

## **ABSTRACT**

**DISSERTATION:** PROTECTING ASIAN AMERICAN FEMALE SEXUAL MINORITIES:  
A QUALITATIVE STUDY INVESTIGATING THE INTERSECTION OF RACE, GENDER,  
AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

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The purpose of this dissertation study was to explore the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation as they relate to the lived and educational experiences of Asian American female sexual minority (AAFSM) college students attending Midwestern universities in the U.S. To explore the participants' lived and educational experiences, qualitative research, as a scientific tool, was best suited to serve the goal of this study. This study employed one of McCall's (2005) three intersectionality methodological approaches—intra-categorical complexity—to guide the study.

My first finding was that my AAFSM student participants had experienced intersectional objectifications, including racial objectification, gendered objectification, and sexual objectification. This finding answered my research question regarding what it is like to be AAFSM students attending predominantly White campuses in Midwestern universities. My findings also showed that my participants intersectionally internalized racism, sexism, and heterosexism as strategies to avoid their being ostracized. And my participants' internalization

allowed society/institution to internalize these -isms as norms. The manifestations of intersectional internalizations reported by participants included racial stereotypes, Whitenization, stereotypical gender roles, gender norms, parental influence, and institutional influence. Findings also indicated that my participants had experienced intersectional blindness; consequently, their understandings of Asianness, womanhood, and LGBTQness were affected. Another meaningful finding was that the racism, sexism, and heterosexism experiences of the AAFSM students were compounded and complex. The theme was best categorized as intersectional post-racism, -(hetero)sexism. Findings regarding students' experiences with intersectional internalizations, intersectional blindness, and intersectional post-racism, -(hetero)sexism answered the remaining two research questions.

I discussed intersectional internalization; de-intersectional-internalization; re-intersectional-internalization; intersectional visibilities, connections, and representations; the implementation of intersectionality; and intersectionalism. Discussions and suggestions were aimed to provide an intersectional inclusive campus environment for my participants who were AAFSMs attending Midwestern predominantly White universities. The discussions, as a milestone, provided meaningful suggestions for educators, administrators, and universities to effectively create an intersectional inclusive educational environment for my participants.