging and inclusion, were presented as multiple case narratives to show the connectivity of the themes across the participant's stories (Burton & Vincente, 2018). Each theme contained a summary of the theme followed by quotations from each participant. Narrative inquiry has also been used to explore the experiences of marginalized doctoral students in research environments.

To address the effects of centering of Whiteness in socializing minoritized students in science, technology, engineering, agricultural and mathematics (STEAM) doctoral programs, Azizova and Felder

(2017) built their study around four basic assumptions of doctoral socialization. They are 1) socialization is essential to education, 2) the process is informed by both the student's racial or ethnic experience as a student and their ability to engross themselves in their program, 3) socialization is culturally influenced by one's preexisting value system, and 4) socialization occurs within a historical context of as student's experience with previous organizations. I mention these assumptions since they provide a framework for the study's methodological rationale.

Their use of narrative inquiry utilized active interviews since the authors believed this approach to assist in the meaning-making process (Azizova & Felder, 2017). Four participants were selected for the study and were interviewed twice. The stories were combined with the researcher's field notes as a means to incorporate the voices of the participant and the researchers and allow for complete interpretation of each participant's experience (Azizova & Felder, 2017). The data were then analyzed using a three-stage process to further identify themes. The data were then combined to convey the trends of meaning that were constructed from the participant's narratives. Those trends were then organized into themes. Two of those, othering and intrinsic foundation and forces of the agency, were presented in the study. The findings section was a detailed discussion of the study's theoretical framework supported by direct quotations from the participants.

Narrative inquiry in education has also been used to story the experiences of Queer and Trans* Students of Color who are traditionally marginalized on campus. Centering the experiences of students who exist at the margins is an important feature of this qualitative inquiry. As such, Stewart (2021) used a technique in narrative inquiry, known as genre blurring, to story the experiences of undergraduate students who engaged in sex work and the effects systems of power had on their social identities. This technique combines two narrative genres, in this case life story and literary based approaches, to explore participant experiences (Kim, 2016; Stewart, 2021). The technique "pushes researchers to consider all factors of the research to create the best design for the study" (Stewart, 2021, p. 4). Stewart (2021) intentionally sought Black and Queer and Trans* Students of Color who engaged in sex work during their

time as undergraduates, yielding seven participants across race, sexual, and gender identities. He examined participants' personal writings (literary), along with the retelling of their personal experiences as sex workers (life story), to construct a complete narrative picture. In line with the overall methodological rationale, data were collected through a series of interviews and artifact examination. Two interviews were conducted. Interview One focused on participant's' backgrounds and how they go into sex work. Interview Two focused on their time as sex workers in context of their experience as students (Stewart, 2021). Each interview was completed across two phases, outlined by Kim (2016) as the narration phase and the conversation phase. The narration phase allows participants to speak uninterrupted about life stories, building trust with the researcher, before going into the conversation phase. The interviewer plays a more active role in constructing stories in the conversation phase by asking more detailed questions on the detail the participants present in the narration phase (Kim, 2016). Stewart (2021) completed this process twice over a one-week period with each participant. To collect literary-based data, the researcher asked each participant to write a letter to their past self before they made the decision to go into sex work, and a second letter to a campus facility or stakeholder about their experience as a student who engaged in sex work. These data were analyzed using the Listening Guide (LG), which is discussed in greater detail in a subsequent section. In brief, the LG has four phases where the researcher listens to interview audio multiple times to center participants' stories that may have a deep connection to the researcher (Gilligan, 2015). The results of the study revealed that Stewart's participants felt unwelcome on their college campuses. They expressed distrust in their institutions' ability to provide adequate support. The researcher also highlights the importance of centering the needs of those that exist within multiple margins, so these invisible populations are provided meaningful support (Stewart, 2021).

While narrative inquiry in higher education has been used to investigate the experiences of underrepresented groups, very little research exists on the experiences of BQDS. Their stories are often complex and deserve to be brought from the margins to the center. Their stories are often those of personal triumph and overcoming adversity. Thus, I have selected narrative inquiry so that researchers

and administrators can gain an understanding of how BQDS relate to campus life, cope with stress, and establish a sense of community with students of minoritized sexual or gender identity.

Genre of Narrative Inquiry: *Bildungsroman*

Narrative inquiry can take on several forms, or genres, to story a participant's experiences. One such narrative genre is *Bildungsroman*. A German literary term, *Bildungsroman* is concerned with a participant's personal growth and identity development (Kim, 2016). *Bildungsroman* also places greater emphasis on a participant's triumph over hardship, resilience, and perseverance – or *Bildung* – rather than a particular outcome (Kim & Zimmerman, 2017). These stories can feature the conflict between perception and reality and focus on the elements of persisting through uncertainty, complexity, and transformation (Roberts, 2008). The genre also emphasizes the importance of questioning, dialogue, and doubt in one's personal journey. Questioning can emphasize the internal or external conflict between perception and reality by asking questions to come to terms with doubt. Doubt refers to the internal conflict due to uncertainty. Dialogue, then, may include questioning and doubt in conversation one may have with themselves or others. This may also provide context to personal character development (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.; Roberts, 2008). Roberts (2008) also states “part of the role of the *Bildungsroman* is to remind us that we have a story to tell, and while we can question and wrestle with what life throws at us, we cannot halt the flow of experience” (p. 252). The stories of BQDS do not just begin in higher education. For some, their journey to higher education has been influenced by the conflict between what their life should be as opposed to the reality. Overcoming systemic racism and homophobia requires resilience through the unknown. *Bildungsroman* provides a necessary lens to form their narratives.

Uses of Bildungsroman in Education. There is already precedence for the use of this narrative genre in education. To explore teacher dispositions, Kim and Zimmerman (2017) used *Bildungsroman* to detail a high school teacher's journey from chronically depressed to a justice-oriented teacher. Kim and Zimmerman (2017) selected *Bildungsroman* due to the genre's ability to story a person's growth in the context of their own personal journey, character development, and the conflict between their reality and

what is possible. With the features detailed above, the researchers reconstructed a teacher's story of overcoming depression to become a teacher who centered a justice-oriented style of teaching. Data were collected from one German-born white woman who was enrolled in an action research class during the fall semester of 2014 and included two life-story interviews along with an autobiographical essay, weekly reflective journal, and action research paper. The research article contains actual text from the *Bildungsroman* constructed by the researcher.

The participant's constructed *Bildungsroman* is presented in the study. The researchers gave each section of the narrative a subtitle to convey the overall meaning of the section. For example, the first section is titled, "Before teaching: A long and winding road" (Kim & Zimmerman, 2017, p. 240). This section described the participant's failed suicide attempt and how the action galvanized her need for change in her life. So, she decided to follow her military husband from Germany to the Midwestern United States for a fresh start. The participant's character development is described in the next section as she decided to return to school at age 36 to be a teacher – her childhood dream. Becoming a teacher is presented as a conflict between reality and what is possible since she failed the entrance exams to pursue higher education in her country. Her teachers in Germany also made her doubt her academic abilities. Becoming an educator is presented in the narrative as the culmination of her personal journey. The text also included one of her journal entries, which presented in her own words, is used to emphasize her personal journey through self-doubt to become a teacher.

Rationale for Use of Narrative Inquiry and *Bildungsroman* to study BQDS

As has been described, narrative inquiry serves to story the experiences of populations that have been historically marginalized in educational research. BQDS are exemplary of such marginalization. Students in this population have lifelong experiences with systems of oppression such as racism, homophobia, heterosexism, cisgenderism, and transphobia. The most available research on these issues in higher education focuses on undergraduate students. Additionally, most research on graduate students tend to group master's and doctoral students into one category when the experiences of advanced degree

students can vary across these different levels. Narrative inquiry helped me center the experiences of some of the marginalized students in higher education.

The personal journeys of BQDS getting to and persisting through doctoral education are best suited for *Bildungsroman*. Their experiences often involve stories of personal growth and overcoming challenges both internal (e.g., anxiety, stress, depression) and external (e.g., systems of oppression, minority stress). The selected genre allowed me to focus on those experiences without focusing on a particular outcome. *Bildungsroman* can allow BQDS experiences to exist as they are. This un-alteration can be important to understanding how BQDS make meaning of their experiences with minority stress and systemic barriers that may have prevented their ability to succeed with the hope that administrators will design campus services with BQDS needs in mind.

Setting

A pseudonym was used for the research location, Southern Technical University (Southern Tech, STU) is a large public four-year university, with very high doctoral research activity, located in a major city in the American Southeast. It is primarily a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) focused institution with several program offerings in these areas. Sixty percent (60%) of degrees awarded for Academic Year 2021-2022 were at the graduate-level, this includes Master of Business Administration (MBA), Master of Science (MS), and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD, Enterprise Data Management; EDM, n.d.-a.). There were approximately 4,000 doctoral students enrolled in Academic Year 2022-2023. It is comprised of 50.6% foreign nationals and 49.4% U.S. citizens/permanent residents. Forty-eight percent (48%) are Asian, 33.8% White, 7.7% Latinx, 5.7% African American or Black, and 1.4% Unknown. The biological sex of the students is reported as 68.4% male and 31.6% female (EDM, n.d.-b). STU does not provide statistics on master's student enrollment in the same way as doctoral students. Therefore, statistics on master's student enrollment were not available at the time of the study. STU also does not collect data on sexual orientation or gender identity, other than biological sex, at the institute level.

Southern Tech has over 150 registered student organizations listed on their website. Of these, approximately 40 are multicultural based on race, ethnicity, or gender. About 25 are actively listed as “graduate-student friendly.” There were also five organizations created specifically for graduate students based on degree type (engineering and business), race/ethnicity (African American and African), and queer student interests. The institution is also not listed on the Campus Pride Index.

Regarding the previously named campus services – faculty-student relationship, multicultural center, queer campus spaces, and counseling services – STU has several options available. The Office of Faculty Professional Development provides workshops and programs on creating a mentoring culture across campus. STU’s Center of Student Diversity and Inclusion operates as the campus multicultural center. The Center has several programs designed for minoritized students, including initiatives to recruit diverse populations, mentor African American men, and provide academic support through tutoring and academic coaching. They also offer resources for graduate students to become socialized to campus life. The LGBTQIA+ Resource Center supports the campus queer and trans* community by providing support groups – across gender, race, and sexual identities – wellness programs, and resiliency workshops for graduate and undergraduate students. STU’s Counseling Services provides group, individual and couples therapy for both undergraduate and graduate students. They also offer a variety of presentations and workshops on themes such as time management, mindfulness, graduate student health, and stress management of Black and Indigenous People of Color. Approval from the institutional review board at Southern Technical University and Georgia Southern University were sought prior to investigation.

Positionality

I am a cisgender man from both an educated and middle-class background. These identities have allowed me to navigate the world with special privileges that may vary greatly from cisgender women or trans* persons. I also identify as a Black queer man who grew up in a major metropolitan area in the South during the 90s and early 00s. Though my male, educated, middle-class and suburban-urban background might have afforded some advantages, my identities as Black and queer presented

complications, and in some ways, overshadowed any privileges that might have otherwise been available to me. I view education as a safe space which has led me to both a career in, and student of, higher education. I also live with in, and am in treatment for, anxiety and depression which is due, in part, to my past experiences with the proximal minority stressors of internalized homophobia, anticipated discrimination, and identity concealment. My triggers and diagnoses are related to the intersection of my multiple identities in a society designed for white cisgender heterosexual men. Recognizing the relative lack of available research by Queer People of Color by Queer People of Color, my unique background has led me to the exploration these students' experiences in higher education as they cope with minority stress and seek community among students of minoritized sexual or gender identity. Thus, I acknowledge that the current research project is an exploration of my own experiences as a member of the same general community as the research population. I also addressed my own implicit bias by using peer debriefers to maintain credibility.

I have worked in higher education for 13 years. The majority of the time I have spent in the field has been spent working with graduate students, primarily doctoral students, at Southern Tech. I began as a Graduate Program Coordinator and am now a PhD Program Manager. My time at Southern Tech has shown me the importance of doctoral student mental health. I have had several conversations with students that have brought my attention to the importance of the faculty-student relationship and its influence on the way doctoral students view their programs and the university. What has also been striking is the often lack of knowledge on campus services from faculty, staff, and students. My experience and these conversations with students have influenced my research interests. Though I am not particularly religious, a Bible verse comes to mind, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (King James Version Bible, n.d., Hosea 4:6). My interpretation of this is that I, a Black queer scholar-practitioner, have seen that campus stakeholders, especially doctoral students, have been negatively affected by either the lack of knowledge of campus resources or the lack of knowledge of the needs to

doctoral students of campus administrators. Therefore, I aim to address the lack of knowledge so that BQDS can thrive.

Participant Selection & Recruitment

To recruit participants, I leveraged my relationships with STU's Queer Resource Center, Graduate Education Office, and academic offices with doctoral programs across the university by contacting directors and program administrators. I constructed an email with my study's information for these gatekeepers to send to their respective student populations. The email guided interested students to a screening survey created via Qualtrics. The screening survey, found in Appendix A, asked students interested in the study their name, pronouns, best contact email, and other questions inclusive of my study's criteria. Students who met the inclusion criteria were contacted within 1-2 business days of completing the survey. To incentivize participation, I offered \$10 eGift Cards to participants for each completed interview, a total of \$20 per student, for their time. Recruitment began upon IRB approval from Georgia Southern and Southern Technical University.

I did not initially receive responses from students who met the racial/ethnic inclusion criteria. Thus, I made the decision to revise the study's recruitment strategy and update the inclusion criteria. This included creating a recruitment flyer that specifically asked for participants who were Black, LatinX, and Indigenous who identified as queer or trans*. The flyer contained my picture and mentioned the eGift card. I decided to share my image since I am aware that my name is nonethnic and may cause confusion on my racial identity. Including my picture allowed for interested students to see that I am a Black man who was seeking participants who were also underrepresented minorities. A QR code was also included on the flyer that directed interested students to the screening survey. It was then distributed to various academic departments, the counseling center, STU's Queer Resource Center, STU's multicultural offices, and Graduate Education. The flyer was created in multiple sizes for these units to share in departmental newsletters. I also widened my search for participants by contacting student organizations who served students in the study population to seek participants. I contacted the leaders of these organizations as

listed on STU's organizational website. I asked these leaders to forward the recruitment flyer to students in their organizations. I also requested time in their student meetings, both in-person or virtual, to talk about my study. Recruitment flyers were also distributed in these meetings. Since I had also developed relationships with Doctoral Students of Color who openly identified as queer, I used snowball sampling technique to contact these students via email and ask for their participation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I also asked them to provide contact information for any other students who might meet the inclusion criteria that also might be interested in participating in the study. My inclusion criteria were updated to replace the doctoral candidacy requirement with full-time or part-time in a doctoral program at STU for at least one academic year. This change to the inclusion criteria was made in recognizing the difficulties Queer and Trans* Doctoral Students of Color (QTDSOC) may have in reaching candidacy in hopes that I would reach a broader range of study participants. These changes were approved by IRBs at both Georgia Southern University and Southern Technical University. The recruitment process was active from July 2023 to October 2023.

The final inclusion criteria for participants were:

- **a full-time or part-time doctoral student:** full-time student status is defined by STU as maintaining enrollment in 12+ credits in an academic term. Enrollment in less than 12 credit hours is considered part-time. STU also requires graduate research assistants to maintain full-time enrollment. Though the experiences of full-time and part-time doctoral student can vary, both were considered valid and provided insight into how STU provided services to all its students.
- **have been in their doctoral program for at least one academic year:** the academic year for STU begins in Mid-August and ends in at the end of July of the following year. The university operates on the semester system offering fall, spring, and summer terms. Doctoral students who have been in their program for an academic year of their program were more likely to understand program expectations and milestones, and thus, able to speak to program-related stress.

- **an established relationship with a research advisor:** a research advisor is defined as a member of STU's faculty tasked with assisting a student to reach their academic milestones. The research advisor may also be responsible for a student's employment as graduate research assistant. Since the current study includes the faculty-student relationship as an integral campus service, this relationship may impact how a doctoral student relates to campus life and services.
- **an underrepresented racial/ethnic minority:** this criterion included students who may have been Black or African American, Native American or Indigenous, or of LatinX descent. This criterion was included to center the experiences of doctoral students historically underrepresented racial/ethnic minorities in scholarly materials.
- **of queer or trans* identity:** queer was defined as doctoral students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer. The term trans* referred to students with a gender identity that is incongruent with the sex they were assigned at birth. This criterion helped center the experiences of doctoral students who are multiply marginalized by their queer or trans* identity. These students might have experienced minority stress and an intersectional experience with discrimination due to the confluence of their identities.
- **utilized at least one campus service, excluding the faculty-student relationship:** campus services were defined in this study as the queer resource center, counseling services, or multicultural centers. QTDSOC were considered more likely to have used these specific services to cope with both minority stress and academic stress and establish a sense of community with students minoritized by their sexual or gender identity.

I was also interested in the *Bildungsroman* of Queer and Trans* Doctoral Students of Color – their stories of personal growth to doctoral study – and their experiences with campus services to help them cope with minority stress and establish a sense of community with other students minoritized by their sexual or gender identity. The screening survey received 24 responses at the conclusion of the study's recruitment. 19 were excluded since they did not meet the criteria as an underrepresented minority. Five

met the revised inclusion criteria. I selected Four of the five students since they were all Black Queer Doctoral Students (BQDS). To maximize a similarity of experience across participants, the fifth person was excluded since they identified as LatinX rather than Black or Afrolatino. Additionally, the decision to focus on the experiences of four Black Queer Students prompted me to change the research questions from “QTDSOC” to “BQDS.” The demographic information for these participants is listed in Table One.

Table 1

Participant’s Demographic Information

Selected Pseudonym	Gender Identity	Pronouns	Race/Ethnicity	Age	Sexual Orientation	Program	Student Status	Year
CeeDee	Male	He/Him	Black/Latino	23	Gay	Engineering	Full-time	Second
Ian	Male	He/Him	Black	40	Gay	Humanities	Part-time	Fifth
Monica	Female	She/Her	Black	24	Lesbian	Engineering	Full-time	Second
Rain	Female	She/Her	Black	30	Bisexual	Engineering	Full-time	Third

Story Collection Method

Before beginning story collection, I met with each selected participant individually for a pre-interview conversation via Zoom. The purpose of these conversations was to establish rapport with the participants by discussing my background as well as my personal and professional interests in their stories as BQDS. I also explained the difference between a standard qualitative interview and the relational nature of narrative inquiry so that the participants were aware of the process (Clandinin, 2013; Stewart, 2021). I wanted them to understand that the interviews could feel more like conversations in that I would be listening to their stories while also speaking to my own experience in order to guide story collection. During this conversation and the proceeding interviews, I openly used the term “queer” as an umbrella term to describe the LGBT community. I also used the term while recruiting study participants, e.g., using “of queer and trans* identity” as inclusion criteria. None of the participants appeared to be uncomfortable with the use of “queer” to describe their identities. They also used the term to refer to their own sexual identity throughout the interviews. Additionally, I sent the participants the informed consent form

(Appendix B) for their review prior to the pre-interview conversations. They were offered the chance to ask any questions they might have about the informed consent or the study. These pre-interview conversations were not recorded, nor did I take any written notes. However, I did take notes during Interviews One and Two. I also asked the participants to sign the informed consent form at the conclusion of the pre-interview conversation. The study's interviews were also scheduled via Zoom and Outlook calendar invites were sent before ending the calls. I also sent the participants guiding questions (Appendix C) in advance of the interviews.

The relational nature of narrative inquiry means that, my aim as the researcher was to build a deeper rapport with my study's participants than what is expected from other methods of qualitative methodology (Clandinin, 2013). I collected data in two interviews per participant and split each interview into two phases: the narration phase and the conversation phase. This method allowed for a deeper connection with participants, thus maximizing the strength of my results (Kim, 2016; Stewart, 2021). An unstructured interview style was adopted during the narration phase. This open-ended interview allowed participants to tell their story with minimal interruption – other than referring participants to guiding questions – so the participants could complete their stories. I also provided the guiding questions for this phase to the participants in advance of each interview so that the participants were given a chance to think about how they wanted to tell their stories. The guiding questions for both phases can be found on the study's interview protocol in Appendix C. I was a listener and observer of the participant's narrative during the narration phase (Kim, 2016). These observations included the way a participant responded, any pauses, and changes in body language and facial expressions (Kim, 2016). Once the participants completed their story, the interview moved to the conversation phase for the remainder of the time (Stewart, 2021). I adopted a semi-structured interview technique in this phase where I engaged participants based on the story constructed during the narration phase to construct the narrative (Kim, 2016). The process was completed twice within one to three weeks of Interview One, with an average interview time of about 84 minutes.

Interview One focused on the participant's history – their journey to doctoral study, perceptions of their multiple marginalized identity, and perspectives of community. Interview Two focused on how they coped with stress – related to both their minority identity and program – relationship with their advisor, use of campus services, and the use of those campus services to cope with stress and establish a sense of community with other students minoritized by their sexual or gender identity. The constructed narratives came from the retelling of stories across both interviews.

All interviews were video recorded and transcribed via Zoom. The participants selected pseudonyms that were used to protect their privacy. Their selected pseudonyms are listed in Table 1. I also took observational notes during each interview about the details of the location for potential inclusion in the constructed narratives. Since the interviews were also video recorded with audio, the notes taken included changes in body language, pauses, and stumbling over words. The purpose of taking these notes, especially during the narration phase, was to ask the participant questions about parts of their story that might have made them uncomfortable. I discovered that asking these follow-up questions before starting the conversation phase was effective in gaining additional context about their experience as BQDS. For example, when participants finished telling their story before one hour, I used my notes of their changes in body language, pauses, and stumbling over words to revisit parts in their story that required further explanation. Taking notes of these details added depth to my analysis. Given the sensitivity of minority stress and intersectional experiences with racism, homophobia, and transphobia, noting these nonverbal responses also helped me construct narratives that spoke more intentionally to those experiences.

Story Analysis and Compilation Methods: Listening for *Bildungsroman*

I used the Listening Guide (LG) as my method of analysis to construct each participant's *Bildungsroman*. LG grew out of a need to depart from research's tendency to categorize and code, and as such, has been used to give voice to populations who have been historically underrepresented in research (Gilligan, 2015; Tolman & Head, 2021; Woodcock, 2016). It has been used in research of queer and

Queer People of Color (Chmielewski, 2017; Davis, 2015). These prior studies and rationale serve as the primary reason for its selection in the current study.

LG required me, the researcher, to listen to participant's interviews multiple times, and with each listen, evaluate the various components of the interview that might not have been readily recognized upon the initial listen (Gilligan, 2015; Tolman & Head, 2021; Woodcock, 2016). Woodcock (2016) suggests four listens while both Gilligan (2015) and Tolman and Head (2021) suggest three. Since Tolman and Head (2021) suggest three and two additional steps to analyze and compose the narrative, I discuss their approach below since I adapted their method in this study. The LG analysis was conducted after both interviews for each participant.

Step One: Observing the Landscape

I took note of anything about the interview I found interesting during the first listen of their interview. This included “ums,” pauses, and changes in vocal pitch or tone (Tolman & Head, 2021). This stage was used to maintain data authenticity via personal reflexivity since it required me to take note of my own responses to their answers, and any thoughts and feelings that emerge, that might present a challenge or get in the way of my ability to hear what the participant is trying to say (Woodcock, 2016). Personal reflexivity was maintained through self-recording voice notes of my reactions after each listen. I also notated my reactions to the interview audio in the transcripts during Step One. Using ATLAS.ti, I made notations of relevant pauses using ellipses (...) and such as “pause,” and “seven-second pause” to notate their significance to the participant's narratives. I also developed a color-coding system that I used to identify pause notations, my reactions to their stories, and questions I asked during the conversation phase. I continued to use this color-coding system throughout each listen. This system assisted me in the construction of each narrative during Step Four.

Step Two: Listening for the “I”

This second listen involved creating I-Poems. Creation of I-Poems involved focusing on the participant's use of the first person (e.g., “**I** feel...”, “This caused **me** to...”, “When **we** got home...”,

“**You** never know how you will respond...” as means to understand the participant’s point of view and relation to the world (Tolman & Head, 2021; Woodcock, 2016). I-Poems were created after all the participant’s narratives were complete for inclusion in the cross-case analysis. The purpose in completing this step was to identify the combined voice of the participants within each theme. Creating the I-Poem also allowed me to disconnect my own narrative from that of the participant to maintain our separate voices (Gilligan, 2015). To create the I-Poems, I created an Excel document. One tab was created for each participant. Columns were also created using “I,” “Me/My,” “We,” “They,” and “You/Your.” Each participant’s I-statements were copied from the transcript and pasted in the Excel document. I was able to use I-statements from each participant’s interviews to create the I-Poems. Selecting these statements required me to consider each participant’s context within each theme. The I-Poems did not follow the logical or chronological flow of the conversations (Gilligan, 2015). Rather, they were constructed based on their relevance to the theme to show commonalities in experiences across the participants. The I-statements were also color-coded in the transcripts for easier identification during Stages Four and Five. These statements were recorded line-by-line in the participant’s original sequence to keep their story in the order in which they presented it. I-Poems were later constructed for inclusion in the cross-case analysis and are presented in Chapter Four at the beginning of each theme. Creating I-Poems helped me understand the participants’ collective voice within each theme, and how their experiences related to each other.

Step Three: Listening for Contrapuntal Voices

According to Tolman and Head (2021), “contrapuntal voices are the focus of your particular inquiry and carry your research question” (p.157). Thus, in this step, I listened to the interviews with special attention for the parts that spoke to BQDS experiences with minority stress and establishing community with other students minoritized by their sexual or gender identity. Listening for contrapuntal voices also allowed me to ensure each participant’s narrative was “consistent, identifiable, and communicable” (Tolman & Head, 2021, p. 158). This listening also required me to pay attention to the

quieter voices that may have evidenced the participants' personal beliefs self-doubt, insecurity, and internal conflict (Balan, 2006; Petrovic et al. 2015). In other words, the *Bildung* was found in the contrapuntal voices. For example, one of my participants, CeeDee, spoke about his feelings of loneliness and isolation, but it was not until I listened for his contrapuntal voice that I was able to fully understand how his loneliness related to minority stress. Those feelings of loneliness and isolation were used to construct his *Bildungsroman* and story how he was able to triumph over those emotions. This process also helped me identify the starting point of Ian's *Bildungsroman*. Ian was about 10 to 20 years older than the other participants and also pursuing his doctoral degree part-time. This meant that his relation to campus was different than the other participants. Ian's contrapuntal voice revealed a need for safety in his academic environment that was, at first, compromised by negative experiences at Southern Tech. Thus, the need to establish community with other students on campus became a primary focal point of his narrative. These examples were important to my analysis in a variety of ways. CeeDee's *Bildungsroman* was the first I constructed. Listening for his contrapuntal voice provided a guide for the subsequent narratives. Conversely, constructing Ian's *Bildungsroman* presented a challenge since he was more succinct in his responses than the other participants. Listening for his contrapuntal voice provided a starting point for his narrative that was not as easy to identify as with the other participants.

I used a set of color codes to identify contrapuntal voices relevant to my research questions. This included minority stress, campus services and stress, campus services and minority stress, faculty and stress, faculty and minority stress, campus services and community, and campus services and intersectionality. Using CeeDee again as an example, he spoke at-length about his experience with his faculty advisor and how he was recruited into his lab. CeeDee would say, "my advisor...makes my life hard." I would change the color of the text to correspond with the faculty and stress color code. CeeDee also retold his coming out story and how he had to overcome internalized homophobia to do so. Those related statements would then be color-coded for minority stress. I used ATLAS.ti to color-code those quotations related to themes for use in Step Five. The end result was a colorful transcript that made it

easier to identify the contrapuntal voices as they related to my research questions to consider during Step Four.

Step Four: Voice Analysis and Assembling the Evidence

Voice analysis and assembling the evidence involved interpreting the participant's voices to uncover patterns present in the narrative (Tolman & Head, 2021). I began to construct each participant's *Bildungsroman*. As outlined by Kim (2016), analysis in *Bildungsroman* should focused on: 1) the idea of personal growth; 2) the tension between the ideal and reality; 3) the participant's context in the narrative; 4) enhancing the *Bildung* of the participant and reader; 5) the participant's experiences with questioning, dialogue, and doubt in their journey; and 6) elements of striving, uncertainty, complexity, and transformation.

To complete Step Four, I constructed an outline of the research questions and components of *Bildungsroman*. Please see Appendix D for an example of the outline. The outline contained a subsection for each characteristic of *Bildungsroman* (e.g. personal growth, tension between the ideal and reality). I used the data I color-coded from Steps One through Three to fill in information that corresponded to each area. The I-statements were also used to support the evidence. Additionally, I used the text search feature in ATLAS.ti to better identify phrases and quotes that were relevant to each participant. As an example, Rain's story of personal growth is related to her coming out story and journey by which she accepted her identity. The details of her story were constructed in the outline under the subsection applicable to that corresponding characteristic. The process was presented similarly with the research questions. I constructed a part of their story related to the corresponding question. For instance, Rain retold her story as a former leader of graduate student organizations and how those experiences led her to establish community with other students minoritized by their sexual identity. The details of that story were constructed on the outline. This process was completed for all four participants in preparation for composition of the analysis. Rain's story of personal growth took place over a span of approximately eight to 10 years. I was able to uncover a lot about her experience through the conversation phases of her

interviews. Thus, assembling her voice required more focus via completing the outline than the other participants given her life experience.

Step Five: Composing the Analysis

Composing the analysis provided a means to deepen understanding of the narrative. It also speaks to the researcher's thought process and how they might have arrived at a particular conclusion (Tolman & Head, 2021). Construction of each narrative took place at the conclusion of Interview Two. All recorded interviews were transcribed via Zoom and analyzed using ATLAS.ti software to efficiently organize interview data. Once constructed, I sent an edited draft of the narrative to each participant via email for their review and feedback. My primary purpose was to ensure each participant believed they were accurately represented in their narrative. I offered a follow-up interview to go over the details. This method of member checking maintains credibility and adds valuable perspective of the narrative constructed (Clandinin, 2013). The narratives were completed while STU was on winter break in December 2023. Therefore, I gave each participant one to two weeks to respond to my email and schedule an interview. I followed up once with participants who did not respond to the initial request. Three of the four participants responded to my member checks. Rain asked me to remove details she believed to be too identifying for which I complied. CeeDee thanked me for telling his story. Ian responded that he had no further comments. However, I did not receive a response from Monica after the two-week follow-up period. I was explicit in my pre-interview conversation, informed consent, and member-checking email that I would move forward with inclusion of their narrative as I constructed if no feedback was received. Therefore, Monica's narrative was included without her feedback.

My completed analysis was included in Chapter Four of this document which is dedicated to the findings of my study. A narrative for each participant is presented individually. The last section of this chapter includes a cross-case analysis of themes and patterns identified across each constructed story. This process included a review of each completed narrative for commonly recurring themes. To complete the cross-case analysis, I re-read each participant's completed narratives to better understand similarities

and differences in their experiences. Additionally, the process of constructing the narratives, i.e., a minimum of three listens per interview, my personal notes, and the created outlines, allowed me to become immersed in the data collection and analysis process. This immersion allowed for ease of identification of each theme. Once the themes had been identified, I constructed I-Poems from the I-statements collected during Step Two. The I-Poems were included in the cross-case analysis as a means to emphasize the collective voices of the participants under each theme. Presenting the information in this manner allows for the reader to, first, understand each participant's perspective and experiences and, second, understand what experiences may be common across BQDS as they cope with minority stress and establish community with other students minoritized by their sexual or gender identity.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness may be obtained through ensuring transferability, confirmability credibility, and dependability through data collection and analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability is concerned with the degree to which a study's findings can be replicated in a similar situation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability reduces bias by separating the voice of the researcher and the participant. Credibility is the extent to which the study's findings are representative of the study population. Dependability is concerned with how well a study can be replicated by a different researcher and yield similar results.

Confirmability was sought through providing descriptive details of the data collection and analysis process. I maintained reflexivity of my role as both researcher and primary instrument throughout the process by journaling and creating voice memos after each listen. I also made notes on each interview transcript of my reactions to the participant's interview. Additionally, Berger (2015) describes two circumstances that will affect reflexivity: studying the unfamiliar and familiar. As a Black cisgender gay man, I am most familiar with the experiences of Black queer people. However, our experiences are not monolithic which can lead to studying the unfamiliar. Black queer people come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. Though there were some similarities between the participants'

stories and that of my own, there were parts of their stories that were considerably different, or unfamiliar, to me. To this end, Berger (2015) suggests checking the unfamiliar by asking questions from those who are part of the research population. Thus, I adopted member checking by providing an edited copy of the participant's narratives for their review and feedback. Member checking was not only a useful way to ensure dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) but also presented the opportunity for me to better understand any information I might have misrepresented in my analysis. Each participant should be able to see their stories accurately represented in the constructed narrative (Birt et al., 2016). As such, the participants were given the opportunity to review and suggest changes. Of the four BQDS, only one participant suggested changes to better deidentify their information as presented in the narrative.

I am most with familiar experiences related to my identities. This affords me the ability to understand the experiences of other Queer People of Color in ways that would be unfamiliar to a researcher who is an outsider to Queer Person of Color communities. Though our experiences are not monolithic, there may be commonality in dealing with racist and homophobic systems of oppression. Thus, I was better able to understand slang and body language that would be otherwise unnoticed (Berger, 2015). This also meant I was more likely to ask questions about queer participants' experiences that might be considered taboo to those outside of the community.

This membership is not without its challenges though. Studying the familiar can increase the chance of researcher bias. In other words, shaping interview questions based on my own experiences and projecting those experiences into my data analysis (Berger, 2015). I employed two strategies to maintain separate voices: multiple listening of the interviews and peer debriefing. The LG analysis plan required me to listen to interview audio multiple times (Tolman & Head, 2021). This technique enhanced confirmability by allowing me to maintain my voice as separate from the participants' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Peer debriefing was also used to ensure credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My selected peers were tasked with reviewing my completed narratives and analysis to safeguard against any personal

biases that might be present (Berger, 2015). I identified three such colleagues for this process. Peer Reviewer One was a current doctoral student who was also using narrative inquiry to investigate the experiences of an underrepresented group in higher education. Peer Reviewer Two recently earned their doctorate degree and serves as a director of an outreach program at a local historically Black college. Peer Reviewer Three earned their doctorate in higher education administration in 2017 and is currently a director of retention in my academic unit at Southern Tech. The peer reviewers were each emailed a copy of my completed Chapter Four draft. They were asked to provide feedback according to the reviewer instructions located in Appendix E. I received completed reviews from Peer Reviewers One and Three. However, after several follow-ups and requests for extensions, I was unsuccessful in retrieving a completed review from Peer Reviewer Two due to schedule conflicts and their own personal illness. Peer Reviewer One mostly agreed with my findings and analysis but suggested a revision to the Community as an Ameliorating Factor theme to address where the participants found off-campus community. Peer Reviewer Three also agreed with my findings and noted that the *Bildungsroman* of the participants conveyed their ability to cope rather than their ability to overcome obstacles. These comments and suggestions were considered in the final review process. However, after careful review, the decision was made to continue with the theme and *Bildungsroman* as written as the feedback might have been beyond the scope of the current study.

CHAPTER FOUR

STORIES, ANALYSIS, AND COMPILATION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the narratives I have constructed from each participants' story. Each narrative has also been given a title to encapsulate the participant's experience with both program-related and minority stress and how they might have utilized their faculty advisor and campus services to overcome these difficulties. The narratives also story each participant's experience as Black queer doctoral students at Southern Tech. The chapter concludes with a cross-case analysis of the participants' combined experiences into themes common among their narratives. I also utilized I-Poems in my analysis as a means to further compare and contrast the participants' combined voices among each theme.

The overarching question guiding this study was: How have Black queer doctoral students (BQDS) coped with minority stress and establishing community among other students of minoritized sexual or gender identity? Additional sub questions I investigate were:

1. How do BQDS utilize campus services to cope with stress?
 - a. How do BQDS utilize these campus services to cope specifically with minority stress?
2. How do BQDS utilize faculty to cope with stress?
 - a. How do BQDS utilize faculty to cope with minority stress?
3. How do campus services assist BQDS establish community among other students of minoritized sexual or gender identity?
4. How do the intersections of their racial and sexual or gender identities influence BQDS experiences with campus services?

CeeDee - From Isolation to Community

My first participant was CeeDee (he/him/his). I remember being excited to interview him. CeeDee is a 23-year-old Afro-Latino gay man from a liberal-leaning city in Texas. He is very proud of his

hometown and upbringing. CeeDee is a second-year engineering PhD student at STU and shows a passion for helping people. He was also heavily involved in the interview process which kept me on task. When I forgot to send the guiding questions for the first interview, CeeDee followed up with me. He likes to be prepared and wanted to have all the information he needed to tell his story. CeeDee came to both interviews on time, via Zoom, from his apartment which was well kept and organized. His love for soccer was evident in the league scarves that bordered his walls. CeeDee shows up with a confidence that would have been beyond me when I was 23 years old. His perfect posture – probably due to his years in band – friendly nature, and outgoing personality add to this confidence. CeeDee is very charismatic and is ready to take on the world.

***Bildungsroman* – Overcoming Loneliness and Isolation through Campus Involvement**

It was during the first year of his PhD program that CeeDee started to feel alone. He was new to the city and had a hard time making friends. “I wanted a friend group. I just wanted to meet people, and I was kind of rushing it. I was like, when am I...where am I going to meet friends?” CeeDee enjoys physical activity, so he joined the local gay soccer and running leagues. However, it seemed to him that the others in these leagues only associated with him during games or when it was time to run. They would disperse shortly after, not to be seen again until the next week. CeeDee also went to the city’s gay bars in search of community. As an extrovert, he had no problem introducing himself, “I was going to bars. And then it just kind of felt lonely. I’m not opposed to...just like walking up to one or two people and be like, ‘Hey, I’m [CeeDee]. Can I...talk to you?’” This, too, was unsuccessful. He did not feel connected with anyone in this new city.

On campus, CeeDee joined the Black graduate student organization only to find his Blackness questioned. CeeDee is a fair-skinned Afro-Latino man with supposed “passing privilege.”

I genuinely now identify more as a Black man than anything else, which is interesting because I go to Black circles, and then they're like, “Are you Black? I really couldn't tell... you don't have

Black people hair” is what I get told all the time. I do...have Latino hair. I have to claim it, but I just...that it’s kind of sad because it’s kind of makes you feel like you don’t belong anywhere at a certain point when [you] get told [that] from your own people.

In other words, his Latino features aided his perception of racial ambiguity and thus able to blend in with the American racial majority. This caused some initial tension and frustration.

CeeDee also thought he would be able to connect with his lab mates or the other students in his program, but he quickly found that he had little in common with them. His advisor also sold him on the belief that he would be supportive of CeeDee’s programmatic needs: “he roped me in under this really cool project that was in line with what I wanted to do.”

However, CeeDee has been continually disappointed.

...The first red flag should have been when he didn’t respond to an email when I was trying to arrange visitation. He got back to me three weeks late. And so, moving forward, he’s still doing the same shit...Actually, I sent him my paper two weeks ago. He told me he would have it by last Thursday. Been almost a week.

CeeDee’s advisor offered little support to aid him in his transition to doctoral study. CeeDee believed he needed this support, “Like...as a Black man, I feel like starting from lower, you know? So, I need more...resources. I always feel like I’m not good enough. So maybe [some encouragement] ... ‘Hey, you’re doing enough. Just keep it up.’ You know?”

This new reality in a new city was different than the idyllic experience CeeDee expected. CeeDee was hitting a wall. He just wanted to feel connected to his new environment. He was beginning to panic. It was then that CeeDee had dinner with a friend and expressed his frustrations to them.

I felt extremely alone, you know, by like by that October. By the time I broke down like I just went to dinner with a friend like, “How do you feel?” And I was like, “I’m not gonna lie. I’m

going through. It doesn't feel great.” So, you know, I just, I tried to...I try to meet with someone in my support group.

CeeDee began to wonder how someone as social as he, who was exerting so much effort in finding friends and community was not able to build genuine connections in this new city. However, his friend reassured him that building community would take time. He was only a few short months into his program and new environment. Building the connections that CeeDee sought would just take time which was something he initially struggled to understand.

This conversation with his friend served as a turning point in his story. CeeDee realized that he was expecting something instantly, and he needed to slow down and let the connections happen at their own pace.

... [My friend was] really just like, “Hey, okay, okay, breathe. Take a sec. How you feel, it’s not unique. Most people who move somewhere [have this experience] ...so just run with it...and just give it time...” And I was kind of impatient because I feel like I had given the time. That's why I felt that way. But you know, just do it until you find your group.

Soon after, while at a conference, CeeDee was able to connect with other students at Southern Tech.

I met someone at a conference we all...ended up meeting in [statistics class], and then I come in the semester, and like they introduced me to their friends in my lab...Because they're all a year ahead of me...and I was kind of just like that was a core group of people. So, by the spring I felt so much better.

This was the start of the connections CeeDee began to build. CeeDee also took up a leadership role in the Black graduate student organization as a means to embed himself in the campus’ Black graduate student experience. CeeDee found that the lack of support he experienced through his program

was common among the other Black graduate students. He realized that they had to stick together if they were going to make it through STU, "...we kind of form...that family together, and it kind of makes us feel like all we have is each other. It's kind of the mentality that you'll have."

CeeDee also began teaching a student-led course whose purpose was to help new students acclimate to campus life. He received great joy in helping his fellow graduate students not feel so alone in their programs.

I was like I'd love to help other people kind of feel welcome at [Southern Tech]. I'm doing it now, and I like it. [Leading the course] means so much to me now that I can help people who...come from all over the world. They're on their first year at [Southern Tech]. They don't know anything. And I'm just like, "Okay, make a WhatsApp group. You're taking the same class like hit each other up like you wouldn't have otherwise." You know, just like facilitating things like, "Oh, you like baseball, you like baseball. Let's go to a [baseball] game." You know something as simple as that. So really, just...fostering that. And it just comes down to being around people because you want to, not because you have to.

In addition to the connections he has formed on campus, CeeDee currently has a boyfriend for the first time in his life, "[he] [sic] was probably my biggest...the biggest aspect of my support system." This personal connection has offered him better space to meet other queer people in the city. As CeeDee has grown into his new life, he does not feel alone so much anymore. Though his true community is still back in Texas, this new city has started to feel like home. One year after his breakdown, CeeDee is overcoming loneliness one connection at a time.

CeeDee and Stress: Making Lists and Coming Out

CeeDee is a regimented person who thrives when things are structured and organized. He has been this way since high school.

I had my routine...sometimes I would wake up at five, do my notes like, do my readings for class...6AM, run. 7AM, practice my instrument for marching band. 8 AM, knock out some stuff for clubs. 9AM to 4 PM, school; 4 to 6 PM maybe is more club stuff; 6 PM to midnight is working. Go to bed and do it again.

So, when CeeDee experiences stress, he expressed that it is when he feels disorganized or experiences uncertainty. His first acknowledgment of stress was in selecting a graduate school. The decision was unclear, “the first instance of like stress [I experienced] beyond feeling overwhelmed, was [sic] like stress like what the fuck is going on...” CeeDee developed a ranking system of the criteria that would be important to him. As a Black gay man, he wanted to feel comfortable in the city he selected for doctoral study. This meant he quickly ruled out schools in Florida or any other location that he felt would be unsupportive of his multiple identities. In the end, the decision was between Southern Tech and a school located in the Bay Area of Northern California. Southern Tech won at the very last minute.

I just started telling people I was going to [California] like a week before the deadline. So, the deadline was April 15. So, April eighth...til April 11th, I just started telling people...I'm going to [California]...and I just kind of like wanted it to feel right. I guess it just didn't. Because April 11th to 14th...I was like, ‘I'm going to [Southern Tech] ... you're going to go to [Southern Tech]. And I don't know. I just maybe it felt better...so come deadline day...saying [Southern Tech] just felt better.

In terms of minority stress, despite coming out as gay to his dad at 17 and his bandmates during undergraduate, CeeDee has actively concealed his identity throughout his adult life. CeeDee describes himself as having masculine passing privilege which has allowed him to exist in heterosexual spaces for the majority of his life. His bandmates expressed surprise when he came out to them during a game at a party.

So, everyone like shares details that's really close to them. And so, I was kind of just like. “Yeah, it's crazy, and I'm gay.” And they're like “Wait. What?” Like...they didn't know. Well, Surprise! I guess...That was the first instance I can think of like coming out to people aside from like when I came out at 17...and I thought that was really emotional. Emotional is the wrong word. I thought that was meaningful because, you know, it was to my family.

Minority stress can present as internalized homophobia, identity concealment, or anticipated discrimination. Internalized homophobia is a part of CeeDee's coming out story. Given that his examples of queerness have been described as flamboyant and feminine, this made CeeDee question his own identity, “some of them were just...extremely flamboyant, and I didn't want to associate with them.” He didn't want to be thought of as “that type of gay.” CeeDee plays sports and works out, which he believed to run counter to the images he was presented growing up.

CeeDee and his Advisor: A Lack of Support Makes Him Want to Leave STU

CeeDee's current faculty advisor was not on the list of faculty he indicated he wanted to work with when he applied to Southern Tech. He was interested in working with an advisor who was also minoritized in STEM.

[My advisor] called me on Zoom when I applied to STU. He said “I am, a straight white heterosexual Christian man. I acknowledge that I have all the privilege in the world. I know I'm not what you are looking for in an advisor, but I really want to put you on this project.” And then he proceeded to tell me about the project...and the project seemed interesting enough. It was their acknowledgement of like I understand that I might not be what you want.” [His advisor's identity] was one of the first things we talked about. He acknowledged it fully, and he did feel really supportive in that moment, but it hasn't come up again since.

Despite his advisor showing initial interest, CeeDee has had a difficult time getting his attention unless the situation was urgent. “When I have his attention, He is 100% in my corner. There are just many

more instances of him not. I mean, not having his attention, and I can't help but feel abandoned.” His advisor has also shown very little interest in CeeDee’s life outside of the lab to the point that CeeDee uses gender neutral language, engaging in identity concealment, to describe his boyfriend.

I think I'm really conscious about using gender neutral language...now that I'm in a relationship...It's always “my partner,” not “my boyfriend.” And I...think there has been like an instance of that or two around my advisor. But I think that's mostly just because I don't have that relationship with my advisor...their stance for my personal life is, don't ask, don't tell.

He does not feel comfortable sharing his full identity. His relationship with his advisor makes him feel unsupported. This lack of support makes CeeDee question if he made the right choice in school. CeeDee has considered “mastering out” of Southern Tech for the university in California in an attempt to be better supported.

...Part of me was like, maybe...it's a good thing that I came here. But you should just like get your masters, and...then go [to California] ...Part of me still doesn't know what to do. I don't want to leave admittedly. But...I kind of feel like if I want to be seen, or have someone who makes me a priority, I should leave, and I shouldn't do without talking to [my advisor]. The problem is that [it is] very hard to talk to them.

CeeDee has a need to feel supported, but his advisor has not been able to provide adequate support. This has made CeeDee unsure if continuing at Southern Tech will be the best option for his success.

CeeDee and Campus Services: A Questioning of Purpose and Relevancy

Despite the stress his advisor gives him, CeeDee does not typically use counseling services because he believes he does not need them. “I'd say I'm fortunate to not be neurodivergent, maybe, is the best way to say that. Like I don't suffer from depression, anxiety...So I really don't need to use campus resources. I don't need accommodations.” However, when CeeDee does use campus services, it is to

connect to student organizations. As mentioned in his *Bildungsroman*, he joined a graduate student organization as a means to connect with other Black students. CeeDee also loves teaching the aforementioned graduate course as it is a means to help his fellow graduate students. The ability to help other graduate students have an easier time acclimating to life at STU brings him satisfaction.

I'd love to help other people kind of feel welcome at [Southern Tech]. I'm doing it now, and I like it means so much to me now that I can help people who like. They come from all over the world. They're on their first year at [Southern Tech]. They don't know anything.

Despite the connections he has made with Black graduate students and teaching the course, CeeDee has not made the same effort to connect with any of the queer organizations. To him, one's racial identity is more evident than their queer identity.

I have done very little connecting with queer students... I should say there are very few facets to connect with queer ...I'm sure I interact with a lot of queer students. But it's not like we're meeting in a queer setting...I go to the [Black graduate student organization] and I'm meeting with Black students, you know. Maybe it's because race is...something, you see which is the whole distinction between being gay and being Black and being both makes you like recognize the fact that there's the outward you, and then there's the you there's inward you but...I think, at least with an academic setting, I've been much more conscious of seeking out Black students rather than queer students.

CeeDee is aware of two of STU's multicultural centers. "I have been connected to [the multicultural center]. I have not used them, but I know they exist...I know what they can do for Black students." He has briefly engaged with another multicultural center for free food and as a place to study between classes but has not fully engaged with their resources.

Last semester [I had a class] in the public policy building. So, it's just kind of like...it was right next to it. So, I just like went there for an hour and a half. [I] did some work. I took their free food, took their free pencils...it just like I wasn't too connected...

When I asked CeeDee how supportive campus services were of his multiple marginalized identities, he did not believe support to be the problem, "I don't think being supportive is the problem with those organizations. It's more just like knowing how to use them."

He commented further on using the queer resource center:

I think, especially with like the [queer] resource center, like the problem...is really like everyone knows it's there. No one knows how to use it like, do I need an appointment? Can I just walk in? What are they going to do? Are they going to give me a condom and tell me to be good or like? Are they gonna like actually connect me and listen to me for what I need? So, I guess it almost feels performative.

Overall, CeeDee questions if Southern Tech's campus services are designed to support him. Using the language of the minority stress theory, CeeDee does not believe them to be an ameliorating factor.

CeeDee and His Use of Services as a Black Queer Doctoral Student: A Disjointed Work in Progress

When it comes to his identity as a Black Queer Doctoral Student, CeeDee expressed he has had very few opportunities to be both Black and gay. He has admittedly prioritized connecting with other Black students over queer students. CeeDee wants to be known for his achievements more than his queerness, "I'm high achieving. I'm gonna focus my efforts here. And that's what that's what I am. You know. That's what I want to identify me." CeeDee told me that it took him years to realize that his sexuality was not a detriment. Rather, it is a part of his overall identity – though his connection to being both Black and gay is disjointed at times. Despite being in a city with a rich Black, gay culture, CeeDee

has not yet been able to delve into the intersection of those identities. His Black life is on campus, and his gay life is off campus.

He has only intentionally associated with other queer people outside of STU. The joining of his Black and gay identities has not been facilitated by campus services, but rather through his relationship:

If I go out to places, it's still gay bars, and I'm still meeting gay people, and it is different from my [STU] life, so it still feels disjointed. But I think it's starting to become integrated now that my partner and I are doing stuff.

The joining of CeeDee's identity as an Afro-Latino gay man is still a work in progress.

Summary

CeeDee did not believe he needed campus services to help him cope with stress since he does not consider himself neurodivergent. Therefore, CeeDee used campus services to help him connect to the Black graduate student organization. Though he had access to Southern Tech's multicultural centers, he did not use them to connect to community. He also admitted that he does not know how to use the queer resource center, nor did he believe most campus services were designed to fit his needs as a doctoral student. CeeDee's access to community was through the Black graduate student organization for connection to other Black students, and his boyfriend and off-campus organizations have provided him with connection to the queer community. He has yet to allow his identities to exist at once. Even though CeeDee does not have a close relationship with his advisor, the use of gender-neutral language to describe his relationship could be due, in part, to his disjointed identities. However, anticipated discrimination might also play a role in CeeDee's reluctance to disclose. Whatever the case may be, CeeDee's advisor does not appear to have provided a safe space for him to exist as more than a doctoral student working in his lab. His advisor's inability to provide the support CeeDee needs as a person with multiple marginalized identities will continue to affect CeeDee's ability to persist in the doctoral program.

Monica – Cautiously Reaching for Community

Monica (she/her/hers) is a 24-year-old engineering PhD student in her second year at STU. She identifies as a lesbian and is of Nigerian heritage. Monica was the first person to complete the screening survey who met the study's inclusion criteria. In our introductory interview, Monica's body language and tone were muted. This led me to believe our proceeding interviews would be more guarded than they were. However, Monica spoke candidly about her life and experiences with homophobia which have affected the way she approaches education and accesses campus services. I later learned that our initial conversation took place while she was back home on vacation, and Monica did not want her family to overhear what we were discussing. Monica is a bold, in-your-face person, which was evident in her ability to energetically speak about the homophobia she has encountered, her own struggles with internalized homophobia and anticipated discrimination, and her attempts to connect and build community with other Black queer students. Her narrative is constructed below.

***Bildungsroman*: Seeking Support She Cannot Find**

Monica is very supportive of her friends and their lives. Being a religious person, Monica believes that her friends are gifts from God and no mere circumstance of chance, "I'll tell anybody...God alone [gave me] these people, and only either us, ourselves or God...no outside force." Monica believed this so much that she put the comfort of her friend and roommate at the time, Maya – a pseudonym that Monica provided for her friend – ahead of her own by allowing her homophobic boyfriend to live with them during the height of the pandemic in 2020. This took place while she was completing her undergraduate degree at a public land-grant research university in the Midwest. During that time, Monica endured inappropriate behavior and slurs so that her anxious friend would have the support she needed during such a difficult period. Monica disregarded her personal safety and comfort just so her friend could cope. This is evident when Monica recounted a story about Maya's boyfriend.

[In telling a joke] I'm not exaggerating when I say...within the span of 10 minutes, he maybe said the [faggot] 36 times, because he was explaining this story that required it 36 times...It was so

uncomfortable that everyone in the room was just silent. But my friend...she has like severe anxiety. So, it was kind of known within the friendship group like don't confront her because she just has...crippling anxiety. Me, I'm a confrontational person. I live for it. It clears my skin up when I confront things.

Once the effects of the pandemic started to lighten, Monica decided to confront Maya about the enabling of her boyfriend's behavior. However, Maya became defensive and attempted to gaslight Monica, telling her "She was overstepping her bounds" and "blowing the situation out of proportion." During this conversation, Monica realized that Maya was also homophobic, which provided an explanation of why she could tolerate her boyfriend's behavior. Monica decided to confide in one of their mutual friends, Lauren (a pseudonym), about the situation. Much to Monica's surprise, Lauren also had information to share. Another friend in their group, Camille (a pseudonym), was also homophobic. Monica was in disbelief that Camille was homophobic, "now, me and Camille, we're [close]...we would call each other at 2 AM and answer on the first ring. Like it's been tight since day one." Camille helped Monica come out of the closet; they even attended pride events together. There was no way Camille could be homophobic. In fact, Monica was so certain of this that she called Camille on FaceTime while talking to Lauren. She recalled the conversation below:

Monica: Lauren says that you're homophobic. I know that's not true, so let me ask you this, do you think being gay is a sin?

Camille: (pauses)

Monica: Okay, girl stop being fucking dramatic.

Camille: Well, technically it is a sin the same way pedophilia is a sin. If you're gay, you're going to hell.

Monica: (pauses) Camille, do you think I'm going to hell?

Camille: Yes, you are going to hell.

Monica hung up the phone. She had heard enough.

The revelation of Camille and Maya's homophobia split their friend group, Monica and Lauren, and their other friend Ray (a pseudonym), on one side and Camille and Maya on the other. For Monica, who believed friendship to be God-sent, this was initially too much to bear. She relied on Lauren to help her get through this hardship:

I was in a...very, very bad space, where even though Lauren went through the same friendship breakup, she had to step up and be there for me, because I was in a space where I just...I just wouldn't be here today.

Overcoming this situation started Monica on a path to live more authentically, but to also advocate for herself "I'm not going through that again because I can't...I'm not sure if I'll get through it a second time. It's like things had to change." She realized that she needed to develop community among other Black queer people. Since she was graduating soon, Monica knew that living in a Black queer-friendly city would be part of her selection criteria when she chose a PhD program.

I knew I had to go to grad school in a city, I was not going to go to a college town with cornfields around. I was not going to be in a small area...I had to go to a city that was Black, and I had to go to a city that was very open to queerness...

Monica chose Southern Tech solely for the institution's location. Selecting an institution whose research interests aligned with hers was of secondary importance. She also had very few backup options if she could not find an advisor who aligned with her research interests at Southern Tech. During her program recruitment week, she only found one faculty who had the same research interests as her. Luckily, she matched with her current research advisor. Monica's chief comfort was that she would be doing research that was important to her in a city filled with other Black queer people.

So, [I] really just had to thank God, because, like I said, it was kind of like my only option for getting into a [Black] Mecca going from [Midwest] to [Southern city]. It was kind of necessary for me to like, be me. And yeah, for the most part. Yeah, that was a huge leading decision that...I guess connected...my queerness into getting to this doctoral program/vocation.

She was hopeful for the future.

However, Monica has found it difficult to connect to other Black queer people on campus and in the area's community. In fact, she says that I am the first Black openly queer person she has met on campus during her time at Southern Tech. This was a surprise to me. Monica is not an introvert by any means, and she has been putting in the effort to find other Black queer people, "It's not for a lack of trying, and I don't know what's going on with me, but I cannot...I also have a terrible gaydar (she laughs), but...I cannot find people like or like clubs..." She has attended events sponsored by the queer resource center and found that the majority of attendees were young and white. This was not the space she wanted to be in. "I just don't want to be in this white queer spaces, because ultimately they're still white, and I deal with white people every day. Not in my free time."

Monica also has a fellowship awarded to students from underrepresented groups, so she is connected to one of the multicultural centers at Southern Tech. This space is primarily Black. However, Monica is hesitant to share her queer identity due to anticipated discrimination.

Just from my experiences from [undergrad], I pick and choose who like knows I'm queer and like I just haven't put that out there. And I just I haven't. And I'm not sure if I will. Just. I'm not saying that they wouldn't [be accepting]. But I'm not. I'm not gonna give them the chance to not, you know, be there for me. So, I don't know how they would handle. I bet there are other queer people who are very much involved with [multicultural center] as a grad student. But I don't have that first-hand experience, because I haven't allowed that experience to happen.

Monica's central support system has been the Black women in her program, her parents, friends, judo classes, and a screenwriting group. Other than a faulty "gaydar," Monica is unsure of why her expectations of a Black queer community have not yielded any results.

I cannot find people like or like clubs like in [undergraduate university] like, despite us being literally in [the Midwest]. There was kind of a strong, you know, Black/minority queer presence. We had a club that I was a part of that grew and was really a safe haven. Like it helped keep me going throughout my undergraduate, and...I really expected it to be here at [Southern Tech].

I took the time to assure her that from my own personal experience, building a community takes time. The effort she is putting in will get her to the right people. The final story of Monica connecting to Black queer community and friends is unwritten, but she remains hopeful for the best.

Stress, Campus Services and Finding Community: Needs Unmet by Campus Services

When Monica gets stressed, she wants to shut down but expressed that she is unable to do so.

Sometimes, I just like, wanna cut everything off like no school...just bed. But that gives me too much anxiety. And so that's the place I've been at really, since the semester started where I just have a lot of core things that I want to and need to get attention to.

To cope, Monica finds an emotional release to be cathartic, "I think if there's like a way to manage and cope with stress, sometimes, at least for me, is to just cry about it, cry about it to myself and cry about it to someone who's willing to listen." She also finds it helpful to organize her thoughts.

Recently my response to stress has been to write everything that I need to do down...So I'll plan everything out to like within like a 15-minute increment of like. What am I doing for that day or for the week, and just get that checklist and check things off. So, like, yeah, my response to stress for the most part, is like "how can I fix it now?" And if it's something where it's like there's nothing, I can do except wait...That's where it gets bad, because it's like obsessively thinking about it. And it takes away from other parts of my life.

Monica has limited experience with campus services at Southern Tech. She did intend to sign up with the counseling center but never followed through.

In the beginning of the semester, I had like a whole bunch of goals, and my goal was to like sign up for [STU] counseling. And I went on the website and like I felt like you had to...get like a preliminary like screening...I did that [in undergraduate] ... that's another thing to do. And I just, it keeps on getting pushed back to the docket list. Like it's still on my list, but I don't know.

Yet, Monica is connected to one of STU's multicultural centers which provides services aimed to increase the participation of underrepresented groups in STEM graduate programs. The center's assistant director communicates with her often about their events, which Monica frequently attends.

I go to [multicultural center's] events because there's just always a lot of Black people there, and we just be there, you know, food talking and whatnot. But by having the [the fellowship], it introduced me to [the assistant director]. And from there I've been just making sure to always read her emails and going to her events and applying to be part [of] mentorship programs and stuff.

Despite being a regular to the center, Monica has not disclosed her queer identity to any of the center's leadership. She does not want to disclose her queer identity if it will lead to lack of support.

...Just from my experiences from [undergraduate], like I pick and choose who like knows I'm queer and like I just haven't put that out there. And I just, I haven't. And I'm not sure if I will...I'm not saying that they wouldn't [be supportive]. But I'm not, I'm not gonna give them the chance to not, you know, be there for me. So, I don't know how they would handle. I bet there are other queer people who are very much involved with [the multicultural center] as a grad student. But I don't have that first-hand experience, because I haven't allowed that experience to happen.

As for other campus services, Monica is unsure of their ability to help her cope with stress. “It just seems like I don’t know what they could help me with.” As a result, Monica appears to struggle to access the on-campus support she desires. She is also in search of community at STU.

In an attempt to find community with other Black queer people, Monica attended an event hosted by the STU’s queer resource center. Her expectation of connecting to other Black queers was thwarted, “they had like these queer coffee houses...and I went to the first one, and it was, you know...undergraduates. And it's like they're like 17. I'm 23/24...I don't wanna, no offense, I don't want to talk to [them] like that.” She decided that accessing community through the queer resource center would not be a viable option. As mentioned previously, Monica also attended events at one of STU’s multicultural centers. She considers these events to be a safe haven for Black students in their ability to provide a “break from reality.” A safe haven may be important to Monica due to the relationship with her advisor.

Monica and her Advisor: Matched for a Singular Reason

Monica did not select her advisor based on connection or personality. She selected him because of his research interests. He was the only program faculty who was studying something close to her interests. Monica had different priorities:

I selected him...because he was the only professor in the [engineering] department that did remotely anything close to what I wanted to do... I came [to STU] for location, and for you know, I was gonna be in the city that was gonna cater to me.

Monica wanted to be in a city supportive of her multiple identities so much that she did not look into potential advisors until her program’s recruitment event. She interviewed with the faculty member who shared her research interests and was able to match with him – though there were no guarantees. The situation worked in her favor.

So, it was him and by like a large margin, number two... So when I realized that I kind of told him straight up like. The very first meeting I said, "you're my number one and I want to be in your lab, and I want you to choose me." I have to be very direct... I'm not trying to mince my words and whatnot, and it worked out, and I was able to get in his lab.

Monica's advisor is focused on her ability to research, "my faculty advisor... he legitimately just does not care about anything except like data." She also expressed that he often expects more than she believes is capable in terms of producing scholarship and results. Monica's suspicions of his level of care became evident when she had a verbal altercation with a lab mate, and the advisor's only concern was whether they could continue to work together. "I knew when I emailed him [about the altercation] ... [He] couldn't give me anything ... [He] wouldn't give me anything." Monica does not believe her advisor is capable of anything beyond research advice. As such, she has not disclosed her queer identity to him. Therefore, she does not consider him a safe space, nor does she consider him part of her community or support system. Monica's idea of community is seemingly related to her multiple marginalized identities.

Accessing Services as a Black Queer Doctoral Student: Prioritizing Identities

Monica did not mention many on-campus opportunities where she is permitted – or permits herself – to embrace her identity as a Black lesbian doctoral student. She tends to prioritize her Black identity over her queer identity. She is also associated with an off-campus organization for people in the alternative (i.e., punk) lifestyle. Although these events are heavily Black and queer, she does not utilize them in a way that connects her to the community. This has been her only outlet as a Black lesbian. She is in search of a Black queer friend.

... There's something about like a Black, like queer friend in proximity that... could just come over, and [we] can just chill and work together on whatever random, whatever they gotta do... That [sic] have been missing (Monica says with exasperation) that I've been trying to get. I've been trying for myself... I put myself out there. It's just like the right connection with the right person, and that's something that's like I wish I had that... deeper... understanding...

Monica is still in search of Black queer community in the city, but she is committed to the process.

Summary

Monica's experience with campus services to cope with stress and establish community with other students of a minoritized sexual or gender identity are complicated as she uses one center but doesn't exist as a Black Queer Doctoral Student in that space. She is connected to one of Southern Tech's multicultural centers, but anticipated discrimination from the staff prevents her from disclosure in this all-Black space. In Monica's perception, she would rather be supported in part rather than endure discrimination on the whole. However, Monica expressed a deep need to connect with other Black queer people – if not Black queer students. What may be hindering her from connecting to the community she seeks may be due to her own minority stress in the form of internalized homophobia. The community Monica has established is not aware of her sexuality because she has not disclosed her complete identity. By her own admission, she has not let the Black queer experience happen in a way that would facilitate community among her desired demographics. Her on-campus community consists of other Black women in her program, and her off-campus community is primarily through her judo and screenwriting groups.

Additionally, Monica's advisor has not created a safe space for her to exist as a Black Queer Doctoral Student. According to her, he has shown more concern about her ability to produce results than facilitate a healthy lab environment. Therefore, Monica does not believe he is capable of accepting her multiple marginalized identities. Much like CeeDee, her advisor has not facilitated a culture of inclusivity. However, Monica's connections to her fellow students and her off-campus community have provided her with the safety she needs to get through her doctoral program – even if they are not aware that she is queer.

Ian – From A Different World

Ian (he/him/his) is a 40-year-old Black queer doctoral student in a humanities program at Southern Tech. Unlike the rest of the participants, he is a working professional pursuing his degree part-

time. This is just one of many similarities between Ian and me. We are also similar in age and come from middle-class backgrounds. I understood parts of his story just as much as I understand my own. This meant that I had to pay special attention to trustworthiness by organizing my thoughts into voice memos in order to separate our voices in the narrative.

With his afro perfectly sculpted, Ian navigates the world as a Black gay man who is sure of his identity as both Black and queer. This gives him a confidence that can only come from deep reflection on oneself and resolving many of the internal conflicts that are associated with being a person of multiple marginalized identities. Ian exuded this confidence in the way he spoke and how he told his story. During the interviews, he would frequently communicate through his body language by shifting in his seat and what can be culturally described by African Americans as “knowing eyes.” This is a form of nonverbal communication used to emphasize the importance of a statement by tilting the head and widening the eyes. He was also very concise which presented some issues getting enough details to construct his narrative. For me, this meant retelling parts of my own story in order to gather further details from his responses to my story. Additionally, despite scheduling the interviews at the time of our pre-interview, Ian’s interviews took place in a coffee shop for Interview One and his personal vehicle for Interview Two. Interview Two also presented some challenges as there were points where he lost service or would need to change to a different device. This interrupted the flow of the interview, and in listening to the audio, I discovered that some questions about his background went unanswered. Additionally, despite providing the guiding questions well in advance of each interview, he requested that I send him a copy to review while he was telling his story. Ian also completed telling his story within approximately 20 minutes of each interview. This meant that I had to ask probing questions and tell parts of my story in order to get the information I would need to construct his narrative. Both the place of the interviews and his succinct responses to my questions undoubtedly affected my analysis. This, however, did not take away any validity from his story.

The narrative below is the story of Ian, a Black gay man who is trying to further his education with the goal of professional advancement. Ian's story starts at Southern Tech with his experiences with racism and unexpected discrimination both from program faculty and his fellow STU students. Undaunted, these struggles did not deter him from seeking his degree or finding on-campus community. He persists to be of service to himself and the Black community. Ian is on the right track.

Ian's *Bildungsroman* – Overcoming Institutional Challenges to Find Community

Ian is a Black gay man in his early 40s, who came to Southern Tech with a fully realized, intersectional identity, “my areas of interest, as well as my personality, is very racially salient.” Much like me, Ian's perspective and research are grounded in understanding the impact of race in areas where Black people have been historically underrepresented. Nevertheless, he faced challenges at Southern Tech from the beginning.

When Ian selected Southern Tech to pursue a PhD, he knew the institution's culture would be different from what he had been used to.

All of my other degrees were from HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities). So Liberal Arts. I guess all – many of ours (HBCUs) – are classified as Liberal Arts, but I mean the educational process and educational experience [was] never subpar nor lacking, in my opinion. Southern Tech is a Primarily White Institution (PWI) that accepted its first Black undergraduate students as a result of the modern civil rights movement – nearly 100 years after Southern Tech was established.

When Ian started his program, the departmental director of graduate studies at the time tried to dissuade his attendance. The director voiced concerns about Ian's ability to study the themes and framework for which he was interested.

He wasn't sure if I would get the level, of coursework on race that I wanted, and I should look at other programs [in my area of study], which is the study of race, class and gender... “Maybe you should look at [another university]” ...and so I took a course over there...on race and ethnicity

and talked to some of the other PhD students. And they were like, “Well, we don't hardly get a chance to study, either” you know, but that's an urban studies program and so I didn't want to be run off. I wasn't sure that the grass was [greener] on the other side.

Ian was undeterred. However, the conversation with the program's director would not be the only difficulty that he would encounter with race. During the master's portion of his PhD program, Ian had the opportunity to work with the only Black professor in the academic department. Any excitement Ian had about working with him was soon extinguished. “Everything I did was insufficient, right, in comparison to himself...The tones of his feedback became very, not only accusatory, but chastising.” Ian did not receive positive reinforcement. Instead, he was told that his work was not graduate level with little feedback on how to improve.

I have another graduate degree, so I'm not new to the Academy, but also this was [supposed to be a helping hand], not one that was now turning to slap me in the face at every turn. Needless to say, I got through that assignment. I have not spoken to that professor again.

Ian also lost all respect for this professor. Although Ian did not initially seek support from Southern Tech – as he came to the program a working professional – this situation contributed to Ian's need to establish community with other Black queer graduate students on campus.

Ian's Journey to Finding On-Campus Community

Ian's primary source of friendships and connections, his chosen family, are outside Southern Tech. He met them over the last 20 years of living in the city where the university is located, “a lot of us are from networks of friends [and] knowing one another and knowing other people that introduce and [that] kind of overlaps.” The challenges Ian experienced in his program led him to expand his community to include a support system within Southern Tech.

Ian first sought community at Southern Tech with the Black graduate student organization. He again was disappointed, “I found a culture there that was a bit reflective of the campus in which hard

sciences were respected and those in the humanities were more so tolerated.” Ian knew he would not find community there, so he continued his search. This led him to reach out to the queer resource center, “so I started coming around. And I think even in the space with [queer resource center] there were not many graduate People of Color...should I say, Black people, that were active for many different reasons.” One of the reasons Ian mentioned for this might have been due to the rigor of graduate-level coursework. In other words, a Black queer graduate student might deem themselves too busy to connect with the queer resource center’s activities in the face of academic requirements that might be competing for their attention.

Ian, however, has found on-campus community with the queer resource center:

And so, when I do things, I do it wholeheartedly, or I don't do it at all. And so, I kinda emerge as the person that [center staff] would ask [to do things] ... but the thing that I appreciate from them was [support] wasn't hidden. So, it was like, “Hey, Ian, we're really interested in you” ... we're really interested in your experience” or “we'd like for you to take part [in this initiative] ...because your experience is different or unique.”

However, due to the center’s event scheduling and the events’ primary audience, Ian has not been able to connect with many other queer graduate students in the center.

[The center] have different, like, meet ups. Now, some of those...are in the middle of the day.

Others, you know, like the I think the QPOC, which is the Queer People of Color, they are all like undergrad... I went to one...I probably don't need to go back. We just have different lived experiences.

As Ian works full-time, this connection to the queer resource center is Ian’s sole opportunity to interact with campus services at Southern Tech. Through the center, he has also been able to connect with a queer alumnus of the university with whom he chats with on a regular basis. Despite his earlier

struggles with his program, Ian has found community with the queer resource center. That has made all the difference.

Ian and Stress: Finding Freedom through Theology and Keeping the Goal in Mind

Ian described experiencing internalized homophobia during his childhood.

...I knew who I was. I've always been attracted to the same gender as a small child before puberty, but I did not equate it to any [state of being] or systems. [I] equated it to actions. And so, like many of us as...I was thinking... at that time... it was [just] a sexual act, right? And the "it" I'm talking about is being queer.

He also frequently used his education as a screen for why he did not have a girlfriend while in school.

[I] don't have a girlfriend because I'm focused on school, trying to go to college. And then when I was in college, yeah, I'm in school...So that was kind of like my easy [go-to] you know? And it was enough for people to not dig a little deeper, even though there are other people that went to school and dated. And you know [had] girlfriends or whatever. I just wasn't interested in that.

Ian did not come out to his mother until he was in his late 20s and was financially independent due to anticipated discrimination, "I didn't want to be in the position where someone says you can be gay, but I'm not gonna help you pay your rent." He and his mother did not discuss his sexuality for some time after he came out.

I thought I was going to be able to be free...And it just became one of those...secrets between she and I, and it really remained that way. We didn't talk about [my sexuality] again for another two years...even after we talked about it. It actually was 10 years that she really became an advocate for me...

However, Ian explained that he did not grow up in a repressive environment. The church he attended during his childhood was progressive in its response to women in ministry. This notion led Ian to liberation theology through which he was able to resolve issues with his queerness, "...if God loves, and there's freedom in religion...and [if] He knows you, He knows me as well in my queerness."

Since Ian does not appear to contend with stress of religious oppression, I asked Ian about his stressors and response to stress. His general response to stress is to either distract himself or shut down, "[I] just watch television on my sofa and not do anything or become hyper-productive, but that only lasts for like short stents, and I just wear myself out." Knowledge of the goal or objective also affects his ability to cope, "I think," Ian pauses, "not seeing like any type of game, like I'm okay with the struggle, but at some point, it's like, is this effort being exerted...is this tenacity proving anything like? Is it still just like hard?"

Ian admittedly does not have a problem voicing any concerns that might affect his ability to cope with his life. However, he feels the need to approach this differently within his program.

...In an academic space, it's a little bit different...As a student, you have power, but you really don't at the end of the day. Somebody's gonna have to give you a grade, and [you're] gonna have to pass to move on... So, you can...smile and bear it, grin and bear it. You can fight the power and go uphill the whole way, but [at] the end of the day, someone's going to have to [bend].

Ian has a need to feel safe with faculty who gatekeep his ability to complete program milestones. This was evident from his prior experience with faculty in his doctoral program.

Ian and His Advisors: Finding Safety After Discomfort

The negative experience with his program's only Black professor left Ian feeling unsafe. A sense of security is important to Ian. This was the chief criteria Ian used to select his advisor and comprehensive exam committee:

After having that experience, as I mentioned before...I'm a student, right? I'm a disciple, I am, you know, in the classical sense of what students do right? They learn they are vulnerable. They...are taught. They're open for correction. But I did not find it safe, and safety is extremely important to me, maybe because of my multiple identities. But I didn't find it safe working with everyone in my department...And so, for my own academic success, as well as my emotional safety. I chose [my advisors].

According to Ian, the support that he receives from advisors is free of any internalized racism or oppression. Though none of his advisors are People of Color, the subject of race is broached academically through his research questions and interests. Ian has also not directly discussed his identity as a queer man with any of his advisors, not due to any internalized homophobia or anticipated discrimination, but because it is not related to his research. To this end, Ian does not believe any of his advisors to be part of his support system. They provide correction when he needs it but do not go out of their way to provide any additional psychosocial support.

They support me in the ways in which I show up. If I come half-stepping, they'll tell me I'm half-stepping and go back. If I come strong with it, they'll say, "Okay, good..." To me, a support system is going to make sure that I come ready or provide me ways to come ready instead of just assess...whether or not I'm ready or not.

Ian has advisors, but they are not his mentors. His source of on-campus support appears to be from STU's Queer Resource Center.

Ian as a Black Queer Doctoral Student: Finding Support Through the Queer Resource Center

Ian arrived at Southern Tech with an awareness of his intersectional identities as a Black queer man.

I think that in the way I think on my Blackness...I've been in spaces where I had to be sure of who I was because I might have been the racial minority. Well, it's the same model that I'll [use for] sexual identity...

However, this does not mean he always feels comfortable in all spaces, "when I'm around Black men...I can't be myself, because I'm the only gay. When I'm around gays, I can't really get everything I need, because I'm the only person of color. I'm the only Black man."

In relation to stress and being a Black Queer Doctoral Student, Ian believes his multiple identities have intensified the need to have good coping skills.

Even if you live your life out of the closet, you still have to be ready, on all different occasions, for some type of ism. For some type of injustice. For some type of inequality or inequity. Be it just socially or you know, officially.

As Ian described previously and despite scheduling challenges, the queer resource center allows him to exist as a Black queer doctoral student.

In that space, I found my Blackness, my queerness, and my intelligence all being respected and embraced, right? And so that was new for me in any type of educational institution, any type of environment. So that's why I kinda have a close affinity for it.

The center staff have also offered him direct support when he experienced difficulties in his program, "And I must admit I have even reached out and asked about some professional assistance, because...work can be daunting. And so, you know, they kind of offer... at least some type of listening board." The queer resource center was also able to sponsor Ian's attendance at a conference that will help him with his research, "they funded a trip for me to go to a conference in [an American city in the Gulf Coast] for an entire week. So, I loved it so much. So yeah, I have gotten some academic development." Ian's fully actualized identity as a Black queer man has made the difference in his connection to the queer resource center.

Summary

Although Ian's relation to Southern Tech's campus is different from the rest of my participants, his narrative revealed that the use of campus services can be important to connect to community. Ian's experience with racism and discrimination underscored the importance of having a tangible support system. However, he did not seek a means of coping related to minority stress – internalized homophobia, anticipated discrimination, and identity concealment – as Ian seemed to have come to Southern Tech with some acceptance of his queer identity. However, his awareness and acceptance of his intersectional identity made him initially seek community with other Black queer graduate students. This awareness and acceptance provide a reason for Ian first contacting the Black graduate student organization. When his expectations of the Black graduate student organization did not align with reality, he was disappointed but eventually sought the queer resource center. Though he has not made lasting connections with any other current Black queer graduate students, Ian has found community and support with the resource center staff. The center staff are also similar in age to Ian and come from multiple marginalized identities. This could have made it easier for him to connect with center staff who are also full-time working professionals.

In terms of support from faculty, Ian is in a good place academically with his advisors. They provide him with the feedback he needs to complete his academic requirements, but they do not venture into supporting his career goals or psychosocial needs. Perhaps Ian's experience as a part-time student and working professional also means he is less reliant on mentorship from his advisors. The negative experience Ian had with the Black professor in his academic department made safety a priority when he was selecting advisors. Since he appears to have obtained that security from his committee, Ian's academic needs are fulfilled through their interactions.

Rain – Undeniable Resilience

Rain (she/her/hers) was the last participant to complete the screening survey. She is a Black 30-year-old bisexual student in an engineering program at Southern Tech. Rain had an exceptional story to

tell about her experience with campus services. Hers was a unique narrative to construct which, at times, was very similar to my own story. She speaks about the desire to be connected to community, which led her to be a leader in two student organizations. However, her time spent in leadership did not always yield the intended results. I have also led an organization, hoping to connect to my community of Black queer folx, but I did not always feel like the return on investment matched the time and energy I put in. Rain and I share that struggle, so we connected in the way two former leaders of organizations are often able to commiserate.

Rain's voice walks a thin balance of confidence and insecurity. She does not always believe she is the smartest person in the room, but at the same time, she has had circumstances that affirm her place in life and in her program. Rain's slight frame and often insecure demeanor would make one believe that she lacks confidence in her identities. However, these notions are dispelled for me when she spoke – often candidly so – about her life's experience and goals. There was also confidence when she discussed finding a therapist, resolving issues with her sexuality, and how she has experienced campus services.

During Interview One, Rain joined me as she was traveling out of state to see family. While we tried to video chat, it became necessary for her to dial in to complete the interview. The entire 80 minutes of Interview One were voice recorded while she was in her fiancé's car waiting to check in to their hotel. Interview Two was completed from her home. However, she seemed relaxed and candid in both situations. Rain quickly completed the narration phase in both interviews. Though I expected her to tell her story for at least an hour, she had completed her retelling within 20 minutes. Much like with Ian, I had to ask probing questions as well as tell parts of my story in an attempt to get her to share more details. I found this to be effective. The narrative that follows represents her story to the best of my ability.

Bildungsroman: Coming Out, Going In, and Finding Support

As Rain became more confident in her bisexuality – her queerness – she decided it was time to come out to the world. Rain attended Southern Tech as an undergraduate and was part of their queer undergraduate student organization. The organization had a coming out event associated with National

Coming Out Day, an annual day of celebrating one's queer identity with the world, where she walked through a metaphorical door. The event was posted on Facebook. However, Rain's mom is connected to her on the platform.

And so, my mom saw it online. And then she called me. And she was like "You're gonna ruin your career if you're...gay like, it's not gonna work out. No one's gonna wanna hire you. You're already Black. And now you're gonna be gay, too? It's just gonna be so hard."

These words spooked Rain who was already having trouble maintaining an income. "I can't do this," she thought to herself. She also came from a religious household and was already going through an internal battle. She was struggling with the idea that her sexuality was a sin.

Rain decided to focus on her studies, graduate, and deal with her queerness at a later time. To her, being queer was not as visible as being Black, so she prioritized her racial identity over her queer identity. So, she pursued an internship where she could be comfortable just being Black. And then in 2014, Mike Brown, an unarmed Black man, was killed by a police officer in Ferguson, MO, "And I'm like, forget being queer. I'm just gonna focus on being Black. That's enough. So, I just kind of put [my queerness] to the side and just kind of hammered in my studies." Rain's focus on her studies landed her a fellowship with the government that paid for the remainder of her undergraduate education.

Upon graduation, Rain moved to a city in South Central Texas to fulfill the fellowship terms. She would continue to experience homophobia and isolation in her new city. Upon starting her job, two presumably heterosexual men quickly determined that she was queer. This made for a tense work environment.

I was fearful because [their slurs were] very audible so like they didn't care, and the fact that they didn't care about saying that loudly – and at the time where they did it, I was 20 – so [I] wasn't even like drinking age...I know I look young, and you're like out here saying that. This is...not a safe place for me to be queer.

Rain was already struggling to fit into her new environment, and this situation just made it worse. “And I knew I had three years more to go. So, like this is gonna...set up the groundwork for it to be a really shitty experience.”

Since Rain was under drinking age, and could not access any local queer bars, she continued to deal with feeling isolated from the queer community. However, not much changed after she turned 21, “I was like, okay, I'm gonna go out. But I'm not one of those people who you can go to a bar and like, strike up a conversation and be charismatic. I'm really [an] in-the-corner kind of person.” Rain was not able to connect with anyone at local bars, so she stopped going. In fact, it took her three years to finally connect with other queer women of color, but this was right before she left the city to head to a more queer-friendly city in the state.

This move to a new city in Texas marked a change in Rain's ability to find community. Almost immediately, she was able to connect with the locals, “I hung out with like people who were [just queer]. It's their one minority card...So that was that was nice to see...being okay with just like distilled one...minority.” This example of queerness enabled her to start exploring her bisexuality and eventually led her to seek a therapist, where she began the work of reconciling her identities. She even met her now fiancé, a cisgender Black male, who moved with her when it was time to move back to the Southeast for graduate school.

Rain began her PhD program at Southern Tech in 2020 during the height of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which she describes as a mistake.

I couldn't meet with my advisor. I couldn't talk to a bunch of other students. So, it was just like me in the lab working by myself...without being able to discuss, like potentially pushing advisors. Is it the best thing to join this lab? Should you TA first instead? Like that whole [advisor matching] period just didn't really happen.

Rain was also dealing with feelings of isolation.

There were no...serious connections that I made during that first year through the online communities. It was just like complaining about things...about life, was what was happening, and like being able to say hi to somebody if they pass by the next year. "Oh, hey. You were in the online community." But it wasn't like, "you are my person...we're gonna do this together."

Even in selecting graduate student groups, Rain continued to separate her Blackness from her queerness. She was initially part of the Black graduate student organization and the queer graduate student organization. Rain held leadership positions in both. However, after three years in these organizations, Rain decided it was time to resign and leave, "it feels good to make friends initially when you're new. And it's a good time. But...you start seeing the same thing over and over again, and the benefits don't outweigh the work and stress that goes into it." She also went on to say:

One thing that I've noticed this semester is that even though I put energy into these clubs and do things, I don't have these like lasting friendships...It's like I've put years into these organizations, and I don't...I wouldn't call you if I'm in trouble.

Although Rain has solid friendships, she expressed that she left the organizations jaded and unfulfilled. Her community includes several sources of support.

First would be my partner, and then, like my parents. Close friends and close friends are here in [the city], but also, like I have, one of my best friends, is in [the MidAtlantic]. Now, we talk all the time. So, it's just like those people. And then, like mentors, they could be like faculty that are on campus, or from my last job, or like industry contacts that I've made throughout the PhD program, just being like calling people up.

With the help of her off-campus therapist and local queer friends, Rain is reconciling her identity. This is admittedly causing her stress, but it appears that she is starting to feel confident in who she is as a Black bisexual woman.

Rain and Stress: Coming to Terms with her Queer Identity

Rain's religious upbringing caused her to question her sexuality during her early-to-mid-twenties, "I was like, 'is it a sin to be gay?', and that just like set me off on years of like in the closet/not in the closet. Am I really just not religious?" This struggle was further emphasized by off-campus organization she was a part of. "Should I just like try to like, pray the gay away, which someone told me...I was in a Christian group, and they were like, you have to pray (Rain laughs)."

However, after hearing this, Rain left that group in search of her own path and acceptance of her sexuality. She went back and forth with this struggle until she started seeing a therapist in her mid-20s. The time with her therapist helped Rain begin to resolve her internal struggle with her sexuality well before she began her doctoral study at STU. In fact, when I asked her if she had concealed her identity from her fellow students or her advisors at STU, Rain was emphatic that she had not. "Actually, the opposite. Yeah. I'm a little bit too much. Honestly, I've toned it down. But yeah, I came on strong." When I asked her to describe this further, she said, "just like the clothes that I would wear...my laptop. So, I was just like super...and often I just embraced it. I was like, 'I am gay.' So, I brought that energy to grad school."

Rain had this energy because she wanted a different experience than the work mode, she placed herself in during her undergraduate years.

I didn't have that college experience that I was sold back in high school. cause I'm working so hard I just like didn't do the things. And so, I was like, "let me get into grad school, and then and wild out for a bit," and that's kind of what the first 3 years were like. I was working hard, but a good chunk of it was me like putting myself out there trying to meet people like dating people like trying to see what's going on experiencing stuff that I had not gotten from undergrad...I wasn't like explicitly thinking about those experiences I just wanted to have, like the actual college experience.

This lack of an ideal undergraduate student experience led her to join and lead several graduate student organizations.

Rain and Campus Services: A Different Perspective as a Student Leader

Rain has been connected to several centers and organizations as a doctoral student. As a means to meet other Black graduate students, she joined the Black graduate student organization.

So, I started with just like attending and being a part of the community. And then the more I attended the more I want... to be a part of [Black graduate organization]. I just got picked because I kept showing up. The previous President just like voluntold me to be on the [executive board] and voluntold three other people. So, we just did it because we needed to survive, and that kept happening until this year, where I was like kept being voluntold to continue, because I'm contributing. But I wanted to contribute and like, help build a community and everything.

Rain also quickly connected with the queer resource center.

The [queer] resource center hosted a welcome back for all like queer students. And so, I got that email. And I showed up to the virtual open house thing. And people from the [queer graduate organization] were there. And I was like, "Okay, cool. I'm gonna go [there]." So that's how I get connected there with the resource center.

The resource center has also been instrumental in connecting Rain to other queer students who are part of her community, "the resource center is the only one that helped me identify other members of the community." This was facilitated through STU's queer graduate student organization which is operated in conjunction with the queer resource center.

So, after a couple of like in-person [queer graduate student organization meetings] ...I just reached out to some people I was like, "Hey, you're cool. We should hang out." And then, surprisingly, they're like, "Yeah, let's hang out." So that's what happened. And then we kind of became friends, but for, like the people who are my closest friends.

Although she is no longer an officer in the queer graduate organization, this connection to the club has proved to be a source of stress relief for Rain as she navigated her queer identity. Being able to talk to other queer graduate students helped her in her journey to fully accept her sexuality. Beyond that, the queer graduate organization encouraged her to stay in her graduate program when she thought about leaving.

I was thinking about quitting the grad program. And then I talked to someone in [queer graduate organization] ...they were like, “No, Rain, like you can’t ...here's different [resources] you can go down to see how you can change it. Don't just quit now....” I was gonna get my master’s and be done and then they convince me to stay, and things got better.

Rain also believes Southern Tech’s ability to support students lacks follow-through.

There's like a push within [Southern Tech] to be like, “Oh, we're going to support you. You can do it! We get! We got you!” And [they are] not there when the students need them. And so that's like a reason why I think a lot of graduate students don't do organizations because...they already know that's not gonna happen or like me. Now, I'm like I've done multiple. Or I see [support] is not there. So, I'm done like, I'm just gonna do my research for the remainder of my like academic career.

Rain’s overall experience with campus services at Southern Tech seems to have been mixed with positive and negative experiences. Her relationship with her advisors also speaks to inequities and challenges.

Rain’s Relationship with her Advisors: A Lack of Support

Rain was initially nervous about her return to graduate school as it had been a number of years since she had experienced academic rigor. She was grateful to just have an advisor.

2020 is rough because I had been coming from working, so I didn't believe in myself...I thought my lab, my advisor, was...doing me a service by accepting me, and I [am] trying to catch up. And

I always felt like I was gonna get kicked out of the lab...I didn't feel like I was good enough at the time.

However, Rain realized that this was her own thoughts more than her advisor's, "I was just like self-imposed stress retrospectively. He was fine...he's still fine with my performance back then."

Rain's self-doubt continued until she was awarded a STEM-based fellowship through the government, "I've been recognized nationally to be a good enough grad student to get this stuff done, so I'm not like afraid...or like thinking that I'm stupid because I've proven it to myself by getting this...outside accolade." Rain's confidence served as an impetus for her to choose a different focus for her research. This also meant choosing to change labs. A choice that she was, and is, still conflicted about, "I chose my first advisor, and I chose to come back [to STU] because I really liked his lab atmosphere...he really is a family-oriented guy." This advisor's lab featured people from different nationalities and backgrounds. He also took time to support them outside of lab activity.

It just was nice to be around all those different cultures, and then also to have the advisor...pushing us to hang out outside. He had stuff at his house, so I just liked the lab. I like that...he was someone who cared about the well-being of the students outside of like getting work done.

After two years of being in this advisor's lab, Rain decided to switch for several reasons. One of which was connected to her studies.

It was really the whole like BLM (Black Lives Matter) thing was happening through 2020. And I like felt like I needed to do something...I'm back in grad school...I can rewrite my career to like make a difference really impacted me.

Frustrations with her advisor also affected her decision to initially quit the program.

I just didn't feel like I was making any progress [with] my work. And I didn't know how it was gonna relate to my future career goals. And I just didn't...I don't think I felt like I wasn't being heard...I was just like, what is the point of this? And why are we doing this? And all my recommendations aren't being listened to at this point.

Her combined frustrations with her advisor led to her decision to change labs. However, Rain often wonders if she made the right choice,

And now I'm in a different lab, and...it's not the worst. But [he's] not my old advisor. I really miss the lab dynamics and his like mentorship strategy. [My current advisor] is very busy all the time and he does work outside of the lab. He's got like 30-minute blocks for each of us per week. It's just like a different mindset.

Rain also does not consider her current advisor to be part of her support system,

...Unless it's very particular about like their research field...like this is something...I have a question about like you're an expert. How do I do this? Or who should I talk to? Besides that, I'm not really... yeah, gonna talk about for anything personal.

The boundaries of Rain's relationship with her advisor have also been tested. There was a situation where he asked her to do additional work in a short period of time. Rain pushed back on this which was a notable change for her,

...And I was like. "I don't know how to help you...I really don't know." I think earlier me would have been like, Sure, I'll figure it out somehow...' But at this point, I value my time more than I value...his respect. So, I feel good about it.

Rain is finding her own voice comprehensive of her identity as a Black queer doctoral student.

Rain's Experience with Campus Services as a Queer Black Doctoral Student: Finding Support for Both Identities

Rain often prioritizes her Black identity over her queer identity, “I’m less urgent to address queer matters. I’m not sure why. I think in terms of prioritizing...my identities. So [my queer identity] is like second to the bottom, I guess, in terms of like urgency of addressing things.” She did not provide a specific reason for this other than what has already been said about her defending her Blackness in the wake of unarmed Black people being murdered at the hands of the police, “...America hates us like hates people who look like me, and I can’t take the skin off. So, we just gotta put those emotions in the box for now and like go to this riot...for now, I guess.”

When it comes to campus services supporting her intersectional identity, Rain has identified the Black graduate student and queer graduate student organizations as her primary source of stress relief. She also spoke of a sense of belonging among one of the campus’ multicultural centers, “they had food, and also just like it was like a familiar kind of bond going there just like hang out to reduce stress.” Rain, however, has not disclosed her queer identity to this center, “I mean, [center staff] may have known just gaydar being a thing. But yeah, like I never came out...” She also joined the Black graduate student organization to connect with STU’s Black community.

[Black graduate student organization] helped a lot, because there’s always been – I don’t think distance is the right word – but like a distance between like me being Black, and then feeling part of the Black community where there’s like always this kind of gap that I feel. And so, when I’m at [the organization’s] events and like part of the E-board, it felt like I was accepted. But it was also kind of like a work.

Rain also credits the queer resource center for supporting her as a Black Queer Doctoral Student, “the resource center very clearly, [said] ‘Okay, you’re Black, and you are queer. And that’s both at the same time. And we celebrate that.’” As has been described in previous sections, the resource center and

queer graduate student organization have connected her with her close friends and served as a source of strength when she considered dropping out of her program.

Summary

Out of all the participants, Rain had the most experience with student organizations and campus services. Though connected to the university's queer resource center and a multicultural center, her connection to community is closely related to the queer resource center. This connection has allowed her to establish community with other students of a sexual or gender minority. Prior to starting her program, Rain also began to see a therapist to resolve her Black queer identity. Therefore, she did not feel the need to hide her sexuality from anyone – including her advisors. Given Rain's undergraduate experience and the work she was doing with her therapist, she seems to be intentional about living life outside of the closet. However, given that she did not disclose her queer identity to the multicultural center staff, this may highlight a need to remain ambiguous in order to remain supported. Rain might be anticipating discrimination from the staff.

Rain's uneasiness, where she feels set apart from other Black students, may also be attributed to the societal pressure to separate one's Black and queer identity. This does not appear to be something that Rain is willing to do which can lead discomfort. Since the queer resource center staff are also multiple marginalized people who are also accepting of Rain's complete identity, she feels more comfortable in that space than in the Black graduate student organization or the multicultural center.

Rain was the only participant to describe a faculty advisor as a mentor – a relationship that was established with her first advisor. He made it a priority for all his lab members to be seen and supported in their research and career goals. Rain's first advisor also showed interest in establishing community outside of the lab environment. However, this lab culture was not a strong enough reason for Rain to continue with him. After feeling like she was not being heard, and a change in research interests, Rain decided to change advisors. She does not consider her current advisor to be a mentor since he does not

make much time to connect with his advisees. This makes Rain question if she has made the right decision.

Cross-Case Analysis

The purpose of this section was to conduct a cross-case analysis of all four narratives in order to identify common or overarching themes present across the narratives. I identified four themes that aligned with my research questions as: 1) community as an ameliorating factor, 2) mixed perspectives on campus services, 3) role of the faculty as advisor, *not* mentor, and 4) separating identities for support. I also used I-Poems as a means to compile and summarize the participants' combined experiences with these themes. The statements used for the poems are adapted from direct quotes from the participants. To select the statements, I reviewed the I-statements from each participant that I believed to pertain to the associated theme. I was able to create the poems with all participant's voices represented in each theme. The discussion of each theme begins with a constructed I-Poem as a means to highlight the important points. My analysis is detailed below.

Community as an Ameliorating Factor

Being surrounded by people who go for you really is a good feeling.

I define community as networks.

I'm always seeking to build community.

For the support systems that I've had to build them, find them through myself.

I found that in the process of getting a degree I needed community.

That lack has been isolating where I had to find my community.

I still am looking for support systems in proximity.

The I-Poem below highlights the importance of community to the participants. All voices are adapted here from their own words.

The overarching question guiding this study was “How have Black Queer Doctoral Students coped with minority stress and established a sense of community among other students of minoritized sexual or gender identity?” The answer to this question varied across the participants.

For CeeDee, his means of coping existed outside of STU. CeeDee knows the importance of a sense of community as an ameliorating factor to combat feelings of isolation. This may explain why he has established queer community, but this has been outside of Southern Tech. He separates his Blackness from his queerness on campus and has not made much effort in reaching out to the available queer spaces – including the resource center and the queer graduate student organization. Additionally, Monica’s motivation to study at Southern Tech was to be in a city known for its Black queer community. She wanted a different experience than what she encountered as an undergraduate. However, Monica actively conceals her queer identity from the staff at the multicultural center due to anticipated discrimination. She also lacks the local queer Black friendships that she has been seeking. CeeDee does not appear to have an established community with other students of minoritized sexual or gender identity. However, Monica’s source of on-campus support is Black women who are also in her program. CeeDee has found support through his boyfriend who is helping to connect him with other queer people in the city. Monica’s main source of community lies within her judo classes and screenwriting group.

As it pertains to Ian and Rain, these two students began their doctoral programs at an older age than CeeDee and Monica – Ian is in his forties while Rain is in her thirties. Both Ian and Rain, to varying degrees, came to Southern Tech with resolved issues around minority stress. Though Ian came out in his late twenties, he appeared to have taken the time to liberate himself from internalized homophobia, identity concealment, and anticipated discrimination. He came to Southern Tech with a different perspective as a working professional pursuing his doctorate part-time. Rain also came to Southern Tech with a different perspective since she had also been a part of the workforce for a number of years prior to starting her doctoral program full-time. She credits therapy for helping her resolve issues related to minority stress. Out of all the participants, Rain has openly expressed her queer identity in her program to

her faculty advisors. In terms of community and support systems, both Ian and Rain have established off-campus connections as core to their support. Ian considers his chosen family to be integral to his support. Rain's fiancé is central to her support which is not dissimilar to CeeDee. However, both Ian and Rain also have strong associations with Southern Tech's queer resource center and queer graduate student organization.

Community was proven important to these Black Queer Doctoral Students' ability to overcome program-related stress and feelings of isolation. Some campus services have been created to assist students in establishing community. However, as the next section discusses, there is both a lack and misunderstanding of their use and relevance for Black Queer Doctoral Students.

Mixed Perspectives on Campus Services

I think the university prioritizes undergrad students

I'm not really sure if there's any services that were to service me

I haven't connected with campus services. I search it, I Google it. And I've seen it...maybe next semester

In [the queer resource center], I found my blackness, my queerness, and my intelligence all being
respected and embraced

The resource center is the only one that helped me identify other members of the community

The compiled I-Poem summarizes the combined voices and experiences of all the participants with campus services as it relates to the theme.

Both Ian and Rain mentioned how campus services helped them connect to community. As a part-time student in his program, Ian initially thought he would not need to seek community at Southern Tech. However, his negative experiences with racism in his program led him to seek out other Black queer students through the Black graduate student organization. However, Ian described feeling discriminated against since he was not in a STEM program. This discrimination led him to seek out the

queer resource center. Though he did not find community with other Black queer students – mostly due to the centers' event schedule – Ian was able to connect with the resource center staff who have been a listening ear for him when he has experienced difficulties within his program. The center staff is also comprised of Queer People of Color – of similar age – so that could explain his feelings of belonging. Rain also described the queer resource center as a place that helped her connect to community with other queer graduate students. The queer graduate student organization, facilitated through the queer resource center, has allowed Rain to establish community with these queer students who have helped her navigate her program and have even encouraged her to continue to stay in her program when she thought about dropping out. Rain considers these students to be part of her support system. However, CeeDee and Monica discussed having different experiences with campus services, including the queer resource center. CeeDee did not believe campus services were designed for his needs as a doctoral student. However, he has connected to the Black graduate student organization in an effort to build community with other Black graduate students. He also mentioned he did not know how to use the queer resource center and speculated that its purpose might be performative. Monica also experienced an event hosted by the queer resource center, but she found that event to be too young and too white for her to consider it a safe space. This experience may have contributed to why she does not associate with the queer resource center.

None of the participants mentioned the counseling center or multicultural centers in helping them to connect to community. Monica and Rain both described the multicultural centers as providing a safe space from racial fatigue. Additionally, the role of faculty in creating community and reducing stress can be even more important to these students.

The Role of Faculty as Advisor, *Not* Mentor

I chose my [advisor] because I felt as though they were safe.

My advisor makes my life a little hard.

I'm not gonna live in fear. I don't wanna be abused emotionally.

I'm trying to not to take on the stress of my advisor.

My advisor doesn't respond to my email sometimes.

I think when [my advisor] is able to give me time, I feel seen, I feel like I'm on the right track.

I don't look for my advisor for anything other than pure research advice.

The I-Poem above represents the combined voice of all the participants as it relates to their perceptions of their advisors.

The faculty of the participants seemed to be focused primarily on helping students reach academic milestones as *advisors* rather than supporting their additional needs as *mentors*. The most common similarities with their faculty advisor could be found among CeeDee, Monica, and Rain since they were all full-time students in STEM-based labs. Ian, who is in his program part-time, does not operate within a lab environment. He also has a panel of faculty serving as his advisors while he completes his comprehensive examination. Regardless of the program, none of the participants provided stories or instances where their advisors helped them cope with minority stress or specifically supported their queer identity. However, CeeDee actively conceals his queer identity from his advisor in his use of gender-neutral language when he describes his boyfriend. CeeDee's advisor also adds to the stress CeeDee experiences as a doctoral student. His advisor has not made himself regularly available to CeeDee unless it is an urgent matter, nor does his advisor try to provide any psycho-social support. This support was something CeeDee believed he needed as a Black Doctoral Student. Monica has a similar experience with her advisor. Although her advisor has tried to facilitate group outings outside of the lab, Monica believes that he is only invested in her ability to research and yield results. This was evident to Monica when she called on her advisor to mediate a situation between her and a lab mate – both are his advisees. Monica found her advisor to lack mediation skills. As such, she would only seek advice from him if it were related to her data or research. Out of the four participants, Rain was the only one to have experienced changing advisors. Rain's reason for changing advisors – and labs – was related to her

evolving research interests. She also expressed that she felt unable to perform in her first advisor's lab. Additionally, Rain believed her voice was not being heard regarding changes to the lab environment. Despite these concerns, Rain was also the only participant to describe an advisor as a mentor. He not only showed interest in her research, but he also offered Rain career advice and guidance. Rain's experience with her current advisor offers fewer mentorship opportunities. She describes him as too busy to offer much additional time beyond those meetings. As for Ian, he does not seek, nor do his advisors provide, guidance to him beyond his research.

In terms of faculty helping the participants build community, only Monica and Rain mentioned any efforts made by their advisors. Monica was frequently tasked with scheduling events for her lab at her advisor's request. Rain's first advisor and mentor made efforts to build community since he hosted events at his home. However, students with multiple marginalized identities may believe they need to access support by separating their identities.

Separating Identities for Support

When you occupy spaces being Black and queer, you don't get a break.

I have very few outlets for being Black and gay

You see the Black, you don't see the gay.

There's something about a Black queer friend in proximity.

Should I go to the Black one first, or should I go to the gay one?

I can hide [being queer] if necessary. It's nothing that's visible.

I'm just gonna focus on being Black. That's enough.

Me connecting with queer Black people has been almost exclusively outside of [Southern Tech].

The compiled I-Poem highlights the combined experience of all the participants as Black Queer Doctoral Students. Please note that this is the only poem that mentioned their Black and queer-related identities. This was intentional as a means to highlight the perceived structural barriers that existed for the participants.

The majority of the participants expressed a need to separate their Black identity from their queer identity. CeeDee, Monica, and Rain mentioned the need to separate their Black and queer identities. CeeDee and Monica prioritize their Blackness while Rain prioritizes her queerness. CeeDee describes his campus life as his “Black life” and his off-campus life as his “queer life.” To this end, he is involved with the Black graduate student organization and is developing community with his fellow students. This is a conscious effort on his part to maintain these separate identities. Monica has actively concealed her queer identity from multicultural center staff in fear of anticipated discrimination. Conversely, Rain was actively working to resolve issues with accepting her identity as a bisexual Black woman. She also described feeling disconnected from Southern Tech’s Black students, but this is a recurring theme for Rain feeling generally disconnected from the Black community. Her best experiences are with the queer graduate student organization which does not have many Black students in its current membership. None of these three participants exist as Black Queer Doctoral Students at Southern Tech. This is different for Ian since he is in his forties and is a working professional in addition to pursuing his doctorate. Ian came into the program with real-life experience which has cultivated his identity as a Black queer man. Both these identities are core to who he is. Despite this, Ian also offered, “when I’m around Black men...I can’t be myself, because I’m the only gay. When I’m around gays, I can’t really get everything I need, because I’m the only person of color.” This expresses a need to prioritize one identity over the other to access support.

The experiences of CeeDee, Monica, and Rain, specifically the perceived need to operate as Black *or* queer rather than Black *and* queer, could be influenced by the structures or institutions of racism and homophobia that exist within STU. Race may be the most salient identity because it is visible.

Therefore, these Black Queer Doctoral Students who are attending a predominantly white university may find safety by putting their racial identity first and queerness second. This prioritization of identities may have allowed them to navigate Black spaces that may be hostile to queer people. The queer resource center has been described by Monica, Rain, and Ian as predominantly white despite the staff being from multiple marginalized identities. Monica did not feel safe in this environment, so she chose to discontinue efforts to connect with the center.

Summary

Access to community was found to be important to this study's participants to ameliorate the stress related to their minoritized identities. However, the community they required was often available off-campus through social organizations, sports, and support networks they created themselves. Additionally, the participants also expressed they did not believe campus services could support their needs as doctoral students – much less as BQDS. The participants found these services to be irrelevant, inaccessible, too white, or too young. When considering the faculty-student relationship, the participants' advisors were more concerned with them reaching academic milestones than providing psychosocial support overall. In addition, support for their intersectional identities was not available to all participants who often felt the need to prioritize one marginalized identity over the other to find community via campus services. The proceeding Chapter Five aligns these findings with the minority stress model and intersectionality. I also offer recommendations for practice and future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

STORY DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter discusses how the participants' narratives and cross-case analysis answered this study's research questions and subquestions guided by the minority stress model and intersectionality. The discussion began with an overview of the research methodology and theoretical frameworks. I also discussed implications for Black queer doctoral students (BQDS) as they navigate their doctoral programs while coping with program-related and life stress as students of multiple marginalized identities. Recommendations for the practice are also offered to assist campus administrators in addressing the findings. This chapter concludes with a discussion of limitations and recommendations for future research.

Methodology and Findings Overview

This narrative inquiry examined the experiences of BQDS with campus services and their ability to help them cope with minority stress and establish a sense of community with other students of minoritized sexual or gender identity. This study also intended to determine if the intersection of their racial and queer or trans* identities influenced the experiences of BQDS with campus services.

This study used both the minority stress model and intersectionality as theoretical frameworks. The minority stress model provides an explanation for the stress queer people experience as relevant to their minority identity (Meyer, 2003, 2013). Specifically, proximal minority stress, or the stress experienced personally or socially, is defined as internalized homophobia, identity concealment, and anticipated discrimination. Queer people who have a negative perception of their queer identity are more prone to minority stress and, therefore, are less likely to connect to community as an ameliorating factor to combat minority stress. Those with a more positive perception of their queer identity may also experience minority stress, but they are able to connect to community as an ameliorating factor. The stress Queer People of Color experience adds an additional layer of complexity that may not be completely addressed by the minority stress model. Thus, Intersectionality contends that a person's multiple-

marginalized identities exist simultaneously and influence how they perceive the world and access services (Crenshaw, 1991). Particularly, structural intersectionality addresses the policies and practices that perpetuate discrimination experienced by people at the intersection of their marginalized identities.

I chose the minority stress model and intersectionality to guide this study as they both can address the experiences of students from marginalized and underrepresented groups. I used the minority stress model to determine if campus services served as an ameliorating factor by mitigating minority stress and helped students establish community with other students of minoritized sexual or gender minority. I also used the model to determine if the relationship with their faculty advisor helped them cope with stress and minority stress. Additionally, intersectionality was used to determine if the intersection of the participants' multiple marginalized identities created any barriers for BQDS to access campus services. Both theoretical frameworks assisted me in developing interview questions that aligned with each theory. For example, to determine if minority stress affected the participant's ability to cope, I created guiding questions that asked the participants to retell any struggles in accepting their queer identity, or to speak to any times that they actively concealed their queer identity both throughout their life and in their doctoral program. In terms of intersectionality, the participants were asked to consider how the intersection of their race and sexual identities affect their ability to cope. Questions during the conversation phase were also constructed using the same logic. Participants were asked to further elaborate on the struggles they faced in accepting their identity and tell a story about a time they may have concealed their identity from their faculty advisor or their fellow students. They were also asked to elaborate on ways their advisor may have supported their multiple marginalized identities. Step Three of the Listening Guide (LG) analysis also facilitated my approach in highlighting contrapuntal voices that spoke to how the participants' experiences as BQDS might be coping with minority stress. Using narrative inquiry as research methodology, the findings were constructed into narratives of their experiences. I also used cross-case analysis to identify common themes across the completed narratives.

I chose *Bildungsroman* as my narrative genre as a means to story the experiences of my participants as a journey through personal hardship to personal growth (Kim, 2016; Kim & Zimmerman, 2017). *Bildungsroman* focuses on elements of persisting through uncertainty, complexity, and transformation (Roberts, 2008). I believed this perspective would add important insight in constructing the narratives of BQDS. I met with each of the participants for two interviews scheduled within 1-2 weeks of each other. Interview One focused on the participants' personal journeys to doctoral study, asking them to discuss any struggles they may have had in accepting their queer identities. Interview Two focused on the participants' experiences with stress while pursuing their doctoral degree. They were also asked to describe how campus services – counseling services, the queer resource center, and/or the multicultural center – and their relationship with their advisor might have helped them cope with program-related and minority stress. I then used LG analysis to story their experiences. This required me to listen to each interview three times in order to construct each narrative.

In investigating how campus services assist BQDS establish community among other students of minoritized sexual and gender identities, the cross-case analysis of each participants' narrative revealed their primary source of community was outside of STU. However, Ian and Rain mentioned the queer resource center as a space where they were able to connect to on-campus community. The same could not be said for CeeDee and Monica who did not believe campus services were equipped to handle their needs as doctoral students. This finding is supported by Waight & Giordano (2018)'s study of doctoral student use of campus services. Connection to community is also believed to be the primary ameliorating factor in minimizing the effects of minority stress (Meyer, 2003, 2013; Williams et al., 2017). Campus services, in particular multicultural centers and queer resource centers were created to help marginalized students feel supported in an environment that was designed to center Whiteness (Kane, 2013; Reid & Ebebe, 2018; Shuford, 2011). If this is the case, there were mixed perspectives from the BQDS in this study about finding community in these spaces. The lack of scholarly material on the relationship between graduate students and multicultural centers and queer resource centers may also highlight these gaps in

services. Though much more literature exists on the way faculty may also be of service to students (e.g., McCallum et al., 2022 and Schlosser et al., 2003), the participants' advisors were not able to provide social support.

The BQDS in this study did not discuss ways their faculty advisor helped them cope with stress or minority stress. The faculty were described as advisors helping the participants reach academic milestones than providing the psycho-social support necessary to be considered mentors (McCallum et al., 2022; Schlosser et al., 2003). Faculty commonly believe that their role as an advisor is to guide their advisees to graduation (Knox et al., 2006). This responsibility is supported by all the participants' narrative. With the exception of Rain, this support did not extend into mentorship. Even in that singular case, the mentorship she received was not enough to convince her to stay in her mentor's lab as she did not believe her voice was being considered in necessary changes to the lab environment. Additionally, CeeDee seemed to be expecting some psychosocial support from his advisor. To this end, mentorship has been found to be important to assisting Doctoral Students of Color acclimate to the norms and expectations of their particular program as reported by Lechuga (2011) in their study of the faculty-graduate student mentoring relationship. Additionally, socialization into academic culture can help retain Doctoral Students of Color to graduation (Turner et al., 2022; Williams et al., 2018). However, the constructed narratives of BQDS in this study reveal a lack of mentorship. These students exist in an academic environment that often centers Whiteness (Williams et al., 2018). Attention to their intersecting identities is paramount for support. Nevertheless, the narratives also revealed a need to prioritize identities to access this support.

In terms of the participants' intersectional experience as BQDS, three of the participants – CeeDee, Monica, and Rain – spoke to the need to separate their Black and queer identities in order to seek on-campus support. However, it is also important to remember that the stories of BQDS are not monolithic, thus, no singular experience can truly represent their complex needs (Patton, 2006; Reid & Ebede, 2018). Nevertheless, the stories of the participants were in line with the literature. Their Black

identities were often prioritized over their queer identities in these instances. This prioritization of identities is supported by (Bowleg, 2012)'s study of Black queer men. An open, inclusive environment helps promote a sense of belonging among BQDS (Chan et al., 2017; Worthen, 2018). Awareness of the structural oppressions that prevent these students from thriving is paramount. This might be the case for CeeDee, Monica, and Rain who exist in an "either/or" scenario for support. This existence serves to push BQDS further into the margins and may be related to the interlocking oppression of racism and heterosexism (Bowleg, 2012; Nadal et al., 2015). The constructed narratives also reveal a lack of space on STU's campus that affirms their Black and queer identities and support their safety and well-being (Hill et al., 2021; Hudson & Romanelli, 2020). These spaces are important to help students with multiple marginalized identities thrive. The participants' stories were also supported by the minority stress model and intersectionality which are discussed further in the next section.

Connections to the Theoretical Frameworks

This section discusses how the BQDS in this study were impacted by minority stress and intersectionality. These connections are emphasized with references to scholarly literature.

Minority Stress in Black Queer Doctoral Students

Minority stress can have a positive or negative effect on a person's mental health (Meyer, 2003, 2013). It has three main components: 1) unique to the stigmatized group, 2) chronic and sustained by society, and 3) socially based in that the social processes and structures work to uphold their minority status and identity (Meyer, 2003, 2013). The constructed narratives also suggest that BQDS may experience program stress related to acclimating to a new academic culture while navigating their role and responsibilities within their labs and/or program (Bekkouche et al., 2022). These students may also experience feelings of loneliness and isolation, and that could be related to their identity as a Queer or Trans* Student of Color as reported by Parmenter et al. (2021b)'s study of Queer People of Color's experience in connecting to the queer community which centers Whiteness. In terms of minority stress, internalized homophobia, identity concealment, and anticipated discrimination may interact to prevent

BQDS from disclosing their queer or trans* identity (Meyer, 2003, 2013; Williams et al., 2017). Indeed, the effects of minority stress varied across the participants. CeeDee, Ian, and Rain appeared to have a positive view of their queer identities. CeeDee came to STU already having resolved issues accepting his queer identity. This meant that he had to resolve his own internalized homophobia by resolving preconceived notions around masculinity and femininity in order to come out as gay. This internalized homophobia may have prevented CeeDee from fully accepting his queer identity due to his own preconceived notions of being a queer man. Indeed, internalized homophobia is an external process based on society's view on homosexuality (Russell & Bohan, 2006). However, he had accepted his queer identity and may have believed that connecting with other queer people who shared his interests were important to mitigating minority stress. CeeDee actively sought community with other queer people upon his arrival at STU. Moving from a liberal city in Texas, he came to Southern Tech knowing he would be in another queer-friendly city in the Southeast. Ian used his educational pursuits as an explanation for not having a girlfriend throughout his life. He did not come out to his mother until he was financially independent for fear that he would be unsupported. Ian may have concealed his identity due to fear of a poorer quality of life than his middle-class upbringing provided him. His fears are supported by Meyer's (2003, 2013) interpretation of anticipated discrimination. Rain's mother was also a factor in her choice to delay the exploration of her bisexual identity. She feared that her outness would affect her ability to secure a job after graduating from STU as an undergraduate. This anticipated discrimination, the act of vigilantly guarding her queer identity, contributed to the gap between coming out as an undergraduate to safely exploring her bisexuality later on while living in Texas (Meyer, 2003, 2013). Of all the participants, Monica seemed to be the most negatively affected by minority stress. Her undergraduate experience with homophobic friends shaped the way Monica viewed her queer identity. Monica is selective with whom she discloses her lesbian identity due to that negative experience. Anticipated discrimination prevented her from sharing her queerness with the multicultural center staff at STU. These vigilant interactions may be preventing Monica from establishing the community she seeks with other

Black queer people (Meyer, 2003, 2013; Williams et al., 2017). The social support she wants seems to be beyond her current abilities.

Connection to social support by establishing community can serve as an ameliorating factor in reducing the effect of minority stress on a queer person's mental health (Meyer, 2003, 2013; Salfas et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2017). CeeDee experienced the stress of isolation during his first year at STU while he attempted to connect to community. He attempted to connect with his fellow students, joined several gay sports organizations, and even went out to local bars within the queer community. These attempts did not initially provide him with the social support he wanted to develop. This isolation from community made CeeDee feel alone in a new city which may have led to some psychological distress. He has since found community with the Black students on campus through the Black graduate student organization and with queer people he has met off-campus with the help of his romantic partner. Thus, CeeDee's connection to community to overcome feelings of isolation is supported by Salfas et al. (2019)'s study of minority stress processes in queer men. For Ian, who is a working professional pursuing his doctoral degree part-time, his primary source of social support did not initially involve STU. However, the academic culture within his program made him realize the importance of community with other graduate students. This caused him to seek out the Black graduate student organization. However, it was not until he connected with the queer resource center that he felt a sense of belonging and community among the center's staff. Much like Ian, Rain was also in search of a sense of belonging. Rain's return to STU as a doctoral student presented an opportunity to be out in college. She was aware of where to go for community with the Black graduate student and queer graduate student organizations due to her time as an undergraduate at the university. Rain quickly became a leader in both organizations but had stronger connections with fellow students in the queer graduate student organization. This social support has kept Rain in her doctoral program when she thought about quitting. The same on-campus social support seems to elude Monica whose community is primarily off campus in her judo classes and a screenwriting group. However, anticipated discrimination due to negative experiences in her past may have prevented Monica

from disclosing her queer identity in these spaces (Meyer, 2003; 2013; Seelman et al., 2017). It could be surmised that she would rather be supported for part of her identity rather than be ostracized for being a lesbian.

The stress that the participants experienced were unique to their group as Black queer doctoral students. They collectively experienced internalized homophobia that prevented them from accepting their queer identity, but mostly before they started their doctoral programs. Several participants were also apprehensive about disclosing their queer identity due to anticipated discrimination, and as such, were not able to access their desired version of community. Despite societal and cultural advancement to be more accepting of diverse identities, homophobic structures are still sustained in institutional policy which then influences the availability of safe spaces and campus services. This may be magnified for BQDS who perceive campus services as insufficient to meet their needs. The following section discusses how these students from multiple marginalized identities may be influenced by these structures.

The Intersections of Being a Black Queer Doctoral Student

BQDS may not have the space to exist at the intersection of their multiple marginalized identities, often prioritizing one identity over the other, to connect to community as an ameliorating factor in mitigating minority stress (Bowleg, 2012). While campus services, such as the multicultural center, counseling services, and the queer resource center, are designed to help BQDS cope with stress, this study's constructed narratives suggest that BQDS may not believe that campus services have been created for doctoral student use (Waight & Giordano, 2018). Queer spaces have been described as predominantly white which can lead to further marginalization and isolation among these students (Blockett, 2017). They may attend events hosted by campus services only to find these them attended by white undergraduate students. These spaces do not foster a safe space for BQDS who might feel further marginalized by the lack of representation (Parmenter et al., 2021a).

The majority of the participants also retold stories of the perceived need to separate their Black and queer identities in order to be supported for each identity. Racial identity may be seen as the

dominant identity over their queer identity. Minority stress in the form of anticipated discrimination may play a role in the prioritization of their race. Indeed, Black queer people may believe it is necessary to prioritize their Black identity over their queer identity to feel supported (Bowleg, 2012). CeeDee described his on-campus experience as his “Black life” and his off-campus experience as his “queer life.” This was intentional for CeeDee. African American culture can have deep roots in Christianity, and those beliefs have been reported as the primary reason for one to be less accepting of queerness (Nadal et al., 2015; Worthen, 2017). Thus, CeeDee, perhaps subconsciously, chooses to navigate STU’s Black spaces by prioritizing his Blackness, to him, race may be the most salient identity as a means to cope with life at STU. This is not an uncommon experience among Black queer men who view their racial identity as visible while they are often able to seamlessly blend into heterosexual society (Bowleg, 2012). Monica’s experience is not dissimilar to CeeDee’s who relied on her Black identity to gain social support. She associated with one of STU’s multicultural centers for which she viewed as a safe space for Black students. However, due to a history of discrimination, Monica chooses not to disclose her queer identity to the center’s staff. She is also reluctant to share this identity in her off-campus community. Additionally, Monica did attempt to establish a connection with the queer resource center, but she perceived the space to center Whiteness. Thus, she decided not to pursue a connection with the center any further. This is common for BQDS as the centering of Whiteness can contribute to a lack of representation of Queer People of Color in queer spaces (Parmenter et al., 2021a). Rain was also active in both Black and queer graduate spaces at STU. Despite this, Rain described a stronger association with her queer identity more than her Black identity. This association may be attributed to her outness given the often-religious context of the African American experience (Nadal, 2015; Worthen, 2018). The African American experience can be rooted in Christianity, and Black queer people often contend with both being told and feeling condemned to hell because of their sexuality. These structural barriers in the way the Black graduate students may perceive queer people could provide a reason for lack of belonging among these students. Indeed, religion, heterosexism, and homophobia have been found to foster negative feelings towards people who identify as queer or trans* (Worthen, 2018). Thus, BQDS may choose to

stay silent about their queer identity due to anticipated discrimination. Ian was the sole participant who came to STU with a fully realized Black queer identity (Bishop et al., 2020). As such, he found belonging among the queer resource staff since they are also Queer People of Color with fully realized queer identities. The queer resource center staff have supported Ian by being a listening board when he had difficulties in his program. The center was also able to support his educational pursuits by sending him to a conference related to his research goals. In summary, race is often seen as the most salient identity to gain social support. However, this may come at a cost of denying one's queer identity as was storied by CeeDee, Monica, and Rain. Social influences, such as religious reviews and heterosexism, may further impact BQDS' sense of belonging as they may feel unsafe in Black spaces.

Extension of the Current Literature

This study extends the literature on the minority stress model and intersectionality in several ways. The use of the minority stress model has been heavily quantitative used to correlate negative health impacts, such as depression and anxiety, with the prevalence of minority stress (Balsam et al., 2011; Bockting et al., 2013; Burns et al., 2012; Meyer, 2003, 2013; Puckett et al., 2018; Salfas et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2017). This current study uses qualitative methodology via *Bildungsroman*, a genre of narrative inquiry, to story the experiences of BQDS and their use of campus services to ameliorate minority stress and establish community with other students of minoritized sexual or gender identity. Thus, broadening the applicability of the model beyond quantitative methodology. The current study allows users of the model to consider how internalized homophobia, identity concealment, and anticipated discrimination may affect a queer or trans* person's ability to cope by creating interview questions, listening for contrapuntal voices that focus on minority stress, and constructing narratives that emphasize the importance of the voices of the participants' experiences in their own words (Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin & Connelly, 2013; Kim, 2016; Tolman & Head, 2021). Additionally, the study may also expand the way researchers consider the impact of anticipated discrimination in queer people's ability to connect to community (Meyer, 2003; 2013). For example, consider how Monica used one of STU's

multicultural centers to be supported as a Black student, but was afraid disclose her queer identity due to anticipated discrimination. Monica was explicit that she would rather be supported in part for one identity than face discrimination due to her queerness. She might also be able to connect with other Black queer students if she did not fear discrimination. Monica's story exemplifies the importance of overcoming the stress of anticipated discrimination to connect to community. Her experience and perspective may also be applicable to other queer people, thus extending our knowledge of minority stress. There is also a gap in the literature of how the minority stress model might be applicable to Black queer people who are from multiple marginalized identities (Balsam et al., 2011; Moradi et al., 2010). The current study addresses this gap by considering the ways BQDS are negatively impacted by minority stress in addition to the systems of oppression that they must also contend with in order to connect to support. The dearth of scholarly literature on the minority stress model and the additional stress structural racism adds to the experience of BQDS motivated my need to combine the model with intersectionality in order to fully address the complex experience of Black queer people.

Intersectionality as a theoretical framework provided the scaffolding to understand the systems of interlocking oppression that prevented BQDS from connecting to campus services to ameliorate minority stress and establish community with other students of minoritized sexual or gender identities. This study extends the model by considering the ways minority stress might contribute to societal oppressions (Chan et al., 2017; Harris & Leonardo, 2018; Meyer, 2003, 2013). Using again Monica's story, anticipated discrimination may have prevented her from disclosing her identity as a lesbian to multicultural center staff. However, she also felt unsafe when attending an event offered by the queer resource center due to its majority white attendance. Monica is not able to exist as a Black Queer Doctoral Student in either the multicultural center or queer resource center because of the systems of oppression that exist, adding to the challenges of her complex experience (Bowleg, 2012). Additionally, this current study expands how intersectionality may be used as research methodology. Bowleg (2008) suggested that addressing intersectional identities should consider all aspects of a person's identity rather than focusing on one at a

time. The guiding questions and semi-structured interview questions that I constructed for this study were in line with this recommendation to address the participant's experience as BQDS with intersecting identities. For example, instead of solely asking the participants about their racial experience in campus, my questions sought to address their experience as Black queer doctoral students (Appendix C). I also listened for contrapuntal voices during the LG analysis that addressed their intersectional identities. Those voices were represented in the I-Poems in Chapter Four. Thus, the current study expands intersectionality by adding to the body of research a way the theory can be used to develop study and create an analysis plan that explores the experiences of people from multiple marginalized identities.

Though applicable to BQDS, scholarly material that applied the minority stress model and intersectionality to understand the experiences of Queer and Trans* People of Color is sparse (Parmenter, 2021a). Thus, the current study expands how the frameworks explain how minority stress and their experiences as people from multiple marginalized identities may be preventing BQDS from coping with minority stress and using campus services to ameliorate minority stress by establishing community with other students minoritized by their sexual or gender identity. Thus, I am able to offer recommendations to the practice and future research based on the findings and their relation to the selected theoretical frameworks.

Recommendations

This section discusses recommendations for practice supported by current research. It concludes with recommendations for future research based on this study's limitations.

Practice

The need for community has increased as diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives are currently under increased scrutiny across the country (Diep & Pettit, 2023; Kelderman, 2023). These attacks on DEI initiatives may push BQDS further into the margins and out of their doctoral programs. Thus, BQDS may not believe they have a space that is unique to them. Therefore, campus administrators must directly engage BQDS to develop strategies to reach multiple-marginalized students (Blockett, 2017,

Wright & McKinley, 2011). University leaders must come to these conversations ready to listen without judgment or defensiveness. BQDS' experiences of campus services – and the overall perception of the institution – may run counter to long-held beliefs about campus culture and perception (Hudson & Romanelli, 2020; Poynter & Washington, 2005). BQDS are often forgotten in campus planning and allocation of resources. Their unique perspective can help administrators develop programming and centers that will fit BQDS' needs. For example, Monica's experience with campus services described a need for a creation of a space designed specifically for BQDS. There might be other BQDS who might be dealing with minority stress and prioritize their racial identity in a multicultural center space and also do not feel safe in STU's queer spaces. For a campus like STU whose population is over 50% graduate students, BQDS should also have a sense of belonging.

BQDS may also be unaware of current campus services that may be relevant to their needs. This was true for both CeeDee and Monica, who were unsure if STU's campus services could be supportive of their needs. This uncertainty is supported by the literature since low perceived relevancy has been found to contribute to lack of use of campus services among doctoral students (Waight & Giordano, 2018). Directors and managers of these services should develop a communications strategy to reach multiple marginalized doctoral students. The service's website should make it clear that resources are inclusive of doctoral students by specifically stating so. In addition, campus leaders should also consider best practices to engage BQDS with campus services and emphasize events and programming that are specific to their needs. These scheduled events and programming should also keep in mind that doctoral students may have academic or lab-related responsibilities that prevent them from attending events scheduled during the day (Couch & Hodak, 2022). Thus, events for BQDS should occur after business hours to encourage attendance. Once new directives are developed, the campus service or center should leverage their connections to academic units that have doctoral populations. This will potentially broaden the service's reach directly to BQDS who might be more likely read communications from their academic unit rather than a mass email from a campus service.

BQDS may be more reliant on the culture within their department or lab than any other campus service or organization. For example, CeeDee initially sought to establish community with his lab mates and within his academic department to overcome feelings of isolation and loneliness. Similarly, Monica's source of community on campus is primarily the Black women in her program. Additionally, Ian's experience with racism while he acclimated to his program from the director of graduate studies and the perceived discrimination he received at the hands of his professor made Ian feel unsafe. These experiences reinforce that a graduate student's sense of belonging at the program level is a factor in how they may view themselves and their academic achievements (Charles et al., 2021; Gibbs et al., 2012; Jensen & Cross, 2020). This means that a greater responsibility should be placed on the academic unit to develop an awareness of the institution's campus services when different needs arise. For instance, it is important for BQDS to connect to community, so they do not feel isolated. This should also include the creation of initiatives for faculty to develop an awareness of the challenges that students from multiple-marginalized backgrounds often face when acclimating to graduate school life. If a program administrator or faculty advisor has some knowledge of the university's resources and an awareness of potential challenges, it would help guide BQDS to the appropriate campus services to connect to other marginalized students and increase cultural awareness among staff and faculty tasked with helping BQDS thrive. Academic departments should also create programming and department-level strategies to create a culture of inclusivity. However, this does not mean that the onus should be on BQDS to create and sustain these initiatives (Blockett, 2017). Rather, the academic department's strategy should include methods that do not unduly burden the students.

This study's participants also described their relationship with faculty as an "advisor" more so than a "mentor." This suggests that faculty show a greater concern for helping students reach and complete academic milestones than helping them reach career goals, addressing mental health concerns, or supporting their multiple marginalized identities (Lechuga, 2011). However, current research suggests that mentorship plays a greater role in helping marginalized students acclimate to their program and

campus life (Burton & Vicente, 2021; Lechuga, 2011; Turner et al., 2022; Williams et al., 2018). The cultural norms of doctoral programs, particularly in STEM environments, often perpetuate Whiteness which further marginalizes Doctoral Students of Color especially when they do not fully assimilate to those norms (Azizova & Felder, 2017).

The faculty-student relationship is also important in helping BQDS thrive in their programs. CeeDee initially believed that his advisor would be more supportive and responsive to his needs as a student, but he expressed that his advisor was not helpful in his acclimation to the program. CeeDee also believed that his advisor was too busy to provide the attention he sought. Monica also believed her advisor was only capable of addressing academic and research-related concerns. These beliefs were reinforced when her advisor was unable to resolve a conflict between her and a lab mate. Her advisor appeared more concerned about their ability to work together than demonstrating the ability to resolve conflict. Further, Rain's experiences with her former and current advisor evidenced that she has not felt supported in either environment. She left her first advisor since she did not believe he was listening to her concerns. Her current advisor has attempted to give her last-minute work seemingly without much regard for her own time. However, Ian's advisors were supportive of his academic pursuits and goals which provided him with the security he needed in order to complete his academic milestones. With the exception of Rain, who considered her former advisor a mentor, no other participants believed they could seek the psychosocial support necessary to consider their advisors as mentors (Lechuga, 2011). Faculty advisors can influence the way students not only view the university but also how students perceive their work and ability to complete tasks. The lack of mentorship described by the participants highlights a need for advisors to become mentors to their students. This support is important to the overall well-being of BQDS and their ability to persist to graduation (Bork & Mondisa, 2022; Mondisa et al., 2021; Posselt, 2018). This lack of mentorship may also provide an explanation to why CeeDee, Monica, and Ian have not disclosed their queer identity. This means that faculty should foster a welcoming, inclusive environment that will allow multiple marginalized students to freely express and disclose their identity.

Creating such an environment may also assist faculty to go past the role of “advisor” to that of “mentor” (Williams et al., 2018). To that end, faculty should also receive training and mentorship from both the university and at the department level on how to best support students (Knox et al., 2006). This training should include conflict resolution, knowledge of leadership theory, and identification of leadership style. Developing an understanding of how to mentor doctoral students, specifically BQDS, has the potential to create a sense of belonging among marginalized students (Burt et al., 2018; Lechuga, 2011; Turner et al., 2022; Williams et al., 2018). STU has attempted to respond to the need for mentorship training by providing workshops aimed at improving skills, such as developing effective communication, and how to support students’ career goals (Faculty & Staff Guidance Resources, n.d.). These workshops are offered throughout the semester and are available to all faculty. Academic units can also request workshops specifically for their department. These are practices that can be adopted by other universities so that faculty are better prepared to be mentors to doctoral students. Although trainings such as these may be offered by the institution, department chairs must also be proactive in ensuring that all departmental faculty attend these trainings or sessions. Thus, department chairs may consider allotting time in departmental meetings and mandatory faculty retreats to mentorship training initiatives. They could also incentivize attending these trainings as part of the requirements to obtain tenure.

Limitations and Future Research

This study had several limitations which can inform future studies. I chose two theoretical frameworks, the minority stress model and intersectionality, to get a complete understanding of the BQDS experience as multiple marginalized people. This was due to dearth of literature on how a person’s racial identity effects minority stress (Balsam et al., 2011; Meyer, 2003, 2013). Thus, future research should extend the use of the minority stress model so that it includes how the addition of an underrepresented racial minority directly affects minority stress in conjunction with a queer identity. Additionally, I initially had a difficult time recruiting participants that met my inclusion criteria. Indeed, campus administrators have experienced difficulties reaching QTDSOC due to perceived centering of

Whiteness (Self & Hudson, 2015). This required me to modify the criteria – removing the admission to candidacy requirement and replacing it with at least one year of study and expanding the criteria to consider both full-time and part-time students. I also expanded my recruitment strategy to contact minority-serving student organizations at Southern Tech. The four participants in this study represent the students who completed the screening survey, met the inclusion criteria, and shared the same racial identity. Future research should consider how BQDS receive information about study participation opportunities. A greater number of potential participants will allow for the researcher to better understand BQDS experiences if they can choose participants who have more homogenous demographics. For example, if all the narratives are written from the perspective of students with similar demographics (i.e., all Black trans* students), researchers can develop a deeper understanding of that group's experiences and needs from campus services. To that end, the current study lacked representation of students from trans* identities. Trans* Students of Color are often underrepresented in research. However, establishing community has been found to ameliorate minority stress in this group (Bockting et al., 2013; Jourian, 2017). Therefore, future research should intentionally seek out Trans* Doctoral Students of Color to further investigate their needs. Southern Tech is also a STEM-based university. Though they offer programs in the humanities, STU's focus is on science and technology. As demonstrated from the similarities in narratives from CeeDee, Monica, and Rain, Ian's experience in a humanities-based program was notably different. Future study should have inclusion criteria for participants in a singular academic discipline (i.e., engineering, humanities, sciences).

Southern Tech's main campus is also in a major metropolitan city in the Southeast region of the United States. Larger universities in liberal states and cities are more likely to have a queer-friendly culture (Coley & Das, 2020; Fine, 2012). If this study were performed at a university in a rural area, the findings may vary depending on the beliefs and attitudes of the community that surrounds the university. For example, CeeDee was able to contact other queer people in the community around Southern Tech. If Southern Tech were situated in a rural community, his access to queer people might be different. This is

important to understand since rural areas have been found to lack queer social spaces which creates a need to further explore the needs of queer students, specifically Queer Students of Color in these areas (Nguyen, 2017; Sorgen & Rogers, 2020). Additionally, since Southern Tech is a STEM-based university, the experiences of BQDS at a liberal arts university – or an HBCU – could differ depending on the campus climate. Future research should include study at different institutional types to better understand experiences of BQDS with campus services as the mission of these universities, and subsequent allocation of resources, could affect BQDS' relationship with the university and campus officials (Cain & Class, 2023; Gansemer-Topf & Schuh, 2006; Santa-Ramirez et al., 2020).

Though this study did not set out to examine the role student organizations play in helping BQDS cope with program-related or minority stress and establish community, these organizations played a key role in how all this study's participants related to the campus. Establishing connections through these organizations may assist BQDS in finding community with other students of minoritized identities (Couch & Hodak, 2017; Garvey & Rankin, 2014; Nguyen, 2017). This was true for Rain whose support system includes students she met through the queer graduate student organization. Therefore, future study should investigate BQDS experiences with graduate student organizations and the role they play in mitigating minority stress and establishing community. Studying how intersectionality affects BQDS ability connect to student organizations can also increase administrator's and researcher's understanding of how BQDS may prioritize their identities to connect to other marginalized students.

There were also differences in the way "community" was defined by the participants. Each defined it in ways that included more than just connections to other sexual or gender minorities. However, Monica mentioned that her version of community was inclusive of Black women. Future studies should include a more specified definition of community to increase the validity of the results. This could be accomplished by asking participants about their definition of community either on the screening survey or during the initial conversation. Future research may also include the ways external community, such as

friendships or romantic relations, help BQDS cope with program-related or minority stress that may prevent students from academic success.

Summary

The study's findings were supported by both the minority stress model and intersectionality. Minority stress via internalized homophobia, identity concealment, and anticipated discrimination, may affect BQDS' ability to connect to campus services since these students might be apprehensive in disclosing their queer identity. This stress is magnified when BQDS have multiple marginalized identities and may contend with social structures, such as racism, and heterosexism, to gain access to services. These social structures, along with minority stress, serve to further marginalize students who might need additional support via connection to the community. As such, changes to institutional policy have been recommended. Additionally, campus administrators should create inclusive spaces that consider the needs of BQDS as well as develop communications strategies that are better able to reach these marginalized students. Greater emphasis should also be placed on the faculty-student relationship so that advisors are better aware the challenges faced by BQDS so that these advisors may function as mentors. Lastly, future study should consider how researchers recruit BQDS, definitions of community, institutional type, and the role campus organizations play in helping BQDS cope with minority stress and establish community with other students of minoritized sexual or gender identity.

Conclusion

This narrative inquiry examined the of experiences of BQDS with campus services and their ability to help them cope with minority stress and establish a sense of community with other students of minoritized sexual or gender identity. This study also intended to determine if the intersection of their racial and queer or trans* identities influenced the experiences of BQDS with campus services. The participants in this study were four BQDS with varying experiences of campus services. Their constructed narratives and cross-case analysis revealed a need for campus administrators to develop programming and spaces that better addresses the needs of BQDS. Creation of such programming and spaces may help

doctoral students from multiple marginalized identities have a place on campus where they can connect with other students marginalized by their sexual or gender identity. Faculty must also work to become mentors to their doctoral students to increase a sense of belonging among all their advisees. Such changes can help ensure an inclusive campus for all students.

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Appendix A

Screening Survey

Exploring the experiences of queer and trans* doctoral students of color - Project Pre Screening

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q1 Thank for your willingness to share your story as a queer or transgender doctoral student of color with campus services. This project will explore your experiences with campus services and how you have coped with stress and established community with other students of sexual or gender minority.

Participants will be asked to discuss their experiences as a queer or transgender doctoral student of color over two interviews. These interviews are expected to occur within 1-3 weeks of each other. Though each interview should last 1-2 hours, the length of each interview will depend on the flow of conversation. Participants will also receive a \$10 visa eGift card for each interview they complete.

This survey will gather some basic demographic information (e.g., race, gender, sexuality) for the project. Please enter your preferred name, contact information, and other requested information below. If you are selected, you should expect to hear back from me within 1-2 business days.

Thanks again! I look forward to meeting you!

Mitchell J Everett

End of Block: Default Question Block

Start of Block: Block 1

Q2 Preferred Name

Q16 Preferred Pronouns

Q3 E-mail Address

Q4 Phone Number

Q5 Gender Identity

Q7 Ethnicity

- ☐ Hispanic or Latino (1)
- ☐ Not Hispanic or Latino (2)

Q6 Race

- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native (1)
- ☐ Asian (2)
- ☐ Black or African-American (3)
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (4)
- ☐ White (5)

Q15 Sexuality

- ☐ Heterosexual (1)
- ☐ Gay (2)
- ☐ Lesbian (3)
- ☐ Bisexual (4)
- ☐ Pansexual (5)
- ☐ Other (6) _____
- ☐ Prefer not to say (7)

Page Break

Q8 Are you currently enrolled in a doctoral program?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Q13 Which Academic Department?

Q9 Are you enrolled full-time (12 or more credits)?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Q10 Please specify the term that you started your doctoral program (i.e. Fall 2020, Spring 2023).

Q11 Do you have a research advisor or mentor?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Q12

Have you used at least one of the following student services:

Counseling Services

LGBTQIA+ Resource Center Multicultural Center (e.g., Office of Minority Educational Development (OMED) or Center for Engineering Education and Diversity (CEED))

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)
- ☐ Unsure (3)

Q15 If selected, how would you prefer to meet for the interviews?

- ☐ In Person (1)
- ☐ Microsoft Teams (2)
- ☐ Zoom (3)
- ☐ No Preference (4)

End of Block: Block 1

Appendix B

Informed Consent

Key Information for Exploring the Experiences of Queer and Transgender Doctoral Students of Color Utilizing Campus Services:

What Am I Being Asked to Do?

You are being asked to voluntarily participate in a research project. The purpose of this document to explain key information about the project. Please remember that your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. Please feel free to ask any questions you may have about the research as you read this document.

What Is This Study About and What Procedures Will You be Asked to Follow?

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of queer and transgender doctoral students of color (QTDSOC) with using campus services to cope with stress and establish a sense of community with other students of minoritized gender or sexual identity.

You are being asked to participate in two interviews scheduled within 1-3 weeks of each other. Interview One will focus on your personal history and journey to doctoral study. Interview Two's focus is how you may have used campus services to cope with stress and establish community with other minoritized students. Both interviews are expected to last no more than two hours each – a combined total of four hours of your time.

Are There Any Risks or Discomforts you Might Experience by Being in this Study?

Common risks are deemed to be psychological in nature. Some of the topics discussed may trigger past trauma that you might have experienced from your childhood, adult life, or time as a doctoral study. If, at any time during the interviews you start to feel uncomfortable, please let me know. I will then pause or stop the interview until you are ready to proceed.

What Are the Reasons You Might Want to Volunteer for This Study?

You will not be likely to benefit from participating in this study. However, by participating, researchers will be given the opportunity to better understand the experiences of QTDSOC so that universities can provide relevant support to students who may share your identities.

As compensation for your time, I am offering a \$10 eGift Card per completed interview for a total of \$20 for your participation via your provided email address. I will also send you the eGift card if you decide to stop the interview or withdraw from the project.

Do You Have to Take Part in the This Study?

Participation in this study is voluntary. You will not lose any rights, services, or benefits, if any point, you choose not to participate or no longer wish to continue. The choice is yours to be included in this study.

CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR ENROLLING ADULT PARTICIPANTS IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Georgia Institute of Technology

Georgia Institute of Technology

Project Title:

Investigators: Mitchell J Everett, Principal Investigator; Elise Cain, PhD, Research Supervisor.

Protocol and Consent Title: [Include version number and date (Main 00/00/00v1)]

You are being asked to be a volunteer in a research study.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of QTDSOC with campus services. The study seeks to understand how these students may use campus services to cope with stress related to their minoritized identity and establish community with other students of minoritized sexual or gender identity. I expect to enroll no more than 10 students in this study.

Exclusion/Inclusion Criteria:

Participants in this study must be a full-time (12 credits or more) doctoral student at Georgia Institute of Technology. They must also have been admitted to candidacy, have an established relationship with a research advisor, identify as a racial or gender minority, self-identify as queer or transgender, and have utilized at least one of the following services: LGBTQIA+ Resource center, Counseling Services, the Center for Engineering Education and Diversity (CEED), or the Office of Minority Educational Development (OMED).

For this study, queer is defined as those who identify as gay, lesbian, pansexual, asexual, or bisexual. Transgender is defined as a person who identifies with a gender other than the one assigned at birth which may include transmen, transwomen, genderqueer, transmasculine, transfeminine and any other gender identity. Racial minority, adapted from the National Science Foundation (NSF) is defined as American Indian or Alaska Native, Black/African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Ethnic minority, as also adapted from NSF, refers to persons from Hispanic or Latino descent.

Procedures:

If you consent to participate, you are asked to complete two interviews to be scheduled within 1-3 weeks of each other. Scheduling will take place after you have given consent. Both interviews will also be audio recorded, and I will be taking notes during each session. Interview One will focus on your journey to doctoral study. This will include discussion of your minoritized identities and your view of community. In Interview Two, you will be asked to discuss how you cope with stress related to your identity, your relationship with your advisor, and how you may have used campus services to cope with stress and establish community with other minoritized students. I will also provide you with guiding questions before each interview for you to review. These questions will also be available to you at the time of the interviews.

Both interviews will be divided into two parts. During the first part of the interview, you will be asked to tell your story based on the provided guiding questions. You will be permitted to speak without interruption. The first part of the interview is expected to last no longer than one hour. If the first part of the interview last less than hour, you will be able to review the guiding questions to start a new on point in your story. After you have completed telling your story, the researcher will then switch to the second part where I will ask more focused questions, and possible follow-ups, based on the story you presented in the first part of the interview. The second part is expected to last from 30 minutes to one hour. This process will be repeated again during the second interview. The total combined time for both interviews is expected to be no longer than two hours. Remember, you may end the interview at any time during the session.

You will also be given the opportunity to review the narrative once I have completed the analysis. This step will ensure that you are being properly represented in the research. I will send the completed narrative to you via email for your review. You will also be given the opportunity to provide feedback via

email or by scheduling a follow-up interview with me. If no response is received after one week, I will follow-up with you one additional time via email. If no response is received after one week of this follow-up, I will assume that you have no objections to the narrative, and I will move forward with the inclusion of the narrative in the findings section of the research.

Risks or Discomforts:

The risks involved are no greater than those involved in daily activities such as talking to a friend or family member about your life history and experiences. Thus, you may find some topics triggering of past trauma due to your past experiences. If you feel uncomfortable, please let me know, and we will immediately pause the interview until you are ready to continue. You also have the choice to end or reschedule the interview on a later date with no consequences.

Benefits:

You are not expected to benefit from this study in any way. However, through your participation, campus administrators and researchers may be able to provide relevant support to QTDSOC as they complete their programs.

Compensation to You:

You will be compensated with a \$10 eGift card per interview that you complete for a total of \$20. The gift card will be sent to your email address at the conclusion of each interview. You will also be able to receive a \$10 eGift Card if you decide to end the interview before we complete the session.

Storing and Sharing your Information:

I acknowledge and appreciate your participation in this study. It is also a possibility that your interviews could be of valuable in other research projects. By signing below, you are consenting that your de-identified data will be securely stored for a period of three years. If you consent to future use of your interview, your identity will be completely separated from the data. Future researchers will not have access to your personal identifiers. Future study will also require review by an ethics committee before it is used.

Use of Photographs, Audio, or Video Recordings:

Audio recordings will be stored in a password-protected file on my personal computer. The person computer is also password-protected. Once audio recordings are transcribed, the original recording will be destroyed. The transcription will be retained in the password-protected file for future analysis. All stored data will be deidentified.

Confidentiality:

To protect your identity, you will be asked to provide a pseudonym. Your real name and any other identifiable information will not be presented or reported in the study's findings. I will refer to this assumed name when storing your audio recordings and transcription. The pseudonym will also be used when the findings of the project are reported. As mentioned, interview data will be stored on my password-protected computer in a password-protected file.

- [Web-based consent documents should include appropriate information like that which follows here:] "You should be aware that the experiment is not being run from a 'secure' https server of the kind typically used to handle credit card transactions, so there is a small possibility that responses could be viewed by unauthorized third parties such as computer hackers. In general, the web page software will log as header lines the IP address of the machine you use to access this page, e.g., 102.403.506.807, but otherwise no other information will be stored unless you explicitly enter it."]

Costs to You:

There are no costs to you, other than your time, for participating in this study.

Questions about the Study:

Should you have any questions about the study, please contact Mitchell Everett by telephone (404) 788-4497 or meverett35@gatech.edu.

Questions about Your Rights as a Research Participant:

- Your participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study if you don't want to be.

- You have the right to change your mind and leave the study at any time without giving any reason and without penalty.
- Any new information that may make you change your mind about being in this study will be given to you.
- You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.
- You do not waive any of your legal rights by signing this consent form.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Georgia Institute of Technology Office of Research Integrity Assurance at IRB@gatech.edu.

[Finally, include the following signature language. If this study is clinical, participants must write in the date AND TIME of their signature. If you are using electronic signatures, verbal consent, or electronic consent, please see the instructions at the end of the document.]

If you sign below, it means that you have read (or have had read to you) the information given in this consent form, and you would like to be a volunteer in this study.

Participant Name (printed)

Participant Signature
Time

Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

Consent to Store and Share your Information:

I agree that my de-identified information/data may be stored and shared for future, unspecified research.

SIGNATURE _____

I do not allow my de-identified information/data to be stored and shared for future, unspecified research. These may only be used for this specific study.

SIGNATURE _____

[ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES]: If the consent process will take place online and you intend to obtain electronic signatures, then a Waiver of Documentation is not needed. You will need to keep the signature section in this document and state in your IRB Wise submission what software will be used to obtain the electronic signature. Currently, only DocuSign is approved by OIT to obtain electronic signatures. Additionally, please state in the IRB Wise submission which survey software will be used to obtain consent. Please see the [OIT website](#) for more information about which programs/software are approved.]

[CONSENT WITHOUT SIGNATURES]: If the consent process will take place online or verbally and the study qualifies for a Waiver of Documentation of Consent; you may simply remove the signature section and replace that language with either “Agree” and “Disagree” buttons or the following statement listed below. Additionally, please state in the IRB Wise submission which survey software or teleconference tool will be used to obtain consent. Please see the [OIT website](#) for more information about which programs/software are approved.]

- “By completing the online survey, you indicate your consent to be in the study.”

[Before uploading the consent document, be sure to delete all the bracketed instruction language from the document. Consent documents will be returned without review if instruction language is not removed.]

Appendix C

Interview Protocol & Guiding Questions

Exploring Queer and Trans* Doctoral Students of Color Experiences with Utilizing Campus Services

Mitchell J. Everett, MS

Below you will find the questions I plan to ask during each interview. Each participant will be asked to participate in two interviews. Each interview will have two phases. During the first phase, participants will create their story based on the guiding questions found below. Participants will tell their story without interruption and will be able to reference these questions should they complete a portion of their story before one hour. Once the first phase is complete, I will move to the second phase which will assume a semistructured style. Given this style, I may not ask every participant every question. I may also add questions related to the topic based on the conversations with the participants.

Interview One – Guiding Questions

I would like you to tell me about your personal journey to doctoral study. Please consider the following questions as you tell your story:

- Please speak to any struggles you have in accepting your queer or trans* identity.
- Please speak to any times that you actively concealed your queer or trans* identity – both throughout your life and in your program.
- As a queer or trans* person of color, what experiences influenced your decision to pursue a doctoral program?
- When you started your program, how did you connect with other queer and trans* students of color, students of color, and/or queer and trans* graduate students of color?

Interview One – Semistructured Phase

1. Can you tell me about any struggles you have had with accepting your queer or trans* identity?
How did you overcome those struggles to accept it?
2. Have you ever actively concealed your identity from your fellow doctoral students or faculty advisor? Can you tell me about it? How did it make you feel?
3. Why did you conceal your identity? If you have decided to disclose, can you tell the story of why and how?
4. Can you tell me more about your experience with racism, homophobia, and/or transphobia?
 - a. How have those experiences shaped your decision to pursue a doctoral degree?
 - b. Tell me about any experiences you've had while in your program. How have they shaped your perception of the program and/or institution?
5. Thinking about how you connected with students of marginalized identity, how have these experiences affected your perception of the program and/institution?
6. How do you define community?
 - a. Who do you consider as part of your own personal community or support system?

Interview Two – Guiding Questions

This interview will focus on the stress you have experienced as a doctoral student of multiple marginalized identities and your use of campus services to help you cope with that stress. In telling your story, please consider the following questions:

- Describe your experience with both program and life related-stress.
 - Please consider how the intersection of your race and gender/sexual identities have affected your ability to cope.
- Can you describe your relationship with faculty advisor. What criteria did you use to select them?
- What experiences have you had with campus services to help you cope with stress?
 - Please tell me how you connected with these services and how they have affected your time on campus and in your program.

- Describe your support system. Please consider persons both on-campus and off-campus.

Interview Two – Semistructured Phase

1. Can you describe your response to stress? What affects your ability to cope?
2. How has your experience as a queer or trans* doctoral student of color affected your ability to manage and cope with stress?
3. Can you tell me how supportive your faculty advisor or mentor is of your multiply marginalized identities?
 - a. To what extent do you consider them to be part of your support system?
4. Can you tell me the story of how you specifically connected to counseling services, the LGBTQIA+ resource center and/or the multicultural center? What other services have you connected to?
 - a. How supportive have these services been of your multiply marginalized identities?
 - b. How have they helped you cope with your program stress or stress related to your identities?
5. How has your use of campus services helped you identify members of your support system? Can you tell me the story of how they became a part of your community?

Appendix D

Step Four Outline for Assembling and Analyzing Voices

Participant Name:

Background:

I. Bildungsroman

- a. Personal Growth
- b. Ideal vs. Reality
- c. Context in the Narrative
- d. Bildung of the Participant – Personal growth
- e. Questioning, Dialogue, and Doubt
- f. Striving, Uncertainty, Complexity, Transformation

II. RQs

- a. How does [Participant] utilize campus services to cope with stress (and minority stress)?
- b. How does [Participant] utilize their advisor to cope with stress (and minority stress)
- c. How do campus services ameliorate minority stress that [Participant] faces to help her establish community among other sexual or gender-minoritized students?
- d. How does the intersectionality of [Participant] race and sexual ID influence her experience with campus services?

Appendix E

Email to Peer Debriefers

Hello _

First and Foremost, thank you for your willingness to review the findings of my study. You will find a draft of my chapter 4 attached to this email.

Just some background: the purpose of my study was to examine the experiences of queer and trans* doctoral students of color (QTDSOC) with campus services and their ability to help them cope with minority stress and establish a sense of community with other students of a sexual or gender minority. This study also intended to determine if the intersection of their racial and queer or trans* identities influenced the experiences of QTDSOC with campus services.

The overarching question guiding this study was: How have queer and trans* doctoral students of color coped with minority stress and established a sense of community among other students of a minoritized sexual or gender identity? Additional sub questions to investigate are:

1. How do QTDSOC utilize campus services to cope with stress?
 - a. How do QTDSOC utilize these campus serves to cope specifically with minority stress?
2. How do QTDSOC utilize to faculty to cope with stress?
 - a. How do QTDSOC utilize to faculty to cope with minority stress?
3. How do campus services assist QTDSOC establish community among other students of sexual or gender minorities?
4. How do the intersections of their racial/ethnic and sexual or gender identities influence QTDSOC experiences with campus services?

Please consider the following during your review. You will also find key terms at the bottom of this email that should help you understand the direction of my study.:

- To what extent have all the research question been answered?
- Does each narrative have a logical flow? Is there anything out of place?
- Does each participant's *Bildungsroman* convey a story of overcoming obstacles as they complete their programs?
- Did you draw any different conclusions about the participants' use of campus services than what was described in my cross-case analysis? What additional conclusions did you draw?

Please track any changes and add comments to the document as you review. If, for any reason, you need any clarification from me, please feel free to send me an email or text.

Thanks again for your willingness to review my findings. I really appreciate the help!

Key Terms

Anticipated Discrimination – This is a component of the minority stress model which describes the anxiety queer people experience when they disclose their sexual or minority identity.

Bildungsroman – A genre of qualitative inquiry that focuses on stories of hardship, resilience, and perseverance over a particular outcome.

Identity Concealment – This is a component of the minority stress model in which a person actively hides their queer identity.

Internalized Homophobia (IH) – Internalized homophobia is the internalized stigma experienced among people of a gender or sexual minority. It has been known to greatly diminish self-acceptance and one's ability to cope.

Intersectionality – Intersectionality is a theoretical framework that describes the experiences of multiply marginalized groups as inseparable from their race, gender, and sexual identities. The overlapping systems of oppression create systemic barrier that prevents marginalized groups from accessing certain resources that might be available to them.

Minority Stress Model – The minority stress model is a model of stressors – identity concealment, internalized homophobia, and anticipated discrimination – that explains the prevalence of mental illness among queer people.