"Some 'Black Gay Fantasy'"

An Exploratory Study of Discrimination and Identity-Appraisal among Black Same Gender Loving Men

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ABSTRACT—Discrimination has helped facilitate the rejection of Black men from numerous communities. Studies suggest that discrimination of the Black same gender loving man can lead to the experience of negative outcomes, which include internalized homophobia and decreased feelings of self-worth. The following exploratory study seeks to present existing literature; understand the discriminatory experiences of Black same gender loving men; and compare their narratives to the way they appraise their sexual identities. Results support that Black same gender loving men experience variable levels of discrimination, which may impact their sexual identity appraisal.

KEYWORDS—Black, gender, identity, sexuality, men

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Introduction

DISCRIMINATION—IT IS A WORD THAT COMMUNICATES THE WAY IN which Black bodies (i.e. bodies belonging to those in the African diaspora) have been historically rejected from the world at large. The word discrimination brings to remembrance the evolutionary theories that positioned White bodies as intellectual, intelligent, and racially superior; and Black bodies as savage, sexually insatiable, and unable to add value to society (Galton, 1869). The definition of discrimination also communicates the way in which Black bodies have been exploited to an extent where those within the Black diaspora still experience the negative consequences of such exploitations today (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015; LaSala & Frierson, 2012; Slatton & Spates, 2014; Winston, 1901). Interestingly, there is exists minimal investigation of how discrimination impacts the past and current struggles faced by subgroups in the Black community. Although it would be impossible to identify all the ways in which discrimination has impacted Black life in one paper, the following exploratory study seeks to provide a snapshot of the ways discrimination has influenced the experiences of gay and bisexual Black men; as well as Black men who do not subscribe to gay or bisexual labels, yet engage in sex with men (Black same gender loving men, for the sake of this essay).

Discrimination and the Black Black Body

Before exploring how discrimination has impacted the lives of Black same gender loving men, it may be valuable to understand how the general discrimination of Black bodies has created space for subgroups within the Black community to experience within-community rejection. May, Cochran, and Barned (2007) record the varying levels of raced based discriminations experienced by the Black community, which include barred access of Black bodies from physical and mental healthcare, proper living spaces, economic growth, and social acceptance. Other observers of Black discrimination record the sexual exploitation of Black bodies, and communicate how Black sexuality has been both fetishized and degraded by the White gaze throughout history (hooks, 2004). Studies suggest that these forms of discrimination, rejection, and exploitation have been instrumental in shaping the modern Black mind; and have contributed to increased

Black sensitivity toward the potential of being rejected by majority. This sensitivity has become so severe that it has led to an increase in distressing outcomes for Black individuals; which include heightened anxiety related to interpersonal interactions with other races, internalized hate, and experiences of stereotype threat (Mendoza-Denton, et al., 2002). Research presents that an additional outcome of Black social discrimination includes the learned behavior of Black community members to engage in acts of respectability—behaviorally political expressions meant to bring acceptance of the Black body, and prove to the majority that Blacks are equal (Lemelle, 2010). The commitment to acting out such respectability has created a cycle in which the rejected have become the rejecters. In making behavioral effort to align with the majority culture, some in the Black community have created a culture of discrimination against subgroups within the community (that may be perceived to hinder such alignment)—groups that include those with same gender loving attractions (hooks, 2004).

Discrimination and the Black Same Gender Loving Man
The impact of discrimination on the Black same gender loving man contains roots in slavery. The dehumanization of the Black body, as well as the exploitation of Black sexuality during slavery, has influenced the Black community to adhere to rigid scripts of respectability in an effort to preserve their humanity (hooks, 2004; Stoler, 1989). These scripts were structured by strict definitions of masculinity and femininity that did not provide a safe space for same gender loving individuals (Loiacano, 1989). And as these scripts have helped maintain the existence of toxic tropes such as the Black Buck, the Sapphire, and the Jezebel, they have also fostered a rejection, in the Black community, of Black same gender loving men (Bowleg, 2013; Stayhorn, 2008; Strayhorn & Tillman-Kelly, 2013). Reflections of this discrimination are emphasized in the way some Black same gender loving men maneuver the college application process, using past negative experiences with family members and peers as motivation to apply to institutions where they hope their racial and sexual intersectionality will be accepted and celebrated (Strayhorn, Blakewood, & DeVita, 2008). Another example includes the way in which financially and educationally established Black same gender loving men may still struggle to thrive in adulthood, as they may lack familial and communal social support in the face of social objectification and rejection (Green, 2007).

Familial Rejection of the Black Same Gender Loving Man

Overt and covert discrimination of Black same gender loving men can be identified in the clinically recorded relationships between Black same gender loving men and their parental figure(s). LaSala & Frierson (2012) conducted an exploratory study to investigate the challenges that arise among Black same gender loving male youth and their parents, and compared these communicated challenges to extant literature. It was found that Black same gender loving youth and their parents both worry about the youth's ability to live up to hyper-exaggerated standards of masculinity, which have been maintained by both the family and external community (LaSala & Frierson, 2012; Rosario, Rotheram-Borus, & Reid, 1996). The study communicated that Black same gender loving youth experienced heightened levels of alienation, as many felt unable to live out their true identities with the support of their parents and families. Additionally, parental reports suggested that while parents were less likely to explicitly mourn the sexual identities of their children, they acknowledged a separation in the parent-child relationship, which stemmed from the Black same gender loving youth's perceived inability to live out the familial-structured standards of "normal" Black masculinity (i.e. having a female partner, procreating, providing for a family, etc.) (LaSala & Frierson 2012, Whiting & Lewis, 2008).

The presented case highlights that the discrimination some Black same gender loving men face on a familial level is linked to a parental, and historically embedded, belief that Black same gender loving men juxtapose the normed presentation of Black manhood and masculinity (LaSala & Frierson, 2012; Rosario, Rotheram-Borus, & Reid, 1996). Parents of Black same gender loving men struggle to cope with the intersecting oppression their child may experience by being both Black and same-gender loving (LaSala & Frierson, 2012). Some parents therefore result to distancing from, rather than connecting with, their Black same gender loving child. This lack of familial support, can leave the Black same gender loving youth at risk of facing various negative outcomes which include substance abuse, mental illness, poverty, and homelessness (Alexander, 2004; Amola & Grimmett, 2015; Choi, Paul, Ayala, Boylan, & Gregorich, 2013; Quinn et al., 2015; Rosario, Rotheram-Borus & Reid, 1996).

Social and Structural Bigotry toward the
Black Same Gender Loving Man

In addition to coping with discrimination experienced on a familial level, some Black same gender loving men may experience rejection, objectification, and exploitation on social and structural levels within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. In recent years, the LGBT community has positioned itself as an inclusive unit that strives to attain equal rights and opportunities for all persons who identify as same gender loving. Yet record suggests that issues most relevant to White LGBT bodies have been prioritized in the LGBT community's social justice efforts (Stone & Ward, 2011). From 1977 to 2000—a time which begat a conservative movement of anti-gay rhetoric and opposition—White gay rights advocates focused on comparing the LGBT and the Civil Rights movements in an attempt to acquire increased job opportunities and marriage equality (Lewis, 2003; Stone & Ward, 2011). Interestingly, these objectives were not reflective of the needs of Black LGBT individuals—needs that included improved access in healthcare, education, and living environments (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015; LaSala & Frierson, 2012; Slatton & Spates, 2014; Winston, 1901). Additionally, once employment opportunities and marriage equality were acquired, the push for equality among White LGBT activists seemed to decline significantly (Lewis, 2003; Stone & Ward, 2011). The lack of prioritization of Black LGBT issues highlights the way in which Black people—Black same gender loving men included—have been excluded from the efforts toward equality on social and structural levels.

Parallel to the political discrimination of Black same gender loving men is their experienced sexual objectification, coupled with social rejection they may face from LGBT individuals of other races. Socially Black same gender loving men have been systematically ostracized from (primarily metropolitan) spaces that have been colonized by White bodies. From the institutional barring of Black same gender loving bodies from housing in 1960s gay metropolitan meccas, to the over-identification and screenings of Black same gender loving men in various gay nightclubs in the United States, there continues to exist a discrimination of the Black same gender loving man from various facets of mainstream society (Jayaratne et al., 2006; Nero, 2005; Street, 2017). This discrimination presents so prevalently that Black

same gender loving men seem to only have spaces of limited social acceptance in the sexual sphere (Newcomb, Ryan, Garofalo & Mustanski, 2015).

Crockett (2016) used a qualitative analysis of multiethnic dating patterns to suggest that despite the socially accepted norm of being "colorblind" to race, many individuals possess a racial sexual orientation—a proclivity to date a specific race. While Crockett (2016) suggests that having a sexual or romantic racial preference may not be inherently embedded in racism, certain narratives communicate that having a racial sexual orientation highlights the struggles of Black same gender loving men in the dating realm. Phua and Kaufman's (2003) exploration of gay dating advertisement reflects that a majority of Black same gender loving men communicate no racial preference when seeking online sexual and romantic relationships. Yet the authors signify this preferential pattern as a potential sign that Black same gender loving men acknowledge their race, or skin color, to be less desirable (i.e. more like to be discriminated against) in the romantic realm (Haile et al., 2014). Similarly, Callander, Newman, and Holt's (2014) investigation of online dating preferences highlighted White gay men's tendency to racially preference when pursuing romantic partnerships. The authors communicated that their racial preference pattern was embedded in, and reflective of, racially charged thought processes maintained in the LGBT community at large—thought processes that present White bodies as completely in control of their sexual and romantic decision making; and emphasized the lack of power Black bodies possess in their sexual politics and decision making (Phua & Kaufman, 2003; Teunis, 2007).

As race seemingly impacts Black same gender loving male desirability in the romantic sphere, it also influences perceptions of Black same gender loving male desirability in the sexual sphere. In addition to dating preferences, Phua and Kaufman (2003) assessed the way in which Black same gender loving men have been presented in media, and have been perceived by other-raced sexual partners. The authors state that Black same gender loving men are perceived as insatiable "forbidden sexual partners," which may lead to their increased objectification (Callander, Newman, & Holt, 2015; Grov, Saleh, Lassiter, & Parsons, 2015). An exploratory study by Choi et al. (2003) communicated that a majority Black same gender loving men experienced both racial discrimination and sexual objectification from other-raced same gender loving men. These experiences have been commonly described in literature as sexual racism (Choi et al., 2003; Tuenis, 2007).

Tuenis (2007) suggests that sexual racism relates explicitly to the struc-

tural exploitation, objectification, and discrimination of the Black same gender loving man; yet what must be acknowledged is that sexual racism is not solely about pleasure, or the disproportionate allocation of sexual pleasure between partners. Sexual racism relates to power and the preservation of a racial hierarchy (Tuenis, 2007). To objectify the Black same gender loving man is to reassure his lack of power in sexual decision making; and to reduce his body to being a collection of parts for pleasure, rather than a complete human entity (Haile et al., 2014). While some Black same gender loving men may not experience overt discrimination from White or other-raced bodies, their treatment as tools for sexual satisfaction, without social acceptance, sustains a script of the Black body that has been perpetuated since slavery (hooks, 2004; Tuenis, 2007). Despite education, amassed wealth, or occupation, some Black same gender loving men are forced to traverse a social sphere in which they are not welcome unless they adhere to a trope which places them in a race-based role used to satisfy the majority (Bowleg, 2012; Green, 2007). And while it might be may seem like there are no lasting effects to the discrimination, exploitation, and objectification of the Black same gender loving man, studies suggest that this position in the social sphere contributes to isolation among Black same gender loving men; which can lead to increased rates of experienced anxiety and depression (Alexander, 2004; Amola & Grimmet, 2015; Quinn et al., 2015). Additionally, this lack of social connection due to isolation can contribute to an increase in sexually risky behaviors; which can then place Black same gender loving men at a disproportionately higher risk of experiencing negative sexual health outcomes (Alexander, 2004; Amola & Grimmet, 2015; Icard, 1986).

These consequences are evident in the way in which Black gay and bisexual men accounted for the highest percentage of all gay and bisexual men who had been diagnosed with HIV in the United States in 2015 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). Such diagnoses have primarily impacted Black gay and bisexual men who were aged 13–24 years. And while the 2015 record of HIV diagnoses for African American people have declined overall, the rates of HIV diagnoses for Black gay and bisexual men have increased in that year by 87% (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). Although these statistics present a vivid picture of sexual health experiences for Black gay and bisexual men, the statistics do not capture the lived experiences of Black gay and bisexual men who do not engage in sexual health testing. Nor do these statistics reflect the experiences of Black men who have sex with men, yet do not subscribe to gay or bisexual labels. Therefore,

there exists a need for more in-depth sexual health outcome research geared toward Black same gender loving, to more accurately understand how the previously described influential factors impact Black same gender loving male outcomes.

Not only does the discrimination of the gay Black man from familial and social circles—which can be classified as stressful life events—lead to negative outcomes in health. Literature suggests that such factors mediate negative and stigmatized perceptions of self, internalized homophobia, and decreased self-worth; which then can result in experiences of emotional distress, substance abuse, and sexually risky behaviors (Alexander, 2004; Amola & Grimmett, 2015; Choi, Paul, Ayala, Boylan, & Gregorich, 2013; Mc-Laughlin et al., 2010; Quinn et al., 2015; Rosario, Rotheram-Borus, & Reid, 1996). Considering this, the negative racial experiences of Black same gender loving men, as well as their perceptions of personal sexual identity are highly under-investigated. The following exploratory study was conducted to examine the racial experiences of Black same gender loving men; further understand their perceptions toward their sexual identities; and investigate the ways in which discrimination has impacted their overall qualities of life.

Methods

Participants

A convenience sample of Black same gender loving men were recruited for participation via social media. The author used his social network on Facebook to identify five Black same gender loving men who lived in the northeastern region of the United States. After this identification, the author sent online messages to these participants which briefly explained purpose of the exploratory study and invited participants to complete an online adaptation of the Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire (PEDQ). The online adaptation of the PEDQ would investigate participants' perceived experience of discrimination, as well as appraisals of their sexual identity. The author then invited the five recruited participants to share the survey with those in their social network who identified as Black, male, and same gender loving (Appendix A). There was no incentive provided for participation in the survey.

Measures

Data were collected via an online survey in September 2017. The Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire (PEDQ) is a 34-item instrument that

measures lifetime perceived racial discrimination among various racial groups (Contrada et al., 2001). Previous studies have used this questionnaire to assess the perceived racial climates on college campuses; as well as to assess the moderating role of ethnic discrimination on cardiovascular health outcomes for Black and Latino populations (Brondolo et al., 2005). Perceived racial discrimination, in this instrument, is assessed over four domains: Social Exclusion, Stigmatization, Discrimination at work/school, and threat/aggression. Research marks the PEDQ as the only tool with subscales that measure various facets of ethnically-oriented maltreatment (Contrada et al., 2001).

In the following study, the author modified the Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire to further fit the purposes of the study. The Perceived Ethnic Discrimination and Sexual Value Questionnaire (PEDSVQ) is a 26-item instrument that measures lifetime perceived racial discrimination and perceived value of sexual identity. Participants were prompted to respond to items such as, "How often have others avoided physical contact with you because of your ethnicity?" and, "In general, I am proud of my sexual orientation." Items related to racial discrimination were assessed on a Likert scale ranging from (1) never to (7) very often. Items related to perceptions of sexual identity were assessed on a Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. Participants were additionally asked to define Discrimination in their own words; and to provide self-report relating to how discrimination has impacted their sexual trajectories, and qualities of life, as Black same gender loving men (Appendix A).

Procedure

SPSS was used to run descriptive data analyses for the demographic data in the PEDSVQ. Sample non responses and missing descriptive data were addressed with the deletion method of data analysis, as they provided minimal risk to the validity or reliability of the research; and can add to the protected confidentiality of participants (Thompson, Bzdel, Golden-Biddle, & Reay, 2005). For the exploratory items regarding discrimination and its impact on participants' quality of life and sexual identity appraisal, a systematic exploratory approach to data analysis was conducted by the author. First, the author collected participant responses to the PEDSVQ and reviewed each item response for provided accounts of experienced ethnic discrimination. This procedural method was used to provide an autoethnographic account from the sample, in hope that a nuanced voice would arrive from the sample (Linn, Adams, & Ellis, 2016). Individual sample responses were

combined and sorted in an effort to uncover higher order themes related to the participants' experiences. This method is similar to the way coding schemes can occur across qualitative focus groups to establish commonality among the groups (Morgan & Kreuger 1998). The author then compared the collected higher order themes to findings already highlighted in the extant literature, in order to identify whether the themes in this study stood parallel, or contrary, to the current work. This process allowed the author to further support previously backed findings, as well as add nuanced perspective to currently existing literature.

Results

Sample Characteristics

The current study had a total of 13 participants who identified as African American, male, and whose other sociodemographic characteristics are reflected in Table 1. The majority of the sample in this study fell in the age range of 18 to 34 years (92.31%; 12 of 13 participants), with one responder identifying in the 45 to 54 age range (7.69%; one of 13 participants). Most participants lived in the Middle and South Atlantic regions (84.62%; 11 of 13 participants), with one participant (7.69%) coming from the New England and East North regions, respectively. Most of the participants came from highly educated backgrounds, with 12 participants (92.31%) having had completed an undergraduate education (46.15%), some graduate education (15.38%), or graduate school in its entirety (30.7%). One participant (7.69%) had experienced one year of an undergraduate education. When it came to sexual self-identification, the majority of participants identified as gay (10 participants; 76.92%), while two participants (18.18%) identified as bisexual, and one participant (7.69%) identified as neither gay or bisexual, yet disclosed that he engaged in sex with men.

Perceptions of Ethnic Discrimination

In regard to the participants perceptions of ethnic discrimination, there was a communicated low frequency of discriminatory occurrences and experiences among participants. The majority of participants (eight out of 13 respondents; 61.54%) reported seldom to no experiences of being subjected to verbally offensive racial comments. The majority of participants (11 of 13 respondents; 84.62%) reported never being subjected to ethnic name calling (e.g. being called "nigger"). While a majority of respondents (seven

Table 1. Characteristics of sample

Variable	N (%)	M	SD
Total	13 (100)		
Age			
18 to 24	5 (38.46)		
25 to 34	7 (53.85)		
35 to 44			
45 to 54	1 (7.69)		
55 to 64			
65 to 74			
75 and older			
Region			
New England	1 (7.69)		
Middle Atlantic	4 (30.77)		
East North	1 (7.69)		
West North			
South Atlantic	7 (53.85)		
East South Central			
West South Central			
Mountain			
Pacific			
Does not live in the United States			
Highest Level of Education			
Did not Attend School			
Some High School			
One Year of College	1 (7.69)		
Two Years of College			
Three Years of College			
Graduated from College	6 (46.15)		
Some Graduate School	2 (15.38)		
Completed Graduate School	4 (30.7)		
Most Connected Identification			
Gay	10 (76.92)		
Bisexual	2 (18.18)		
Man Who Has Sex with Men	1 (7.69)		

of 13 respondents; 53.85%) reported being physically avoided by others due to their skin color, there were fewer reports of respondents being socially (46.15%) and sexually (30.77%) avoided due to their racial presentation. Finally, a majority of respondents (seven of 13 respondents; 53.85%) seldom felt as though they were socially rejected because they did not fulfill a racial stereotype.

While there were few participants who reported negative social experiences due to race, investigation of participants' sexual experiences communicate a shift in presentation. A greater percentage of participants reported that whenever they engaged in sexual activity with other-raced partners, the Black same gender loving male was assumed to be sexually superior (12 of 13 respondents; 92.31%); or stereotyped as being at increased risk of having, or spreading, a sexually transmitted infection (STI) (76.92%). An increased percentage of respondents also communicated that other raced sexual partners have linked the respondents' Blackness to a potential of being dishonest about their sexual health status (nine of 13 respondents; 69.23%).

The provided responses communicate a finding that while the men in this sample did not experience overt racial discrimination on a social level, there existed seemingly covert experienced ethnic discrimination in relation to engaging sexually with other-raced groups (Bowleg, 2012; Choi et al., 2003; Green, 2007; Haile et al., 2014; Tuenis, 2007).

Perception of Identity Value
Overall, participants' responses communicated ambivalence surrounding how they perceived their sexual identities. An equal number of participants (6 of 13 respondents; 46.15%) reported that they regretted, and did not regret, having their specific sexual identities. Few participants (four of 13 respondents; 38.46%) felt that their sexual orientation was viewed positively by others. While a majority of participants felt that they were viewed as inferior because of their sexual orientation (seven of 13 respondents; 53.85%), 69.23% (nine of 13) of respondents also reported that they were generally proud of, and felt good about, their sexual orientation. A large majority (eight of 13 respondents; 61.54%) also perceived their sexual identities as important to their self-image and to their sense of self. A majority of respondents (eight of 13 respondents; 61.54%) identified their sexual orientation as important reflection of who they are. Contrastingly, a large majority (11 of 13 respondents; 84.62%) reported that their sexual identities generally hindered their social, professional, and personal progress.

The presented data highlights that while members of the sample recognized their sexual identities, they concurringly appraised their sexual identities somewhat negatively; and linked this negative appraisal to the negative perception they believed to receive from society at large (Mendoza-Denton, et al., 2002).

Perceptions of Discrimination and Its Impact
on Black Same Gender Loving Men
When prompted to define discrimination in their own words, participants communicated that discrimination involved dominance of one culture over another. A theme of exploitation of one culture to the benefit another was also highlighted.

> *Conquering an already established area or group of persons to build personal value or wealth.*

> *In my opinion, discrimination is when an external group comes in and imposes its values over an already established community.*

> *The adopting of identity expressions or physical spaces that are not one's own for personal gain.*

In addition to their definitions of discrimination, participants provided ways in which discrimination has impacted their sexual trajectory.

> *. . . because of discrimination it is implied I am bisexual because of white men's fetish of black bodies . . .*

> *. . . the dominant culture has impacted my life in creating a culture of shame and inequality for same gender loving people and contributed to many behaviors that are not beneficial to a healthy lifestyle . . .*

> *. . . discrimination has made it hard for me as [same gender loving] man to express myself in any way that challenges the idea of a strong black man . . .*

> *. . . During sexual interactions and sometimes when conversations are sexually driven, I sometimes begin to wonder if the other guy (who is white) is trying some black guy fantasy . . .*

These perceptions of discrimination and its impact on the lives of Black same gender loving men are consistent with literature that describes what discrimination has done to subgroups within the Black diaspora (Bowleg,

2012; Green, 2007; Haile et al., 2014; Phua & Kaufman, 2003; Tuenis, 2007). Participants communicated that the act of dominance on their community, and exploitation of their community, has bred a culture of fetishism toward Black same gender loving men. Additionally, discrimination has maintained feelings of shame and othering of the Black same gender loving man.

Discussion

Data from the presented study on Black same gender loving men contributes to the dearth of information related to this demographic. The results indicate that some of the main outcomes of discrimination on Black same gender loving men include internalized homophobia, decreased perception of identity value, and lowered perception of social acceptance among Black same gender loving men (Bowleg 2012; Green 2007). Men in this sample were able to explicitly define discrimination and were crucially aware of its impact on their community. This awareness, further highlighted by the literature, emphasizes how Black same gender loving male lived experiences have been impacted by discrimination.

Some experiences of perceived racial discrimination reported by Black same gender loving men in the sample include feeling socially neglected by other races in sexual and social settings (Haile et al. 2014). Other experiences involve being socially neglected, sexually rejected and racialized, stigmatized, and correlated with sexual prowess or increased sexual risk (Amola & Grimmett, 2015; Newcomb, Ryan, Garofalo, & Mustanski, 2015; Quinn et al., 2015). These experiences of Black same gender loving men are not solely perceived from an external lens, as Black same gender loving men have internalized these moments of degradation; and have experienced a decline in self-esteem and perception of self-worth (Amola & Grimmett, 2015). Many participants communicated that their social, professional, and overall progressions have been hindered due to their sexual identities. They also reported that their sexual identities have caused them to be perceived as inferior by those of the majority culture (Amola & Grimmett, 2015; Newcomb, Ryan, Garofalo, & Mustanski, 2015; Quinn et al., 2015). Also, a majority of respondents reported that they harbor some regret related to their sexual identities.

The results of this work present a nuanced message in comparison to the existing research. In contrast to previous contextual investigations of the experiences surrounding sexual identity and the Black same gender loving

man, results of this study highlight the Black same gender loving male's discrimination experience solely in the context of social and sexual interactions. The data highlights that the discrimination of the Black same gender loving man, which has connections to social and sexual biases, impacts the way in which the Black same gender loving man perceives and values himself. This negative appraisal of self is heightened as the Black same gender loving man must manage the stress of being a multiple minority and traverse through oppressive spheres based on his racial and sexual identities (Bowleg, 2012).

The importance of the extracted data is highlighted by the study's nuanced focus. The issues impacting Black men who have sex with men—such as race, socioeconomic status, and social injustice—have been generally understudied. And when literature explores the experiences of this vulnerable population, the studies are commonly linked to the outcomes of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (Amola & Grimmett, 2015; Haile et al., 2014; Quinn et al., 2015). While the current study seeks to assess perceptions regarding race and sexual identity, it does not seek to measure Black male experiences under a medical model. The presented research seeks to transcend the colonized perception of Black bodies being observable solely for advances in medical, or health, research (Thomas & Quinn, 1991). Instead, this work is being presented to explore the narratives and inner workings of a demographic, within the Black diaspora, who has been degraded and rejected from within and outside their racial and sexual communities.

Limitations

Whereas the results of this study provide nuanced and valuable contributions to the field, there exist limitations related to the research. One of the main limitations of this study is related to the small, and relatively homogenous, sample size. Most of the Black same gender loving men in this sample possessed advanced education, were relatively young, and resided within the eastern region of the United States. Additionally, these men in total accounted for 13 participants. Morse (2000) suggests that the appropriate sample size of a study is contingent upon the design and purpose of said study. For example, a qualitative study that involves semi-structured interviewing—using focus groups composed of ever-changing cohorts—may call for a sample size of 30 to 60 participants. Morse (2000) nevertheless highlights that a phenomenological study, which may obtain large amounts of data from one participant, may call for a smaller sample size of

about 6 to 12 participants (Morse, 2000). There also exists other literature which suggests that the size of the sample of a study stands secondary to the purpose of the research being fulfilled (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012).

The current exploratory study seems to combine semi-structured interviewing and phenomenological observation; as one-time data was being collected on individual participants' lived experiences. Crouch and McKenzie (2006) present a case for small sample sizes in narrative data collection by suggesting that while a sample size less than 20 may not seem to aid in the generalizability of the study, the normed rules related to "sample size" may not be appropriate for narrative data collection. According to the author, each piece of lived experience data highlights that variant experiences in a social setting are being sampled, rather than a sampling of the individuals from a large target demographic. Therefore, it is difficult to set boundaries on what an appropriate sample size would be for such an exploratory study. The goal of this study was to focus specifically on varied experience of individual cases, which provides logic for the existing smaller sample size. Yet if the direction of the study were to focus on using these individual experiences to highlight themes found in the larger demographic, there would be reason to call for increased sample size. To add increased power to the data collected, and make the study increasingly generalizable, there should be effort made to increase the sample size to at least 35 (Morse, 2000). Effort could also be made to increase the variability of the sample demographics. Further nuanced data might have appeared if there was greater representation of elderly African American men in the sample; or men who differed more in education level.

A second limitation of the study relates to the method of recruitment of the sample. As previously mentioned, recruitment occurred by way of the author's social media outreach, which reflects a convenience sampling of recruitment; and contributed to the resultant small sample size. Future attempts of this study should consider methods of recruitment that maximize sample collection. One of these methods include presenting the study in a way in which participants feel they are contributing to their community without sacrificing their privacy. In a study that assessed reasons why individuals reject study participation, it was found that potential participants assess their attitudes and comfort with the material being investigated; their attitudes toward study participation; perceived benefit and cost of the study; and perceived benefit and costs of study participation (Hughes-Morelt et al., 2016). In regard to exploring Black male sexuality, participants may perceive

confidentially and anonymity as important. As previously mentioned, there is an overwhelming stigma related to being a Black man, having same-sex attraction, and disclosing said attraction. Therefore, to improve on recruitment, it might be beneficial to include an in-depth description of the measures taken to preserve the confidentiality and anonymity of participants in the study (Thompson, Bzdel, Golden-Biddle, & Reay, 2005).

It is finally noted that the current questionnaire was an adaptation of an already existing tool with supported reliability and validity (Contrada et al., 2001). And while the current adapted tool provided data relevant to the study, reliability and validity of the measure cannot be assumed. Future engagement of this study should seek to qualitatively asses the validity and reliability of the questionnaire items.

Conclusion

The findings from this study present a unique exploration of the experiences faced by Black same gender loving. There have historically existed cultural norms that oppress this cohort based on their race and sexual preference. Black same gender loving men have also experienced longstanding exploitation, discrimination, and oppression without investigation of how these occurrences have impacted their quality of life. Continued excavation of the narratives within this cohort reveals that the discrimination of the Black same gender loving man may produce negative physical, mental, and emotional outcomes. As further research is conducted on this issue, further insight will be given regarding the actions necessary to address both the discriminations, and negative outcomes faced, by Black same gender loving men.

Patrick Grant, MPH is a third year student at LaSalle University, pursuing a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology. Having received a Master's in Public Health, Grant's interests

include investigating the intersections of sexual and mental health throughout the Black Diaspora; particularly among Black men who have sex with men.

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Appendix A

The Perceived Ethnic Discrimination and Sexual Value Questionnaire (PEDSVQ)

Survey Link: http://surveymonkey.com/r/5NLLJ9F

1. What is your age (please circle)?

18 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54
55 to 64	65 to 74	75 and older	

2. What region of the United States do you live (please circle)?

New England	(Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut)
Middle Atlantic	(New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania)
East North Central	(Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin)
West North Central	(Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas)
South Atlantic	(Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida)
East South Central	(Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi)
West South Central	(Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas)
Mountain	(Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada)
Pacific	(Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, Hawaii)

I don't live in the United States

3. What's the highest level of education you have completed (please circle)?

Did not attend school	Some high school	Graduated from high school
1 year of college	2 years of college	3 years of college
Graduated from college	Some graduate school	Completed graduate school

4. How do you identify (please circle)?

I am a gay Black man	I am a bisexual Black man
I am a Black man who has sex with men, but I do not identify as gay or bisexual	

We would like to know about acts of discrimination that have been directed against or toward you personally during the past three months. Please respond to the following questions using the 7-point scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never			Sometimes			Very Often

Write the rating (from 1 to 7) on the line provided in front of each item.

Verbal Discrimination

1. ___ How often have you been subjected to offensive ethnic comments aimed directly at you, spoken either in your presence or behind your back?

2. ___ How often have you been exposed to offensive comments about your ethnic group (e.g. stereotypic statements, offensive jokes), spoken either in your presence or behind your back?

3. ___ How often have you been subjected to ethnic name calling (e.g. "wop", "nigger")?

Avoidance

4. ___ How often have others avoided physical contact with you because of your ethnicity?

5. ___ How often have others avoided social contact with you because of your ethnicity?

6. ___ How often have others avoided sexual contact with you because of your ethnicity?

7. ___ How often have others engaged in sexual contact with you because of your ethnicity?

8. ___ How often have others outside of your ethnic group made you feel as though you don't fit in because of your dress, speech, or other characteristics related to your ethnicity?

Devaluating action

9. ___ How often has it been implied or suggested that because of your ethnicity you must be sexually superior or advanced?

10. ___ How often has it been implied or suggested that because of your ethnicity you must have, or be at higher risk of contracting, a sexually transmitted infection (STI)?

11. ___ How often has it been implied or suggested that because of your ethnicity you must be dishonest about your sexual orientation, sexual behaviors, or sexual health status?

Threat of violence

12. ___ How often have you felt you would be the victim of an external threat (e.g. physical violence, sexual assault, etc.) because of your ethnicity?

13. ___ How often have you felt you would be the victim of an external threat (e.g. physical violence, sexual assault, etc.) because of your sexual orientation?

Discrimination

14. In your opinion, what is Discrimination?

15. How has Discrimination impacted (if at all) your life, and sexual journey, as a gay/bisexual man, or as a man who has had/currently has sex with men?

We are all members of different (various) social groups or social categories. Some of these social groups or categories pertain to gender, race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class. We would like you to consider your membership in your SEXUALLY ORIENTED GROUP and respond to the following statements on the basis of how you feel about your SEXUALLY ORIENTED GROUP and your membership in it. There are no right or wrong answers to any of these statements; we are interested in your honest reactions and opinions. Please read each statement carefully, and respond by using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree strongly	Disagree	Disagree somewhat	Neutral	Agree somewhat	Agree	Agree strongly

Write the rating (from 1 to 7) on the line provided in front of each item.

16. ____ I often regret that I have the sexual orientation that I do.

17. ____ Generally, my sexual orientation (and/or expression tied to that orientation) is viewed positively by others.

18. ____ Overall, my sexual orientation has very little to do with how I feel about myself.

19. ____ Most people consider me to be inferior due to my sexual orientation (and/or expression tied to that orientation).

20. ____ My sexual orientation is an important reflection of who I am.

21. ____ Overall, I often feel that my sexual orientation (and/or expression tied to that orientation) hinders my social, professional, and personal progress.

22. ____ In general, others respect my sexual orientation (and/or expression tied to that orientation)

23. ____ My sexual orientation is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.

24. ____ I feel good about my sexual orientation.

25. ____ My sexual orientation is an important part of my self-image.

26. ____ In general, I am proud of my sexual orientation.