PROTECTING ASIAN AMERICAN FEMALE SEXUAL MINORITIES: A Qualitative Study Investigating the Intersection of Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation

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SECTION I

This dissertation is organized in two sections. In the first section, the research project is introduced in Chapter One, which includes the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, the research questions, delimitations, assumptions, definitions of terminology, and a summary. In Chapter Two, a literature review is presented along with the theoretical framework for the study. Chapter Three includes my research questions, research design, descriptions of participants, instruments, data generation, data analysis, limitations of the study, positionality and reflexivity, and summary. In Section II, research findings and discussions are presented.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, researchers such as Crenshaw (1989) took a new look on inequality and started to realize that inequality should not be understood along only one dimension, such as race or gender. A noticeable absence of discussion linked to intersectionality related to inequality existed during this period. After Ferree and Hall reviewed the most widely used textbooks in the 1980s, Ferree (2018) argued that a basic sociological understanding of inequality was not informed by the intersection of race, gender, and class. However, Crenshaw (1989) highlighted an important exception when employing intersectionality to inequality as applied to the lived experiences of African American women, establishing them as prototypical intersectional subjects for the following decades. Although not the first person to introduce the idea of intersectionality, Crenshaw is still widely regarded as the leading scholar who employed the notion of intersectionality in inequalities. When exploring multiple marginalized subjects from feminist theory and anti-racist policy discourse scholarship, Crenshaw (1989) argued that single-axis analysis (e.g., focusing on gender or race only) did not suffice. Crenshaw critiqued previously published material for merely utilizing a single analytical category to understand African American women; for example, feminist theory usually gave emphasis to White women, and anti-racist policy discourse emphasized racial discrimination from the perceptive of men of color. Crenshaw’s (2012) transcript from an interview explained why single-axis analysis does not work sufficiently:

Intersectionality simply came from the idea that if you’re standing in the path of multiple forms of exclusion, you are likely to get hit by both. These women are injured, but when the race ambulance and the gender ambulance arrive at the scene, they see these women of color lying in the intersection and they say, “Well, we can’t figure out if this was just
race or just sex discrimination, and unless they can show us which one it was, we can’t help them. (p. 2)

In addition, Crenshaw asserted merely adding one subordinate category onto another (e.g., African American plus women does not equal Black women) could not authentically or sufficiently reflect Black women’s lived experiences. Black women’s lived experiences show that “the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140). Crenshaw’s criticism and arguments regarding inequality of Black women led to another key insight of intersectionality, which called for researchers to remove additive thinking when utilizing intersectionality.

Specifically, Crenshaw’s (1989) analogy of traffic in an intersection metaphorically demonstrated that intersectional discrimination was not an additive one but rather a more complex, dynamic, and multiplied format. Crenshaw writes:

Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination. (p. 149)

Crenshaw’s (1989) analogy of traffic in an intersection, the metaphor of race and gender ambulances (2012), and the metaphor of a basement (1989) have had a tremendous impact on promoting social justice for racial and sexual minorities. Crenshaw’s research challenged contemporary laws, which excluded African American women because they could neither speak
for *all* women nor *all* Blacks. Crenshaw suggested that any concrete policy that has been used to
understand Black women must be rethought and recast if not taking intersectionality into account
(Crenshaw, 1989). When applying Crenshaw’s African American women argument onto Asian
American female sexual minority (AAFSM) populations, one acknowledges that AAFSM might
neither speak for *all* women, *all* Americans, *all* Asians, nor *all* sexual minorities due to their
intersectional identities. AAFSM students’ educational experiences can be both similar to and
different when compared to those experiences of White women, Asian American men, and
White LGBTQ. AAFSMs sometimes experience discrimination in ways that are like White
women's experiences; sometimes they share very similar experiences with Asian American men;
and sometimes AAFSMs share similar experiences with sexual minorities.

Crenshaw (1991) critically advanced that intersectionality, as a transitional concept and
methodology, should remedy how mutually exclusive categories are falsely separated for the
purpose of countering the disembodiment of multiply oppressed groups at the intersection. Since
then, the term *intersectionality* has been used by scholars across various venues and has become
a “buzzword” (Davis, 2008, p. 75; Nash, 2008, p. 3). However, within academia,
intersectionality should not be utilized as a “buzzword” or overhyped trend. Instead,
intersectionality is meant to challenge the prevailing mindsets of the dominant groups and to
disrupt the normative claim of dominant discourses (e.g., heteronormativity, masculinity, and
Whiteness). Intersectionality should “disorient” us to “get us thinking about how ‘we’ think”
(Carastathis, 2019, p. 111). Drawing on Ahmed’s (2007) concept of disorientation,
intersectionality should be deployed in research to deconstruct and disorient our entrenched
cognitive habits. For instance, how does one understand and make sense of normalized and
exalted identities (e.g., male, heterosexuality, White, etc.) compared to pathologized and repressed identities (e.g., female, LGBTQ, non-White)?

Many researchers have utilized intersectionality as either a theoretical framework or an analytical tool to gain an expansive understanding of individual’s lived experiences (Windsong, 2016), identity development (Duran & Jones, 2019), and multiplied exclusions and oppressions (Collins & Bilge, 2018). An increasing number of studies have discussed intersectionality by emphasizing two dimensions of various marginalized categories, including but not limited to, African American women (Crenshaw, 1989), Asian American gay men (Eguchi & Spieldenner, 2015; Han et al., 2014; Hom, 1994; Wooden et al., 1983), and Black gay men (Squire & Mobley, 2014).

The research presented here sought to contribute to the current literature by expanding variation scales from two dimensions to a more complex fashion and focused on three dimensions (e.g., race, gender, and sexual orientation) from an intersectional perspective instead of two dimensions (e.g., race/gender, race/sexuality, gender/sexuality, etc.). This study intended to draw attention to an unmarked marginalized group—AAFSM. The study explored AAFSM’s lived experiences in Midwestern universities in the United States. Particularly, the study sought to explore how AAFSM’s personal identity, college experiences, and educational opportunities were co-constructed with race, gender, and sexual orientation. AAFSM’s understanding of personal identity, college experiences, and educational opportunities in both formal and informal interactions among teachers and peers as well as within institutions was studied. Qualitative research was conducted in several Midwestern universities to examine these aforementioned aspects. Employing a qualitative methodology and intersectionality framework, the researcher
interviewed several AAFSM attending Midwestern colleges in the United States to gain a deeper understanding of their lived experiences.

Statement of the Problem

After surveying the literature on AAFSM college students’ experiences, it became apparent that few studies had explored AAFSM college students’ lived and educational experiences in the predominantly White Midwestern universities in the United States. Review of extant literature demonstrated the inadequate amount of research on this population. Recent scholarship had mainly presented any two marginalized categories (out of race, gender, sexual orientation, social class, and other types of social subordination) as closely interwoven and intertwined. Analysis of the lived and educational experiences of AAFSM college students had been overlooked as shown by the insufficient amount of research. Additional scholarly work exploring AAFSM college students’ lived and educational experiences will make a contribution to the growing body of literature.

Before the concept of intersectionality in inequality emerged during the late 1980s and early 1990s, the lived and educational experiences of people with multiple marginalized identities could not be interpreted precisely. Researchers often used a single-focus lens to interpret others’ lived and educational experiences. Research suggested that some college students suffered from discriminatory barriers to enrollment imputable to gender (Pinar et al., 2014; Tyack & Hansot, 1990; UNESCO, 2000). Other college students’ lived and educational experiences regarding discrimination on the basis of heterosexism were linked with sexual orientation (Kosciw, 2002, 2004; Kosciw & Elizabeth, 2006; Kosciw et al., 2008; Kosciw et al., 2010). Similarly, students’ lived and educational experiences with exclusion and discrimination
could be associated with other social divisions including their ethnicity, ability, culture, religion, and the like.

To foster a safer educational environment for students with overarching marginalized identities, college students created and organized special programs and organizations, such as African American student clubs, LGBTQ Safe Zone, degree programs in Women’s Studies, and the like. Specifically, schools established LGBTQ student organizations to decrease oppressions for sexual minorities (Wimberly, 2015). Similarly, after the first Women’s Studies program was established at San Diego State University in the early 1970s, Bourgeois (2014) reported that “over 600 Women’s Study programs have been established at colleges and universities…[to] focusing on women’s varied and unique experiences” (p. 6). However, some students did not neatly fit into any of these overarching programs because of their intersectional identities. Asian Americans who are female and sexual minorities do not fit into most of the overarching programs. Greene (1997) demonstrated “the process of acknowledging an LGB[TQ] orientation (i.e., ‘coming out’) may translate into greater potential for losses because of the number of communities of which LGB[TQ] People of Color may be a part” (also cited in Miville & Ferguson, 2006, p. 95). In addition, these abovementioned programs used a “one-at-a-time approach” (Collins & Bilge, 2018, p.3), which emphasized a master marginalized identity, to solve problems that students faced in schools on a daily basis. The “one-at-a-time approach” misunderstood AAFSM students’ unique needs and experiences. AAFSM college students’ educational experiences cannot be adequately explained by the body of traditional feminist study, queer study, or critical race study, each of which uses singularity and separateness. An urgent need remains to explore AAFSM college students’ educational experiences by using intersectionality framework and methods to critique the institutional influences on students with
multiple marginalized identities. The work can inform universities and colleges how best to improve AAFSM college students’ educational experiences.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation as they relate to AAFSM college students’ lived and educational experiences at Midwestern universities. By better understanding AAFSM college students’ school experiences, the study seeks to provide concrete policy recommendations to promote an intersectional-inclusive educational environment. Specifically, this study’s foci include institutional influences on AAFSM college students’ educational experiences and AAFSM college students’ intersectional identities; how AAFSM college students navigate through previous and present schooling using multiple identities; and, how AAFSM college students’ educational experiences were co-constructed, intersected, and co-influenced by race, gender, and sexual orientation.

The first step of the study was to gain an understanding of AAFSM college students’ lived and educational experiences in terms of the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation. The next step was what Chang and Culp (2002) identified the “so what” step. As Chang and Culp (2002) delineated:

The first is to remember the ‘so what’ question. It’s one thing to say that race, gender, sexuality, class and nation operate symbiotically, cosynthetically, multidimensionally, or interconnectedly…the next step is to be able to prescribe or imagine points of intervention. (p. 490)
The next step was to raise the awareness by higher education policymakers of the complex issues involved with intersectionality and provide points of interventions to meet the particularities of the perspectives and needs of AAFSM students.

The study was developed by three steps of purposes: 1) to understand AAFSM college students’ lived and educational experiences in terms of race, gender, and sexual orientation and how they navigate it; 2) to examine what shapes their experiences and causes this navigation; and, 3) to prescribe points of interventions to challenge and alter school policies affecting AAFSM college students’ positions.

**Significance of the Study**

The study on intersectionality drew attention to the AAFSM college student group and emphasized that AAFSM college students’ special voices should be heard. Secondly, the study employed the lens of intersectionality to explore how issues of race, gender, and sexual orientation impact AAFSM college students as they navigate through education. It is important to note that AAFSMs’ lived and educational experiences could not be fully understood without examining how their experiences were intersectionally structured by race, gender, and sexual orientation. Lastly, the study furthered research on intersectionality by giving emphasis to AAFSM college students at Midwestern universities in the United States. The results provide crucial information to help stakeholders and school policymakers develop intersectional interventions for an intersectional-inclusive educational environment. The study added a new field of scholarship dedicated to the study of AAFSM and contributed to the field of intersectionality scholarship.
Research Questions

This study explored the intersections of race, gender, and sexual orientation as they co-constructed and influenced AAFSM college students’ lived and educational experiences. The researcher developed several research questions to guide the study.

The research questions were:

1) What is it like to be an Asian American female sexual minority in a predominately White Midwestern university?

2) How do race, gender, and sexual orientation intersectionally shape the lived and educational experiences of Asian American female sexual minority college students?

3) How do Asian American female sexual minority students with multiple identities navigate through previous and present schooling and what identity steers this navigation (e.g., race, gender, or sexual orientation)?

Delimitations

The purpose of this delimitation section is to assist readers in understanding how I narrowed the scope and set research boundaries for this study (Roberts, 2010). Because it is impossible to explore everything in a given study, researchers use different lenses to view their research problem(s) by giving emphasis to different facets, factors, and variables. Thus, the delimitations narrow the scope to keep the research comprehensible and manageable. This study centered on the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation as its key factors; therefore, to study the concept intersectionality, I chose AAFSM college students as my research subjects. Often, the terms delimitation and limitation confuse readers. According to Mauch and Birch (1993), a limitation is an inevitable factor out of a researcher’s control that influences a researcher in an important way or reflects inherent weaknesses in a specific methodology;
whereas, a delimitation is controlled by researchers in order to draw the boundaries of studies.

Limitations are usually associated with methodologies; therefore, they are discussed in Chapter 3. The dissertation’s delimitations included:

1. Those interviewed in this research were AAFSM college students.
2. The researcher chose Midwestern universities as the research setting.
3. The duration of the study was from January 2019 to July 2021.

**Assumptions**

The assumptions are “what you take for granted relative to your study” (Roberts, 2010, p. 139). The assumptions made in this project included:

1. The research participants were representative of the AAFSM students in Midwestern universities.
2. Responses received from the participating AAFSM students accurately reflected their lived experiences, understandings, and perspectives.
3. The interviewees answered all the interview questions openly and honestly.

**Definition of Terminology**

The following definitions of concepts assist audiences to understand commonly used terms and concepts as they are used in this particular field of research and to avoid any misunderstandings due to varying interpretations in different fields and disciplines.

**Intersectionality:** Intersectionality, as a “buzzword,” has been interpreted in numerous ways across diverse political projects and interdisciplinary fields. In this research, I used Collins and Bilge’s (2018) latest definition on intersectionality:

Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life
and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. When it comes to social inequality, people’s lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race, or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other. Intersectionality as an analytical tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves. (p. 2)

Sexual Minorities: This research employed Hirschtritt et al.’s definition of the term sexual minorities, which is depicted as “those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or another non-heterosexual orientation; are transgender or are gender nonconforming; and adolescents who endorse same-sex attraction or behaviors” (2018, p. 422).

Sexism: Sexism could be understood in both overt and covert ways. For instance, Benokraitis and Feagin (1986) depicted sexism in an overt way as “unequal and harmful treatment of women that is readily apparent, visible, and observable, and can be easily documented” (p. 30). Swim and Cohen (1997) added a covert understanding of sexism, which could be conducted in a hidden or clandestine manner to harm both women and men. For example, a company superintendent may appeal to gender equality publicly but intentionally undermine the promotion of women within the organization. Heterosexual Asian males might not be employed due to their physical appearance, which company employers misunderstood or stereotypically viewed as demonstrating gay characteristics.

Heterosexism: Briefly, heterosexism is an ideology that advantages heterosexual people and affirms heterosexual relationship while discriminating against homosexual people or any types of homosexual behaviors, relationships, and the like (Herek, 2004). The expansion of
understanding on the term heterosexism was elaborated by Plummer (2007) in *Homophobia, Heterosexism and Beyond*.

**Heteronormativity:** Heteronormativity is an ideology supplementary to heterosexism which “argues that privileging heterosexuality created a set of normative standards against which alternative sexualities are judged” (Plummer, 2007).

**Racial Minorities:** Pollard and O’Hare (1999) systematically elaborated the term racial minorities by referring to four major racial and ethnic groups: African Americans, American Indians and Alaska Natives, Asians and Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics in comparison to Whites, who have been socially and historically constructed as the dominant group. Put simply, any race (or socially disadvantaged race) other than European White (or socially advantaged White) was considered a racial minority.

**Racism:** This research utilized Olivier et al.’s definition of racism, which is depicted as “an ideology that justifies or prescribes the behavioral act of certain forms of racial discrimination” (2019, p. 3). Such discrimination includes but is not limited to unjust treatment of individuals on the basis of race, bias, and prejudice towards racial minorities.

**Individual Racism:** Alvarez (2009) stated that “individual racism occurs when individuals act upon their belief in their own racial superiority and the inferiority of other racial groups” (p. 400).

**Institutional Racism:** Alvarez (2009) indicated that “institutional racism refers to laws, regulations, policies, and practices that serve to restrict the rights, choices, and mobility of a racial group in systems such as business, housing, justice, health, education, and so forth” (p. 400).
**Cultural Racism:** Alvarez (2009) said that “cultural racism is reflected in the pattern of underlying values, beliefs, traditions, and assumptions that promote the dominance of one racial group over another” (p. 400).

**LGBTQ+:** An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, pansexual, asexual, and many more.

**Geisha:** This term (sometimes used as a discriminatory slur) specifically refers to Asian Americans who self-identify or are perceived by others as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and/or questioning, and the like. Geisha is a different kind and one kind of “gay of color” (Han, 2015).

**Homophobia:** A term used to depict hostile reactions, both verbal and physical, to sexual minorities including, but not limited to, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and the like. This hateful attitude also applies to individuals who are heterosexual but viewed as gay.

**Summary**

Intersectionality, as a “buzzword,” has been widely employed in various disciplines and fields by scholars, policy advocates, and practitioners with the intent to create more inclusive and just campus environments. Before the ideology of intersectionality emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s, people used a “one-at-a-time approach” (Collins & Bilge, 2018, p.3) or a single-axis analysis (Crenshaw, 1989) to address problems that students faced in college communities on a daily basis. Intersectionality has become a powerful tool to examine the multiple inequalities that some college students face due to their interlocking marginalized identities. This study recruited AAFSM college students as the research subjects for the purpose of exploring their lived experiences in college. The study was organized in eight chapters:
Chapter One provided a statement of problem, which leads to the research questions, the purpose, and the significance of the study. A brief introduction on intersectionality is included in the chapter; also, for the purpose of clarification and comprehension, definitions of key terms used throughout the study are provided.

Chapter Two provides a comprehensive literature review on how racism, heterosexism, and sexism affect minority individuals. In the examination of these social forces on individuals, it was found that it is impossible to isolate one social force from another. Therefore, discussion regarding the intersection of racism, sexism, and heterosexism was also presented. Accordingly, research gaps were identified in the existing studies; and, therefore, this study of the lived experiences of AAFSM college students contributes to the body of literature. The literature review supported the choice of intersectionality as an appropriate theoretical framework for this study.

Chapter Three elaborates how intersectionality was used as an appropriate and powerful methodological and analytic tool to collect and analyze data. Chapter Three was organized with the following subsections: the research methods, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the research design, the sample description, data collection, data analysis, the limitations of the study, and a summary.

Chapter Four presents rich data to illustrate the participants’ experiences as AAFSM students attending predominantly White midwestern universities. Findings showed that participants encountered racially constructed objectification, gender constructed objectification, and sexually constructed objectification. Most importantly, each objectification did not stand alone. Rather, they intersectionally objectified participants as either a “perfect package” or
completely off the preference list. Because AAFSM students were perceived as objects rather than individuals, these intersectional objectifications denied the participants their individuality.

Chapter Five presents findings regarding intersectional internalizations on race, gender, and sexuality. Participants in the research reported that they frequently internalized racism, sexism, and heterosexism through racial stereotypical bias, Whitenization, gender norms, stereotypical gender roles, and familial and institutional influences. Most importantly, this research found that participants internalized racism, sexism, and heterosexism in an intersectional way rather than in separate ways. For instance, the racism that participants experienced inevitably involved sexism and heterosexism as well.

Chapter Six presents the results from the data analysis regarding participants’ experiences on racialized-genderized-heterosexism, sexualized-genderized-racism, and racialized-sexualized-sexism. This theme could be best categorized as intersectional post-racism, -(hetero)sexism. In addition, the researcher found that participants experienced intersectional blindness on race, gender, and sexuality.

Chapter Seven discusses intersectional internalization; de-intersectional-internalization; re-intersectional-internalization; intersectional visibilities, connections, and representations; the implementation of intersectionality; and intersectionalism. Discussion of these facets aimed to provide an intersectional inclusive campus environment for my participants who were AAFSMs in Midwestern predominantly White universities. Additionally, these discussions could provide meaningful suggestions for educators, administrators, and universities for effectively creating an intersectional inclusive educational environment for my participants.

Chapter Eight provides conclusions of this research dissertation and suggests further research based upon this study. This chapter summarizes the research questions, theoretical
framework, methodology, findings, and suggestions. In addition, suggestions for future research based on this study are provided.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Multiple areas of studies are reviewed in this section to frame this research about the lived and educational experiences of AAFSM college students attending predominantly White Midwestern universities in the United States. These studies included the experiences of Asian American, women, and sexual minorities in K-12 and postsecondary education, respectively. Chapter Two also discusses the theoretical framework of the study, identity, and power relations. Chapter Two is organized into three main sections: the theoretical framework; literature on racism, sexism, and heterosexism; and the summary.

Theoretical Framework

Each research has its own paradigm, or worldview, which encompasses four facets: axiology, epistemology, ontology, and methodology. As Denzin and Lincoln (2018) described, “Alongside the paradigms are the perspectives of feminism, critical race theory, critical pedagogy, cultural studies, queer theory, Asian epistemologies, disability theories, and transformative, indigenous, and social justice paradigms” (p. 97). Each of these perspectives has its own criteria, philosophical assumptions, and methodological practice that guides researchers in conducting their research projects. This research study focuses on AAFSM students and explores their educational experiences at the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation, which are, more or less, shared perspectives with feminism, critical race theory, and queer theory. However, this study employed the intersectionality theoretical framework which derived from a brief discussion of the limitations of each of the above-mentioned theories.

Feminist theory has been employed in studies on various facets by feminist researchers, including, but not limited to, women’s voices (Leavy, 2015), women empowerment and social
change (Hawkesworth, 2006; Letherby, 2003), girls’ middle school experiences (Finders, 1997), and gender studies (Jaggar, 2008a). Furthermore, feminist theory has also been associated with:

- specific disciplines and with the writings of women of color; intersectional feminisms, including the intersection of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, and classism; women problematizing Whiteness; postcolonial, transnational discourse; decolonizing arguments of indigenous women; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer and/or questioning (LGBTQ); disabled women. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 99)

For instance, Oleson’s (2011) research centered on women with disabilities. Other examples abound, including Crenshaw’s (2018) study on women of color (i.e., African American women). Although feminist scholars have contributed to the development of a more inclusive academic world over the feminist transformative developments, the primary focus that feminist scholarship addresses is that of women (Cuádrax & Uttal, 1999; DeVault, 2018). Feminist transformative developments emerged due to enormous demands for research specifically by and about groups of women, which included women of color, women with disabilities, LGBTQ women, and the like. Notwithstanding the fact that feminist scholarship has added other marginalized identities on women, many scholars still questioned whether (White) feminist scholarship can be utilized to authentically understand women’s marginalization (Cole, 1986; Hooks, 1984; Woo, 1985). Thus, feminist theory is insufficient to explore the experiences of women who stand at the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, religion, nationality, disability, and the like. As Parker and Lynn (2002) explained, “In the case of Black women, race does not exist outside of gender and gender does not exist outside of race” (p.12). This leads to the second discussion on the limitation of critical race theory.
Critical race theory focuses particularly on race, racism, and power and the relationships and transformation among them (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Race and racism are normal components of American life and are embedded deeply in the United States society (Ladson-Billings, 2003; Park & Lynn, 2002). The literature makes one thing very clear: students of color have faced discrimination, harassment, macro- and micro-aggression on the basis of race at both the individual and/or institutional level for decades (Alvarez, 2009; Brunsma et al., 2016). In this respect, critical race theory has been widely utilized to examine campus climate (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001) and the experiences of Black students (Duncan, 2002) in the hope of oppression elimination (Harris, 2001) and inclusion. However, Donnor and Ladson-Billings (2018) argued that critical race theory lacked the capacity to articulate the dynamic inequalities that had emerged in the era of post-racialism. As Kim (2013) mentioned above, racism should not be understood separately because race co-exists with gender as well as other identities, both advantaged and disadvantaged. The inclusion advocated by critical race theorists has arguably been called “limited inclusion” or “imperfect inclusion” by the post-racial theorists (Kim, 2013, p. 134). For instance, the inclusion that works for men of color might exclude women of color. Other examples abound. Critical race theory may be utilized to emancipate Asian American men but may also oppress Asian American women who are also members of LGBTQ groups. Therefore, limitations of critical race theory on exploring the experiences of AAFSM stood out significantly.

Before discussing the limitations of queer theory for this study, queer theory should be examined to appreciate how the theory provided perspective on framing the study. Queer theory emerged in the post-Stonewall era along with the gay liberation movement (Spencer et al., 2015). Queer theory, as opposed to gay, lesbian, or homosexual theory, attempts to keep all sexual
categories open (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Leavy, 2015). These sexual categories include gay, lesbian, bisexual, questioning, etc. The term queer itself specifically refers to being “outside the norms” (Leavy, 2015, p. 93). However, the terms lesbian and gay were constructed based on the norm of the binary gender, which is inadequate to describe women sexual minorities. For instance, some women with distinct masculinity identified themselves as gay instead of lesbian. Other examples abound; some women self-identified as lesbian by admitting their biological gender, whereas some did not. As Creswell and Poth (2018) argued, “The historical binary distinctions are inadequate to describe sexual identity” (p. 31). Therefore, this study decided to use the term AAFSM instead of Asian American lesbian because the former identity is more open and less constructed. In addition, the perspectives of queer theory also framed this study’s intersectionality methodological approach—*intra-categorical complexity*, which is explained in the next chapter. Like critical race theory and feminist theory, queer theory is inadequate to explore AAFSMs.

According to the preceding discussions regarding multiple theoretical frameworks, this study employed the intersectionality framework to design the study, frame the interview questions, and guide data generation and analysis. Collins and Bilge (2018) delineated, “Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experience” (p. 25). Intersectionality is the most appropriate theoretical framework to shed light on the complexity of educational experiences of AAFSM college students standing at the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation. For three reasons, intersectionality has been extensively employed to articulate the intersecting oppressions, complex relationships of power and oppression, and social locations which are formed by analytical identity categories such as race, gender, and sexual orientation (Battle & Ashley,
2008). First, the nature and attributes of analytical identity categories intersect with one another.

The second reason is that social systems and power “interest, constitute, and reconstitute each other” (Battle & Ashley, 2008, p. 2). The third reason is the nature of the intersection of interlocking systems and intersecting analytical identity categories. To apply the intersectionality framework in this study, it was crucial to review the core ideas of intersectional framework.

These core ideas include social inequalities (e.g., racism, sexism, and heterosexism), complexity (e.g., racialized-sexualized-sexism, racialized-genderized-heterosexism, or sexualized-genderized-racism), power (e.g., heteronormativity, White supremacy, and masculinity), and relationality (Collins & Bilge, 2018; Windsong, 2016).

**Literature Review**

**Racism**

The United States society has an invisible but powerful pyramidal hierarchy, which situates people of color at the bottom while empowering and privileging White/European Americans at the top. This pyramidal hierarchy of race, as a pervasive social force in the United States, is also socially named racism. What exactly is racism? Racism, like other social forces such as sexism and heterosexism, is a form of oppression with many definitions. For instance, Tinsley-Jones (2001) defined it as “a system of cultural, institutional, and personal values, beliefs, and actions in which individuals or groups are put at a disadvantage based on ethnic or racial characteristics” (p. 573). According to Jones (1972), “Racism results from the transformation of race prejudice and/or ethnocentrism through the exercise of power against a racial group as inferior, by individuals and institutions with intentional or unintentional support of the entire culture” (p. 172).

In addition to the general definition of racism, Jones (1997) further categorized the racism into three facets: individual racism, institutional racism, and cultural racism. Specifically,
Jones (1997) elaborated that individual racism is a social power that operates by a superior racial group while working against an inferior racial group. Individual racism refers to bullying, verbal and physical harassment, and discrimination. In other words, racial minorities experience overt verbal and physical discrimination at worst and microaggressions at best. For instance, according to the recent studies by Ong et al. (2013), Asian American college-aged students experienced overt racial harassment. In a recent study, 32 percent of Asian Americans reported that they had been the target of racial slurs, and more than one third of Asian Americans had been the target of microaggressions based on race (McMurtry et al., 2019). Specifically, Asian Americans experienced microaggressions through discriminatory slurs such as yellow peril, model minority (Lee & Hong, 2020), forever/perpetual foreigners, honorary Whites, (Tuan, 1998), and Otherness/Others (Wooden et al., 1983).

Regardless of the number of generations their families have been settled in the United States, racial slurs (such as forever/perpetual foreigners) deny Asian Americans the opportunity to identify themselves as pure Americans (Lee, 2005). Reviewing racism in historical context in the United States allows differentiation between racism in general and anti-Asian American discourses in particular. During late 19th century, Asian American immigrants were recruited as cheap laborers for plantations in Hawaii, canneries in Alaska, and mines in California (Alvarez, 2009). Although Asian American immigrants were recruited by US plantations, they were perceived as “yellow peril” bringing “protentional threats to national security” because they might take jobs away from real Americans (Lee, 2005, p. 5; Lowe, 1996). Specifically, during the 1870s in San Francisco, the population of Chinese immigrants increased steadily. At the same time, the San Francisco’s economy was hit hard by the national economic depression. Many White laborers were unemployed and international relations between the United States and
Asian countries were tense. Therefore, the anti-Chinese movements and discourses intensified (Wollenberg & Nishida, 1994). Early Asian immigrants were seen as “nothing more than starving masses, beasts of burden, depraved heathens and opium addicts” (Chan, 1991, p. 45).

Racial discrimination existed in educational institutions as well. In a recent study, one Asian American student made the following claim in his classes because he felt unfairly grouped with other international students who, according to the beliefs of White students, took away jobs on campus.

Being of South Asian descent, people, especially in the college [name], assume I am an international student here to take jobs away from the United States. Every time, in almost all my classes that require group work, I need to let them know that in fact I am an American and I live here in the United States. (Yeo et al., 2019, p. 51)

Asian Americans are often perceived as foreigners even if they fully identify themselves as Americans (Lee & Hong, 2020). Therefore, Asian Americans experience individual racism in educational institutions as well. For instance, McMurtry et al. (2019) indicated that approximately one in six Asian adults reported “experiencing discrimination when applying to or while attending college” (p. 1422). Other examples abound; Kim, a female Asian American student from the study by Yeo et al. (2019), indicated that the majority people on campus had a negative connotation towards Asian Americans. The negative connotation, which was further elaborated by another interviewee in the study, referred to the belief that “There are too many Asians on campus. We don’t need more” (p. 50).

Although Asian Americans have been cast as forever/perpetual foreigners, White/European Americans have also labeled Asian Americans as “honorary Whites” (Tuan, 1998). Nevertheless, Asian Americans have never been accepted as authentic Americans. It is
important to know that Asian Americans, as “honorary Whites”, do not have the same privileges as White Americans (Lee, 2005). The racial slur of “honorary Whites” was derived from another race-based slur—moral minorities, which has been intractably associated with Asian Americans. Since the 1960s, Asian Americans have been the objects of racial prejudices and model minority stereotypes, such as being hard-working, “good at mathematics,” smart, well-behaved, and academically inclined (Qin et al., 2008; Yeo et al., 2019). Some Asian American take these as positive compliments, but the majority feel insulted and pressured by these stereotypes (Yeo et al., 2019). An Asian American male student named Feng from the study explained the insult:

People usually ask me for help in mathematics or sciences. Then if I get their question wrong, they get mad at me and say, “Aren’t you supposed to be good?” I felt like I was a disappointment to this premade stereotype they had of me. (p. 55)

The fact is that not all Asian American students are academic superstars. Lee (1994) lifted the veil of the model-minority myth in his paper by saying, “not all Asian American students are successful. During the 1988-89 school year, 15 Asian students were deselected from Academic High because of weak academic performance and sent back to their neighborhood schools” (p. 415). By having this ideology and discourse in schools and communities, Asian Americans felt restricted in what they wanted to be in their academic, social, and personal lives; instead, they felt compelled to live up to the expectations of others. One interviewee named Mei Mei Wang in Lee’s (1994) study said:

They [Whites] will have stereotypes, like, we’re smart—They are so wrong; not everyone is smart. They expect you to be this and that, and when you’re not— [shakes her head]. And sometimes you tend to be what they expect you to be, and you just lose your identity—just lose being yourself. Become part of what—what someone else want[s] you
to be. And it’s really awkward too! When you get bad grades, people look at you really strangely because you are sort of distorting the way they see an Asian. It makes you feel really awkward if you don’t fit the stereotypes. (p. 419)

Therefore, the racialized stereotype of the model minority served to oppress and suppress Asian Americans and kept them marginalized, underserved, and unrepresented.

Asian Americans have sometimes been likened as closer to White and sometimes closer to Black. This dynamic and unstable identity of Asian Americans has been influenced by the Black-and-White ideology on race (Feagin, 2000; Wu, 2002). Thus, whether Asian Americans are likened to “honorary White,” or Asian, or even Black (Takaki, 1989), this ideology, derived from a White-named and White-framed perspective, is used to serve the interest of Whiteness (Feagin, 2000; Yeo et al., 2018). This dynamic and unstable Americanness of Asian Americans is ideologically and socially framed by the dominant group and constantly changes due to other identities (e.g., gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, etc.). For instance, Ong (1999) asserted that whether Asian Americans were ideologically Whitened or Blackened depended on their socioeconomic status. Specifically, middle- and upper-class Asian American immigrants, say, Chinese American immigrants, have been Whitened; whereas working-class Southeast Asian American refugees have been Blackened. Asian American refugees, including Hmong, Lao, and Cambodian refugees, have been Blackened; whereas East Asian American non-refugees have been Whitened (Ong, 1999; Tuan, 1998). Most studies which employ critical race theory to examine racial minorities’ experiences give greatest emphasis to the race aspect. These studies have explored the strong correlation between racial minorities’ lower self-esteem and racial discrimination (Fisher et al., 2000), the reproduction of inequitable disparities of U.S. public schools due to mechanisms of Whiteness—racism (Castagno, 2014), and the racism impact on
African American male college athletes’ holistic development (Singer, 2016). Research on racial minorities’ experiences was limited and insufficient if intersectionality was not considered.

In addition to individual racism, Asian Americans, African Americans, Latino/x Americans, and Mexico Americans have also been the targets of institutional racism. Institutional racism comes in the form of policies which, consciously and subconsciously, intentionally and unintentionally, and covertly and overtly, affect racial minorities. For example, during late 19th century, second generation Asian American immigrants were prohibited to attend San Francisco public schools according to the San Francisco Board of Education policy (Wollenberg & Nishida, 1994). During the same period, the California state legislature accepted the recommendation from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction that “Negroes, Mongolians, and Indians be prohibited from attending public schools with White children” (Wollenberg & Nishida, 1994, p. 4). Since the 1990s, prestigious universities including Harvard University, Stanford University, UC Berkeley, and Princeton University have been accused of racism due to their differential acceptance of Asian American students (Alvarez, 2009).

Institutional barriers against Asian Americans students can be found in the educational system in many aspects. In short, since the late 19th century, Asian Americans were the targets of educational and political exclusions (e.g., the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882), discrimination, harassment, and violence. Both historical and contemporary evidence indicate that institutional racism has remained prevalent in the form of policies, regulations, and laws.

Parallel to individual and institutional racism, Asian Americans have experienced cultural racism, implicitly and explicitly. One type of cultural racism is how society defines normalcy, values Whiteness, and devalues others. Goffman (1963) provided insight regarding how dominant White value is promoted over others. He said,
In an important sense there is only one complete unblushing male in America: a young, married, White, urban, northern, heterosexual Protestant, father, of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight, and height, and a recent record in sports…Any male who fails to qualify in any one of these ways is likely to view himself—during moments at least—as unworthy, incomplete, and inferior. (p. 128)

Anyone who fails to fit in this American image is viewed as undesirable and abnormal. In addition, cultural racism can be found in how peers perceive “good” and “bad” students in American schools. Lee (2005) reported, “Traditional and Americanized [Hmong] youth defined themselves against each other” (p. 53). Traditional Hmong students were warned to stay away from “bad” Hmong kids who were too Americanized, while the Americanized Hmong youths saw Hmong students maintaining traditions viewed as problematic in the United States. This within-group conflict was caused by two cultures. One was the home country culture of Hmong students, which was defined as a problematic culture; the other was the American culture, which was valued as its cultural norms promoted the dominance of Whiteness over other races. In effect, the dominant beliefs and values enhanced White dominance and (re)produced and fueled racism; in turn, racism was reinforced by the dominant beliefs and values, which empowered Whiteness but disempowered other races.

In summary, this section provided an overview of Asian Americans’ experiences with racism from three facets—individual, institutional, and cultural racism. This section started with the definitions of racism and contextualized racism in historical contexts. Some examples from the literature were discussed for the purpose of indicating how individual, institutional, and cultural racisms overtly and covertly, consciously, and subconsciously, and intentionally and unintentionally affect Asian Americans lives. Discussion also explained how racism shaped and
was shaped by other marginalized identities such as gender and socioeconomic status. Focusing on race alone in research on racial minorities’ experiences, identities, and other unexplored fields is not sufficient. Thus, there is a need to explore AAFSM college-aged students’ educational experiences from an intersectionality perspective to further contribute to the body of literature.

**Heterosexism**

In addition to racism, heterosexism is another social force needing to be addressed. Heteronormativity has been deeply ingrained in U.S. educational institutions including both K-12 and higher education. Heteronormativity refers to ideologies, values, policies, and practices that privilege heterosexual identity, heterosexuality, and heterosexual practices while denigrating homosexuality, homosexual identity, or homosexual practices. Simply put, heterosexuality is viewed as natural and desirable whereas homosexuality is viewed as *otherness* (Kitzinger, 2005; Woody, 2003). In the US, many K-12 schools and institutions are homophobic and heteronormative; college students, too, regularly experience homophobia and heterosexism (Blackburn & Pascoe, 2015; Renn, 2015). Heterosexism is a visible expression of heterosexuality. Heterosexism has normalized heterosexual behaviors, activities, beliefs, and values while demonizing, denigrating, and rejecting homosexual forms (Herek, 1995). Due to these social forces and oppression, many students in the U.S. experience discrimination, oppression, harassment, and exclusion to some extent. Heterosexism “may be expressed overtly or covertly, consciously or unconsciously, and intentionally or unintentionally” (Miville & Ferguson, 2006). In other words, the instances of heterosexism can range from unintentional, unconscious, or covert forms (e.g., “I like your jeans—no homo.”) to intentional, conscious, and overt forms (e.g., being punched, kicked, injured with a weapon, or threatened by a bomb) (Kosciw, 2002, 2004; Kosciw & Diaz, 2006; Kosciw et al., 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018).
These examples (re)produce and reinforce the ideology that heterosexism is the social norm, where heterosexuals are privileged and viewed as superior, and that those who do not conform to heterosexual beliefs, values, and standards are deviant, abnormal, and sick.

Why is addressing issues of heteronormativity and heterosexism such an important topic in education? LGBTQ youth and college-aged students often report experiencing discrimination, harassment, exclusion, and violence in schools, colleges, and universities. These negative experiences affect students on different aspects, through different ways, and to various degrees. To gain a deeper and holistic understanding of how heterosexism negatively affect students, the findings from ten different reports have been summarized in Table 1. American educational institutions, including K-12 and higher education, have committed to create an inclusive campus environment for all students regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, and such. However, many students continue to encounter unique challenges due to their identities such as sexual orientation (Rankin, 2003). Most studies revealed that heteronormativity was deeply ingrained in U.S. schools and institutions. Indeed, heterosexuality was and still is viewed as natural and desirable whereas homosexuality is viewed as otherness (Woody, 2003; & Kitzinger, 2005). The challenges that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) students face are many and varied. For instance, according to the reports from the National School Climate Survey: The School Related Experiences of our Nation’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth, 2010 State of Higher Education and the Campus Climate for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender people: A National Perspective, LGBTQ youths in K-12 schools and LGBTQ college-aged students on campus experienced both verbal and physical harassment overtly and covertly at significantly higher levels in comparison to their heterosexual counterparts. In addition, LGBTQ students, both youths and college-aged, were targets of
homophobic and other derogatory remarks (Kosciw, 2002, 2004; Kosciw & Diaz, 2006; Kosciw et al., 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018; Rankin, 2003; Rankin et al., 2010). Specifically, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) National School Climate Survey published reports (in 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016) as flagship reports on the school experiences of LGBTQ youths in U.S. schools. The reports included the percentages of students who had experienced at least a few verbal and physical harassments based on their sexual orientation at school during their past school year. The percentages of students who experienced verbal harassment and physical harassment in every other year from 2001 to 2017 were, respectively, 83.3% and 41.9%, 84.1% and 39.1%, 83.1% and 37.8%, 86.2% and 44.1%, 84.6% and 40.1%, 81.9% and 44.7%, 74.1% and 36.2%, 70.8% and 27.5%, and 70.1% and 36.7%. The data provided a clear picture that homophobic harassment, including both verbal and physical, and victimization experiences have become a common part of growing up for many sexual minority students in K-12 schools.

In comparison to the school climate data of LGBTQ students in K-12, data of campus climate towards LGBTQ college-aged students is limited. As seen in Table 1, national studies on K-12 school climate towards LGBTQ youth and their experiences have been available for over a decade; however, even though the hostile environment that LGBTQ college students often experience has been documented in many studies since the mid-1980s, comprehensive information and data on campus climate of LGBTQ college students lagged before 2010 (Rankin, 2003; Renn, 2015;). Prior to 2010, campus climates studies had frequently been conducted but most studied only a single institution, a small number of campuses, or a small group of LGBTQ people (Rankin et al., 2010). The publication of the 2010 National College Climate Survey (Rankin et al., 2010), most comprehensive national research study of its kind,
### Table 1

Percentage of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Questioning/Queer (L, G, B, T, Q) Respondents Reporting Particular Experiences Related to Campus Climate in Schools and University Campus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic year</th>
<th>K-12</th>
<th>College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L, G, B, T</td>
<td>L, G, B, T, Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt unsafe/uncomfortable at schools due to their sexual orientation identity</td>
<td>68.6%</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of verbal harassment</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>84.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of physical harassment</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of physical assault</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of hearing homophobic remarks at schools from students</td>
<td>99.2%</td>
<td>99.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of hearing homophobic remarks at schools from faculty (i.e., teachers, staff, etc.)</td>
<td>62.8%</td>
<td>60.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoided disclosing their sexual orientation due to a fear of negative consequences, harassment, or discrimination</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location of harassment</th>
<th>Public space on campus</th>
<th>Their place of residence</th>
<th>Classroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>63.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

extended the research on the experiences of LGBTQ college students from a single institution study to a broader national picture (Renn, 2015).

Renn (2015) asked how K-12 and higher education LGBTQ research can be connected. A literature comparison of the experiences of LGBTQ students from K-12 and LGTBQ college students was completed. As presented in Table 1, the percentages of LGBTQ college students experiencing both verbal and physical harassment were less than K-12 students. Although this comparison may be problematic since participants from National College Climate Survey (Rankin et al., 2010) are different from the National School Climate Surveys (Kosciw, 2002, 2004; Kosciw & Diaz, 2006; Kosciw et al., 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018), it still provided evidence that college students reported much fewer incidences than K-12 students did. But why? Because of their campus environment, many LGBTQ college students did not want to disclose their sexual orientation, which produced anxiety and depression. The more open they were to their sexual orientation, the more likely they were to experience harassment, discrimination, and assaults. As Yeskel (1985) indicated:

The lack of adequate physical protection, the anti-gay stance of many academic courses, the inadequacy of student services and the openly anti-gay atmosphere in many residence halls combine to create a climate producing anxiety and depression for many of these [LGBTQ] students.” (p. 21)

The data on college students with sexual minority identities were limited. Exploration of the experiences of college students with sexual minority identities is thus extremely important.

Exploring LGBTQ students’ experiences is one of the three main foci of the studies on campus climate towards LGBTQ students. Most studies on campus climate have focused on three aspects—psychological (e.g., the experiences of LGBTQ students and their perceptions),
sociological (e.g., their interpersonal and intergroup relationships), and political analysis (e.g., inclusive policies, laws, etc.). From the psychological aspect, LGBTQ students regularly reported negative experiences, which included discrimination and verbal and physical harassment, ranging from subtle to extreme forms. Many LGBTQ students hid their sexual identity from peers and others because they observed others who do not hide their sexual orientation experiencing various forms of discrimination and harassment (Rankin, 2003). They often feared for their safety when walking on campus, in the hallways, into classrooms, or into public restrooms (Rankin, 2003). Even worse, some LGBTQ students encountered hate crimes, such as death threats, on campus. Research on campus climate towards LGBTQ students at Ball State University (BSU) from the 2017 BSU Archives found a Ball State Daily News story by Ortman (2004) that reported: A 30-year-old male named Joel Ray, who was a former board member of Spectrum in 1993, said, “There were a lot of bomb threats at the Student Center because there was a gay guy that worked there” (p. 3).

In addition to psychological aspect, students were “normalized” by social norms and oppressed by the sexuality hierarchy in society, which positions heterosexuality as right or normal and homosexuality as deviant or other. For instance, Chen and Kim (2009) told of a young man who, without actively considering his sexual orientation, sought out a woman to date because he thought that was what men at his age should do. The social norm defines opposite gender marriage and/or dating as the rule that men and women are expected to obey.

The third focus of studies on campus climate towards LGBTQ students referred to institutionalized policies and state laws. One example of this was the lack of areas of congregation for homosexuals in the city of Muncie. There were substantial numbers of

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1 Ball State University LGBTQ Student Organization
homosexuals in Muncie, Indiana and the police from Muncie and Ball State contended that there was no area of congregation for LGBTQ in the city (“Muncie,” 1975). In 1974, a group called the Gay Liberation Movement, were reported to the police department because they had meetings on Muncie downtown street corners and at parks (“Muncie,” 1975). Additionally, Indiana law stated that “any person soliciting a homosexual or unnatural sex act can be arrested. The crime is considered a felony and carries a fine of from $100 to $1000 and-or a prison sentence of two to 14 years” (“Muncie,” 1975, p. 5).

In addition to the Indiana state law, which was targeted against the LGBTQ community, most institutionalized LGBTQ student organizations excluded and marginalized LGBTQ people. Although LGBTQ student organizations in the U.S. were attempting to emancipate sexual minority students, destruct social norms, and eliminate and eradicate inequalities, many institutionalized LGBTQ student organizations ignored the needs of and/or provided limited opportunities for less-privileged LGBTQ students. Barnard (1999) argued that “since most institutionalized lesbian and gay organizations in the US were controlled and dominated by middle-class gay White men, these organizations inevitably have infused the category ‘gay’ with middle-class White male content” (p. 202). In other words, LGBTQ Liberation Movements mainly reflected the values of middle-class gay White men. Consequently, LGBTQ of color, LGBTQ non-White, and the like were excluded and silenced by the larger society. Because the manifestations of internalized and externalized heterosexism vary and are co-influenced by other identities such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, able-bodied, and the like, it is problematic to explore the experiences of students with minority sexual identities without considering their other less-privileged identities. As Miville and Ferguson (2006) suggested, “These [aforementioned] factors need to be considered when assessing and inquiring
about individuals’ experiences of heterosexism” (p. 94). For instance, heterosexism may be experienced differently by Whites and non-Whites, males and females, middle-class and working-class persons, people with disability and their healthy counterparts, and the like. In other words, heterosexism may be experienced differently among people with different, marginalized, and less privileged identities.

Exploring LGBTQ students’ experiences on campus is extremely important because it reflects the campus climate to which students respond. This knowledge can enable researchers to examine how and in what ways institutions oppress students and how students construct their understanding on identity, privilege, and marginalization. Ultimately, hostile campus environments could be destructed by employing tenets of intersectionality. Multiple inequalities could be authentically eliminated for students with multiple marginalized identities, who then would be able to freely express themselves without worrying about any of their marginalized identities.

**Sexism**

Sexism, as a social oppressor, is closely connected to heterosexism in that it further perpetuates the binary gender form. Conformity to this binary gender form creates an oppressive gender hierarchy, which is dominated by White males and positions women in places of coercion, subordination, and submission. According to Miville and Ferguson (2006), the attributes commonly ascribed to males were active, rational, and inventive, whereas women were seen as weak and gentle. Sexism and sexist stereotypes are common across most racial and cultural groups (Hansen et al., 2002). In other words, White women, women of color, poor women, and the like have experienced various manifestations of sexism ranging from covert to overt, conscious to subconscious, or intentional to unintentional. However, there is a tremendous
disparity regarding sexism between White women and other women (i.e., women of color). It is important to remember that the experiences of women of color worsened when their racial identities were considered.

One of the political locutions that has been used since the 19th century by women of color, specifically African American women, is ‘Ain’t I a Woman?’ This locution was first introduced into North American and British feminist lexicon by an enslaved woman named Sojourner Truth, who was born into both racial and gender enslavements (Brah & Phoenix, 2004). It is important to note that the first women’s antislavery society in the U.S. was formed in 1832 by African American women in Salem, Massachusetts, but the Suffragettes did not include voting rights for black women (Brah & Phoenix, 2004). As Brah and Phoenix (2004) noted, “Black women were conspicuous by their absence at the Seneca Falls Anti-Slavery Convention of 1848 where the mainly middle-class White delegates debated the motion for women’ suffrage” (p.76). Nevertheless, White women could plead for equal rights for women and could fight against the discriminatory law. African American women, though, were silenced in both their racial and gender groups. As Anna Julia Cooper noted, “The White woman could at least plead for her own emancipation: the black woman, doubly enslaved, could but suffer and struggle and be silent” (Loewenberg & Bogin, 1996). Although both sexism and racism silenced black women’s voices, many black feminists such as Sojourner Truth tried to make their voices loud and clear to challenge their subordinated status. Though Sojourner Truth was born into enslavement, she gave a speech in 1851 at the Women’s Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio to fight for both the abolition of slavery and for equal rights for women. Sojourner Truth’s speech was recounted in 1863 by an abolitionist and president of the Convention named Frances Gage (as cited in Brah & Phoenix, 2004).
Well, children, where there is so much racket, there must be something out of kilter, I think between the Negroes of the South and the women of the North—all talking about rights—the White men will be in a fix pretty soon. But what's all this talking about? That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody helps me any best place. And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm. I have plowed, I have planted and I have gathered into barns. And no man could head me. And ain't I a woman? I could work as much, and eat as much as any man—when I could get it—and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne children and seen most of them sold into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me. And ain't I a woman? ...

(p. 77)

Because the discriminatory treatment and experiences of African American women were complex and complicated far beyond sexism itself, the phrase ‘Ain’t I a woman?’ was a scream from the bottom of the heart of Black women. Hence, simplistically analyzing the sexualized experiences of women is highly unsatisfactory.

Similar to African American women, Asian American women experienced sexism, sexist stereotypes, gender-related exclusions, and discrimination on the basis of gender for decades. Historically, the United States purposefully denied Asian women from immigrating into the U.S. before the late 1800s (Hall, 2009). Espiritu (1996) explained that the United States believed that Asian women who immigrated into the U.S. with their husbands could be threats to the “efficiency and exploitability of the workforce” (p. 16). Although Asian women were allowed to immigrate to the U.S. during the late 1800s and early 1900s, many of them were prostitutes brought in to fulfill the sexual needs of Asian men (Hall, 2009). Thus, Asian women were stereotypically labeled as sexually permissive, hypersexual, and sexually subservient (Hall,
2009). These sexist stereotypes of Asian women were passed from generation to generation. Unlike White women, the manifestations of sexism towards Asian American women were not caused only by their female identities; rather, their racial identities contributed to their oppression as well. Racial discrimination and sexist stereotypes toward Asian American women interacted to construct their unique sexism, which was saliently distinguished from the sexism experienced by White women.

Asian American women, additionally, need to deal with conflicts between traditional and nontraditional cultures. Traditionally, Asian culture measures a woman’s value by using three obedience—“obedience to father, submission to the husband, and indulgence of the son” (Hall, 2009, p. 196). Fully obeying to three obedience was the way to make an Asian American woman a good daughter, wife, and mother. At the same time, Asian American women had to join in the wave of women liberation movements in the US to portray them as individual and independent. Therefore, as Hall (2009) stated, “[B]alancing the traditional with the nontraditional has become a major stress factor for Asian American women” (p. 196). Similar to Hmong youths, as previously noted in the racism section, who had to balance the traditional and American culture for the purpose of surviving in the US schools, Asian American women had to navigate their racial culture regarding gender aspect and American culture on gender as well. Both cultures could incur sexisms toward Asian American women. The manifestations of sexisms are different: one is racialized sexism; the other is gendered sexism. Although this section discussed sexism, sexism is never all about gendered activities, but also surrounded by other factors as well. Other examples abound, bell hooks (1994) recalled that working class African American people around Yale University greeted her on the street, but middle classed black people ignored here. Sexism in this regard was not only about gender but also about social class.
In addition to the impact of sexism on women, Levant (1996) noted that the sexism on men has begun to be acknowledged as well. For instance, existing gender stereotypes of Asian American men and the ideology of American hegemonic masculinity led to their denigration. Although Asian American men process male identity, they were still perceived as less masculine. Because within the dominant society context in the United States, as Lee (2005) depicted, there was a single hegemonic masculinity that men were measured. Ong (1999) further explained, “White masculinity established qualities of manliness and civilization itself” (p. 266). Therefore, Asian American men, who expressed the masculinity, still experienced sexism as they could not be admitted as “pure” man due to their non-Whiteness. A hegemonic masculine man, as Lee (2005) depicted, must be “heterosexual, able-bodied, physically fit, tall (5’10”-6’2”), independent, Christian, and economically successful” (p. 88). And most importantly, he must be White. With this being said, including Asian American men, even many White men cannot meet these standards set by hegemonic masculinity (Lei, 2001). Thus, men also inevitably encountered, faced, and experienced sexism as well. Furthermore, existing gender stereotypes of Asian American men portrayed all of them as quiet, submissive, shy, short, and the like. All these aforementioned traits did not equal to handsomeness, manliness, and masculinity. The problem was not about the gender, rather, it was about the race. As Feagin (2000) wrote, “White men have been the standard for male handsomeness, as well as masculinity and manly virtue” (p. 113). According to the before mentioned ideologies of and dominant perspectives on masculinity, men of color could only be regarded as subordinated masculinities, who had to rely on overt forms of aggression to maintain authority—White hegemonic masculinity (Lee, 2005). In short, in the discussion of sexism in this section, readers may recognize that the topic of racism and race are mentioned many times back and forth surrounding the sexism topic. It is
because that it is impossible to fully understand the meaning and significance of gender without recognizing the way that gender intersects with race and other identities (Guinier & Torres, 2002). Therefore, there is an assertion that the very core idea of the sexism is surrounded by other social oppressors, such as racism, as well.

“Ain’t I a woman?” captures the core idea of the importance of intersectionality. Gender issues cannot be fully understood without taking race and sexuality into account. Correspondingly, sexism cannot be isolated from other dimensions such as racism and heterosexism either. Therefore, employing intersectionality as the theoretical framework, research methodology, and method becomes necessary, appropriate, and scientific.

**Institutional Racism, Sexism, and Heterosexism Through Curricula**

School curricula was found to be another manifestation of institutional racism, sexism, and heterosexism. Curriculum, as a conceptual tool, plays various roles in schools and provides both overt and covert subjective meaning to our students’ daily lives. The overt curricula refer to content regularly taught and learned in U.S. schools; while the covert curricula are far more complex, complicated, and sometimes dangerous. Curricula, including its content, instructional materials, and teaching strategies, “are the basic tools for translating educational ideals, visions, goals, and policies into realities” (Gay, 1990, p. 57). These ideals, visions, and policies largely reflect the values of the privileged/favored/advantaged people who hold to mainstream ideology and ignore the values of the underserved/unprivileged/underrepresented people. For instance, AAFSM students are often underrepresented in social and educational contexts in the U.S. as well as in the content of their curricula. However, the image of heterosexual-middle-class-White-male is pervasive in American institutions, instructional materials, curriculum content, and pedagogies. Therefore, I argue that curriculum in the U.S. is never neutral because it places
heterosexual-middle-class-White-male in the foreground while marginalized disadvantaged students with minority identities are, consciously and subconsciously, pushed into the background. Many scholars have worked to articulate the ideology of unneutral education, knowledge, and curriculum. Paulo Freire claimed that “education, [along with curriculum], cannot be neutral or objective. It is not a value-free concept. It will, however, reflect the values and ideologies of the community. Specifically, it will reflect the values and ideologies of those in power” (also cited in Stevens et al., 2000, p. 4). In addition, Fiske (2011) stated:

But knowledge is never neutral, it never exists in an empiricist, objective relationship to the real. Knowledge is part of the social distribution of power. The discursive power to construct a commonsense reality that can be inserted into cultural and political life is central in the social relationship of power. The power of knowledge has to struggle to exert itself in two dimensions. The first is to control the “real,” to reduce reality to the knowable, which entails producing it as a discursive construct whose arbitrariness and inadequacy are disguised as far as possible. The second struggle is to have this discursively (and therefore socio-politically) constructed reality accepted as truth by those whose interests may not necessarily be served by accepting it. Discursive power involves a struggle both to construct a (sense of) reality and to circulate that reality a widely and smoothly as possible throughout society. (pp. 149-150)

This discursive power mentioned by Fiske (2011) (re)produces White supremacy, on the racial facet, in the racial hierarchy in U.S. schools through its curriculum and polarizes racial extremes between the racial majority and minorities. Gender and sexuality facets apply as well. Therefore, I argue that the lack of representation of AAFSM students’ experiences in the curriculum in U.S. institutions serves as a production of White supremacy, patriarchy, and
heteronormativity, which privilege White heterosexual male students and marginalize AAFSM students.

**Understanding Curriculum as Racial Text.** The monothematic “Eurocentric” character of curriculum is problematic because it causes misunderstandings of American identities. Pinar et al. (2014) stated, “The American identity is not exclusively or even primarily as European-American. Fundamentally, it is as African-American” (p. 328). Further, I argue that American identity is not merely constituted of European-American and/or African American; rather, it is also constituted of Asian American, Latinx-American, Mexican American, and other ethnicities of Americans. Just like the ideology of gender-fluid from perspectives of sexual minority theorists, racial identity is fluid as well. For instance, southern Europeans, Irish, and Jews were not considered as “White” before the American Civil War; Chinese were regarded as “Indian;” and Native Americans were forged into “Indians” dating back to the twentieth century (Omi & Winant, 1983). Like sexual identity, racial identity is fluid in the context of American history, society, and politics. Therefore, the monothematic “Eurocentric” character of school curriculum (re)produces the ideologies of Whiteness by privileging European-Americans at the centrality and Otherness by marginalizing “people of color” at the edge. To eliminate perpetuated prejudice and to emancipate minority identity, school curriculum should embed racial minorities’ histories and experiences into American history.

**Understanding Curriculum as Sexuality Text.** To understand curriculum as sexuality text is to investigate how curriculum plays a role in reinforcing mainstream discourses regarding heteronormativity and the gender-binary. Regarding the differences and similarities between males and females, the ideology of gender dichotomy has been present in education from the time of Rousseau in the mid-1700s (Robinson, 2015) to contemporary society (Tyack & Hansot,
1990). For centuries, this entrenched gender-dichotomy has provided powerful discourse, doctrine, and ideology in education that has oppressed and suppressed sexual minorities and self-identified gender-fluid students. The abiding gender-dichotomy discourse has stressed overwhelmingly male-centered content, the value of heteronormativity, and the ideology of LGBTQ-illness. Curriculum design has failed to account for the experiences of LGBTQ+ sexual minority students.

**Understanding Curriculum as Gender Text.** Curriculum is a tool of socialization, which means that it (re)produces and reinforces gender inequality in both education and society. The reconceptualization of curriculum regarding gender appeared in the twentieth century when “Feminist theory became integral to the reconceptualized curriculum field in the United States by the mid-1980s” (Pinar et al., 2014, p. 364). Gender inequality, as Erdol and Gözütok (2018) explained, is

the situation in which certain individuals cannot benefit from the rights and opportunities—due to their gender—that the individuals from the opposite gender can, or

the situation in which the provided opportunities fall short of meeting the individuals’ needs. (p. 118)

Statistically, according to UNESCO (2000), 85 million girls are out of school and deprived of educational opportunities, and women receive only one-tenth of the world’s income. Specifically, Pinar et al. (2014) pointed out that in U.S schools, curricula are mainly male centered and tend to (re)produce oppressions and discrimination on women. Tyack and Hansot (1990) agreed, stating that U.S. curricula was designed by male administrators and was overwhelmingly male centered in nineteenth century.
Understanding Curriculum as Re-Segregation Text. For more than 35 years, desegregation efforts in U.S. institutions have mixed White and African American students together, yet minority students still do not have an equal opportunity to learn from curricula that emphasizes not only society’s dominant values but also their own. As Gay (1990) stated, “Inequalities in curriculum options and instructional experiences—based on differences in race, gender, ethnicity, and class—are rampant across the full spectrum of grades, subjects, and schools through the U.S.” (p. 56). For instance, many schools lack LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum for sexual minority students, and the majority schools do not teach Asian American history as an integral part of American history. Even though some schools either employ LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum or Asian American history as an integral part of American history, I view it as a discrete set of improvement. For instance, in U.S. institutions, besides AAFSMs, there are also many other students with multiple identities, including LGBTQ students with disabilities, students of color with disabilities, students of color who live in poverty, and the like. Therefore, curriculum reconceptualization cannot be holistic without taking intersectionality into account; educational evolution and improvement cannot be authentic or comprehensive; and students with multiple marginalized identities cannot be emancipated in their school and/or social environments.

Intersection of Racism, Heterosexism, and Sexism

Overt (or conscious, intentional) and covert (or subconscious, unintentional) manifestations of oppressions based on race, gender, and sexual orientation prevailed in the literature on the intersection of racism, sexism, and heterosexism. It was found that most of this research explored the intersection of two dimensions. For instance, regarding the intersection of race and sexuality, Han et al. (2014) said that Asian American LGBTQ people experienced “high
levels of both racism in the gay community and homophobia in their ethnic communities” (p. 53). Icard (1986) also found that African American gay males struggled in developing a positive self-identity due to both homophobia in the Black community and racism in the gay community. In addition, Wooden et al. (1983) pointed out that Japanese American gays received little support and were not tolerated in their Japanese community and were viewed by White gay men as others. Regarding the intersection of race and gender, Crenshaw (1989) pointed out that African American women were marginalized by both Black and women communities. Regarding gender and sexual orientation, an interview from Hom (1994) related how lesbians were multiply oppressed. Hom (1994) interviewed a Japanese American who grew up in Hawaii with her lesbian daughter. When asked about the people’s attitudes towards them, she said, “They look down on those gays and lesbians, they make fun of them.... It seems as if it is an abnormal thing … They call her a tomboy because she’s very athletic and well built” (p. 40).

Very limited research has documented how all three factors of race, gender, and sexuality intersectionally affect individuals such as AAFSM. Thus, there remains a serious lack of exploration and intervention on these populations. In exploring minority experiences, it is crucial to take into account a person’s other marginalized identities because they may be “a minority within a minority” (Greene, 1997). For instance, acknowledging the experiences of LGBTQ students as sexual minorities may lead to a greater potential for exclusion in communities there the racial minority identity of LGBTQ people of color may be denied (Miville & Ferguson, 2006). Thus, it is crucial to simultaneously analyze the intersections of race, gender, and sexual orientation when exploring the experiences of the AAFSM.

In summary, employing intersectionality as the theoretical framework, methodology, and method for critical inquiry became necessary, important, and scientific. In other words,
intersectionality was utilized to create a new vision of emancipation rather than a new form of oppression.

**Identity**

The term ‘identity’ was rarely employed in the social sciences before the 1960s (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). It represents two rather different concepts—one is the individual’s identification; the other is the one’s social categorization (Gilleard & Higgs, 2020). In this chapter, the three categorical identities of race, gender, and sexual orientation were discussed. Many scholars have critiqued that because identities were inherently unstable and not fixed, they should be conceptualized as plural and dynamic, not singular and non-monocular. Speaking of race, for example, in 1910, the United States courts in *U.S. v. Balsara* determined that Asian Americans were Caucasians (Chang & Kwan, 2009). However, in 1923, the Supreme Court ruled that Asian Indians were not White because they were not originally from Northern or Western Europe (Takaki, 1998). Therefore, race is not merely an individual’s biological identity; rather, it is a “sociohistorical concept given meaning by social, economic, and political forces” (Chang & Kwan, 2009, p. 114).

Similarly, sexuality and gender have been criticized because they are not merely a person’s identity but also refer to one’s social location that constructs, shapes, and is shaped by the individual who lives it (Cuádraz & Uttal, 1999; Moore, 2012). For instance, Collins (2015) conceptualized sexuality as both a freestanding system of oppression and as part of each of the aforementioned distinctive systems of oppression. Further, Collins (2015) claimed that sexuality, as well as other identities, is viewed as an important social location, which joins the systems of oppression and binds the intersecting oppressions together. Collins (2006) also conceptualized
sexuality through the lens of the societal form of oppression—heterosexism, which is viewed as a freestanding system of power similar to sexism and racism.

Power among individuals, in the United States, is always connected with heteronormativity, White supremacy and masculinity have become social norms. This norm is also similarly described as the “mythical norm” by Lorde (1984):

In America, this norm is usually defined as White, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure. It is with this mythical norm that the trappings of power reside within this society. Those of us who stand outside that power often identify one way in which we are different, and we assume that to be the primary cause of all oppression, forgetting other distortions around difference, some of which we ourselves may be practicing. (p.554)

Thus, identities such as race, gender, and sexual orientation tie tightly with power relations. These power relations shape and construct individuals’ identities, which are never stable, monocular, fixed, and singular. In addition, identities are largely affected by institutional forces, interpersonal interactions, and individual understandings. Therefore, it is extremely important to understand what and how social forces construct individual’s identities. Furthermore, before policymakers and educators can design effective interventions, they must understand how these multiple social forces, such as racism, sexism, and heterosexism, co-construct an individual’s lived and educational experiences.

Summary

This chapter began with a the discussion of the theoretical framework which was followed by the rich literature review on how racism, sexism, and heterosexism affect individuals in the U.S. Overall, based upon analysis of the literature on the experiences of Asian
Americans, women, and sexual minorities, the following five points express a need for conducting research:

1. Racism (similar to sexism and heterosexism) affects all members of a community, not only those who are racial minorities (or women, or sexual minorities) but also relatively privileged people with somewhat marginalized identities.

2. Merely giving emphasis to one’s racial (or gender, sexuality) aspect is not sufficient to understand racial minorities’ (or women, or sexual minorities) experiences. For instance, the experiences of Asian American sexual minority women are distinct from the experiences of Asian American sexual minority males, and Asian American heterosexual male and females.

3. Simplistically analyzing sexualized experiences of women (or racialized experiences of Asian American, or heterosexualized experiences of LGBTQ) is highly unsatisfactory. Regarding AAFSM, they may experience racialized sexism and/or heterosexism, sexualized racism and/or heterosexism, or heterosexualized racism and/or sexism.

4. Emphasizing one identity over another is problematic because it can create a new oppression.

5. Employing intersectionality into my research as a theoretical tool, theoretical framework, methodology, and method for inquiry became scientific, important, and necessary.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

Chapter Three describes the qualitative research design employed to explore the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation as they relate to AAFSM college students’ lived and educational experiences in Midwestern universities in the U.S. Specifically, by better understanding their educational and lived experiences in schools, this study seeks to better understand the educational and lived experiences of AAFSM students by exploring, describing, and explaining how they make sense of their school lives while managing their intersectional identities. By exploring an individual’s lived and educational experiences, qualitative research, as a scientific tool, can best serve the goal of this study.

This study does not attempt to generalize AAFSM college students’ lived and educational experiences in the U.S., but rather to give emphasis to how participants in this study made sense of their lives on predominantly White campuses in Midwestern universities. The research employs Creswell’s (2009) ideas regarding the intent of qualitative research, which brings the particularity to the forefront rather than generalizability, as we know that individual’s lived and educational experiences are unique and distinctive. Specifically, each AAFSM college student’s experiences are unique and their understands on intersectional identities are drawn from their different experiences in schools. For instance, all AAFSM college students may encounter general social processes such as racialization, genderization, and sexualization, yet the individual makes sense of these general social processes in a unique, distinctive, and different way. Bogdan and Biklen (2016) stated that qualitative research is “more interested in deriving universal statements of general social processes than statements of commonality between similar settings…” (p. 36). Unlike quantitative research, which overlooks uniqueness, qualitative research emphasizes particularization rather than generalization.
Second, contextualization and meaning are the foci of qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). For example, I learned through personal experience in Japan in 2019 that it is respectful to hire women custodians to work in men’s sauna rooms in Japan whereas in America, matched genders serve in sauna rooms. The meaning of respecting women can be understood differently in different contexts and sites. Similarly, AAFSM college students’ lived and educational experiences vary in different contexts and sites. This study employed qualitative research because of it “lies in the particular description and themes developed in context of a specific site” (Creswell, 2009, p. 193). Creswell and Poth (2018) also stressed this unique value by stating “we cannot always separate what people say from the place where they say it” (p. 46). In this study, research participants, contextualized in predominantly White Midwestern universities in the United States, were asked to explore the subjective meanings of their experiences developed through their interactions within the world in which they live and study. This study sought to examine how institutions may influence the lived and educational experiences of AAFSM college students.

Last, qualitative research brings forth empowerment. Instead of utilizing our predetermined information from the literature or social conventions to speak for a certain group of people, a characteristic of qualitative research is that it can empower individuals to “share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 45). Empowerment is a strong characteristic of qualitative research. This study empowers AAFSM college students to share their lived and educational experiences and to hear their voices, exploring what they are experiencing and how they interpret their experiences.
This chapter is structured into the following sections: (1) research questions, (2) research design, (3) research participant description, (4) instruments, (5) data generation, (6) data analysis, (7) limitations of the study, (8) positionality and reflexivity, and (9) summary.

**Research Questions**

The research design was derived from the purpose of the study and its research questions. This study attempted to explore the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation as they relate to AAFSM college students lived and educational experiences. To better understand what AAFSM college students experience and how they interpret their educational experiences, this study developed several research questions to guide this exploration. The research questions were:

1) What is it like to be an Asian American female sexual minority in a predominately White Midwestern university?

2) How do race, gender, and sexual orientation intersectionally shape the lived and educational experiences of Asian American female sexual minority college students?

3) How do Asian American female sexual minority students with multiple identities navigate through previous and present schooling and what identity steers this navigation (e.g., race, gender, or sexual orientation)?

**Research Design**

For the purpose of capturing the complexity of the lives of AAFSM college students, this qualitative multi-cases study utilized intersectionality as the means for its *methodological approach, critical inquiry, and critical praxis*. *Intersectionality*, as a methodological approach, aimed to explore “the relationship among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formation” (McCall, 2005, p. 1771). *Intersectionality*, as a form of critical inquiry,
explored the lived experiences of AAFSM college students and critiqued the existing bodies of knowledge and college practices associated with social inequalities. *Intersectionality*, as a form of critical praxis, was intended to “explicitly challenge the status quo and aim to transform power relations” (Collins & Bilge, 2018, p. 33).

**Intersectionality as a Methodological Approach**

Intersectionality, as an emerging methodological and analytical tool, explores how multiply oppressed groups, for example AAFSMs, are politically, socially, and educationally relegated to the bottom of multiple social hierarchies (e.g., the gender hierarchy, the sexuality hierarchy, and the racial hierarchy). The purpose of using intersectionality as an analytical and methodological tool was to counter the disembodiment of AAFSMs from race, gender, and sexual orientation. As Crenshaw (1991) suggested, intersectionality as a methodological tool could disrupt the tendencies, which view gender and race as separable or exclusive. Further, Crenshaw (1991) evinced, “While the primary intersections that I explore here are between race and gender, the concept can and should be expanded by fostering in issues such as class, sexual orientation, age, and color” (p. 1245). Carastathis (2019) also suggested a need to reexamine and reinvigorate the concept of intersectionality via a more robust and deeper engagement. The application of intersectionality to this study expanded the dualistic dimensions of race and gender to three categorical identities, including race, gender, and sexual orientation.

But how can intersectionality be utilized as a methodological tool to examine the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation? McCall (2005) introduced three methodological approaches to explore the complexity of intersectionality in social life by utilizing analytical categories such as race, gender, and the like. They were *anti-categorical complexity, intra-categorical complexity, and inter-categorical complexity*. These three
approaches were further examined. This study employed an *intra-categorical complexity* approach to explore an invisible group—AAFSM—and uncover the complexity of their lived and educational experiences embedded in the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation.

One of the distinctive characteristics of intersectionality research is its complexity. McCall (2005) pointed out that intersectionality involves multiple dimensions of social life and categories. For the sake of comprehension and manageability, McCall (2005) categorized the methodological approach into three groups. The first approach was *anti-categorical complexity*, which criticized the usage of analytical categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, social class, religion, able- and disable-bodied, and the like. Many scholars who embraced this approach have aimed to emancipate the individuals from socialized categories, because normalized and socialized categories lead to oppressions, exclusions, and inequalities. As McCall (2005) argued, such categorization “[led] to demarcation, and demarcation to exclusion, and exclusion to inequality” (p. 1777). For instance, the category of sexuality was initially understood to include heterosexuality and homosexuality. However, many people who self-identify as bi-sexual, queer, transgendered, and questioning do not neatly fit into either heterosexuality or homosexuality. Therefore, categorizing individuals into two categories based on sexuality pushes bi-sexual, queer, transgendered, and questioning individuals to the margin or even out of either community.

Another example regarding gender was given by Fausto-Sterling (2008) who criticized the two-sex system and expanded it from two sexes (i.e., male and female) to five non-discrete-categories (i.e., male, female, merm, ferm, and herm). McCall (2005) supported Fausto-Sterling’s five categories as a way of “effectively challenging the singularity, separateness, and wholeness of a wide range of social categories” (p. 1778).
Another research study contributed to the understanding of the division of racial groups (Lee, 2009). Lee uncovered the subcategories of Asian American groups who distinguished themselves into Asian Americans, Asians, Korean Americans, and Asian new wavers. Thus, the analytical categories for race/ethnicity were deemed indefinable. Fuss (1991) attributed this indefiniteness to multiracialism. In addition to indefinite, the analytical categories for race/ethnicity are fluid. For instance, Asian American students, specifically Hmong American students, strategically used their racial identity differently when at school and in their homes because they saw contradictions between traditional and Americanized Hmong Americans. As Lee (2005) reported, “Traditional [Hmong American] and Americanized [Hmong American] youth defined themselves against each other” (p. 53). Traditional Hmong American students were warned to stay away from “bad kids” who were considered too Americanized, while the Americanized Hmong American youths saw maintaining the customs of traditionalized Hmong students as problematic in the United States. Therefore, Hmong Americans may choose to adopt one identity at home and the other one in school. In short, the anti-categorical complexity aimed to delegitimize and refuse analytical categories due to their indefiniteness, fluidity, and complexity.

Both the intra-categorical complexity and inter-categorical complexity methodological approaches adopt analytical categories in contrast to the anti-categorical complexity, which refuses it. The second approach, inter-categorical complexity, analyzes “the relationships of inequality among already constituted social groups…to explicate those relationships” (McCall, 2005, p. 1785). Its focus lies more on the multiple social groups within and across analytical categories. For instance, in this approach, researchers may incorporate a sexuality category as the analytical category; then, heterosexuality and homosexuality will be compared systematically.
Since the aim of this approach is to investigate the multiple groups within and across analytical categories, the other analytical categories also need to be incorporated, such as the race of Asian Americans. Then researchers need to analyze the multiple ethnic dimensions within that racial category—say, Chinese Americans, Korean Americans, and Asian new wavers. Thus, the number of groups expands to six by cross-classifying with sexuality category (i.e., heterosexual Chinese Americans, heterosexual Korean Americans, heterosexual Asian new wavers, homosexual Chinese Americans, homosexual Korean Americans, and homosexual Asian new wavers). In this respect, the comparative design within qualitative research best served this study. This study attempted to explore the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation; however, if this study employed inter-categorical complexity to explore AAFSM college students’ lived and educational experiences by being analyzed across race, gender, and sexuality and within analytical categories (i.e., Asian American, Korean American, Asian new wavers, women, men, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning individuals), then inter-categorical complexity would expand the number of groups to thirty. The study would be unmanageable, incomprehensible, and complicated.

For the sake of comprehension and manageability, this study employed the third approach—\textit{intra-categorical complexity}. Instead of centering the multiple dimensions across and within analytical categories, which would make the study more complex, less comprehensible, and less manageable, \textit{intra-categorical complexity} focused on a single dimension of each category. Specifically, this study limited the scope to one dimension of each category. One category could be Asian American from the racial category, women from gender, and sexual minority from sexuality. This is how complexity in this study was managed. In addition, another reason why the \textit{intra-categorical complexity} approach stood out was because this approach
focused on a single group located at the intersection of multiple categories. As McCall (2005) stated, the *intra-categorical complexity approach* emphasized a single group or cases for the purpose of revealing the complexity of lived experiences within such groups. McCall (2005) demonstrated how the *intra-categorical complexity approach* was appropriate because “case studies are in-depth studies of single group or culture or site” (p. 1782). Therefore, this study employed a multi-cases study as the methodology to explore the intersections of race, gender, and sexual orientation as they relate to AAFSM college students’ lived and educational experiences in Midwestern universities. This study also used one of the intersectionality approaches—*intra-categorical complexity*—to design the research. Throughout this research project, the concept of intersectionality was foundational throughout all phrases including participant selection, the design of the interview questions, and data analysis.

*Multi-Cases Studies*

This study employed the multi-cases studies design. There are many definitions of case studies (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2004). Simons’s (2009) definition, which has been widely used by many qualitative researchers such as Leavy (2015) and Denzin and Lincoln, (2018) states that:

Case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution or system in a “real-life” context. It is research based, inclusive of different methods and is evidence-led. (p.21)

The term “case” mentioned in the definition above raises the first question—what constitutes a case or cases? Denzin and Lincoln (2018) pointed out that what constituted a case or multiple cases was disputed. It could be a person, an institution, an event, an organization, and so forth. This research attempted to explore the lived and educational experiences of AAFSM college students, standing at the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation, in predominantly
White Midwestern universities. To this end, the cases were limited to persons who were AAFSM college students. It was also necessary to delimitate the scope of research locations and methodological approach. This delimitation, which is termed a bounded system, is also one of the features of case studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Simply put, this study limited the parameters of research participants to AAFSM college students and the research sites to predominantly White Midwestern universities. In this study, the cases are, specifically, multiple cases of being AAFSM college students in predominantly White Midwestern universities.

The next important consideration for this case study design involved how to frame the study. Leavy (2015) introduced four approaches to frame the study. Researchers could start with precise questions, foreshadowed issues, theories, or a program logic. The framework of this study started with a theory. As before mentioned, this study employed intersectionality as the theoretical framework to construct the research questions as well as the interview questions. Discussion about the framework of the interview questions occurred by taking intersectionality theoretical framework into account, as described in the Instruments section.

Flexibility is another strength of employing case study research. Leavy (2015) noted that the case study could be conducted either over years or in a few days, weeks, or months. For instance, the case study may spread over years when researchers want to explore how an individual is influenced by a certain educational system. The case study can also be carried out in a short period of time if an urgent need has emerged from a specific group of people. Educational experiences are tightly associated with AAFSM college students. There is an urgent need for stakeholders (i.e., school policymakers, students, teachers, staff, etc.) to recognize the educational experiences of these underrepresented groups who are standing at the intersection of
race, gender, and sexuality. Also, there is an urgent need to modify policies to ensure they are as comprehensive and inclusive as possible.

**Research Participants’ Description**

This study sought to explore AAFSM college students’ lived and educational experiences in Midwestern universities in the U.S. To this end, participation criteria was designed to identify individuals within the population that met specific criteria. To purposively sample the population, the criteria used for selection of participants included the following:

1) Individuals in the study were AAFSM college students. In other words, selected individuals held multiple marginalized identities—Asian American, female, and sexual minority.

2) Individuals who participated demonstrated strong interests in being included in the study.

3) Individuals who participated were currently enrolled in one of the predominantly White Midwestern universities.

The rationale for selecting the first criterion was to accurately reflect the perceptions of AAFSM college students about their lived and educational experiences on campus. Because this study gave emphasis to the intersectionality (both the intersection of identities and socialization practices) of participants, the intent was to allow students who held these intersectional identities to share their voices in authentic, valid, and scientific ways. Individuals’ voices could be powerful as they shared first-hand experiences associated with their intersectional identities.

The second selection criterion referenced the importance of the individual’s willingness and interest in participating in this study. Since this research involved some sensitive issues, such as sexuality, participants needed to be open and authentic in sharing their experiences. In
addition, this qualitative research design involved open-ended and in-depth interviews, for which participants needed to devote sufficient time. Therefore, the degree of willingness and interest in this study reflected the depth of the participant’s engagement in the research. The third criterion delimited the scope to include only college attending AAFSMs. This bounded system was the core feature of the case study, which limited the study on a specific group in a specific site.

The selected sample of students included between five and ten AAFSMs in Midwestern universities. One recruited participant was in a student symposium at Ball State University where this research topic was presented. After the presentation, an audience member, Lyric (all names used are pseudonyms) directly asked if she could participate in the research. It was encouraging that one participant had already shown strong interest in the study. This recruitment is typical of the participant-to-researcher method rather than the researcher-to-participant. The other participants in the study were recruited by using campus-wide email and contacting university organizations, such as the Asian American Association, women’s club, and the Spectrum (LGBTQ+) Organization. Snowball sampling was also used to recruit potential participants who were not active in either the LGBTQ community, the Asian American community, or a women’s community on campus. In snowball sampling, research participants refer other AAFSM college students who they know.

Eventually, nine AAFSM students from midwestern universities in the U.S were recruited. Three self-identified as female bisexual Chinese American; two participants identified themselves as female bisexual Filipino Americans; one believed she was a gender fluid demi-homosexual Chinese American; the other three self-identified as female queer Filipino American, gender fluid bisexual Asian American, and non-binary lesbian Korean American.
Instruments

This research study specifically attempted to explore AAFSM college students’ lived experiences and by collecting data to understand how race, gender, and sexual orientation intertwine with one another. To this end, in-depth interviews and open-ended interview questions were appropriate for capturing detailed, holistic, and comprehensive descriptions of AAFSM college students’ educational experiences regarding race, gender, and sexual orientation from an intersectional perspective. In order to measure the effectiveness of the interview protocol, clarity of wording, convenience of the interview setting, length of interviews, and adequacy of answers, a pilot study was conducted with an Asian American gay man who had graduated from a Midwestern university (Ball State University). To achieve these goals, the participant from the pilot study were asked after the interview to answer several questions in order to make any needed modifications or adjustments. The questions included:

1. Was the interview too long, causing you to lose your patience?
2. Were the interview questions and wordings clear enough for you?
3. Were the interview questions understandable or too scholarly to understand?
4. Did some of the interview questions need to be omitted or paraphrased?
5. Were there additional questions that I should have asked but didn’t?
6. Was the interview environment convenient to you, or do you have any better places to suggest?
7. Did you have any other concerns, suggestions, or questions you wanted to share with me in order to make my interview questions and interviews more effective?

After the responses were collected from this pilot study, some appropriate changes were made in the interview protocol in order to clarify the interview questions and improve the efficiency of
the interviews. For example, to ensure the participants did not lose interest, the interview time was limited to range from 45 to 90 minutes.

In addition to adjusting the time duration of the interview, the interview questions themselves needed to be revised. In the pilot study, participants were asked questions with regards to race and sexual orientation separately, without directly mentioning intersectionality. For instance, one question asked was “how do you perceive your racial identity in schools?” and “how do you perceive your sexual identity in schools?” It was determined the pilot study questions did not best serve the intersectionality research due to the separateness of race and sexuality in the questions. Therefore, during the process of revising the interview questions, emphasis was placed on intersectionality. As mentioned before, intersectionality needs to be emphasized throughout the entire research, not only from the outset but also in every phrase such as design of the interview questions. Secondly, ideas which Matsuda (1991) had called “ask the other questions” and what Windsong (2016) had suggested as incorporating intersectionality directly into the interview questions were implemented. The idea of “ask the other question” is from a quote in Matsuda’s (1991) research on intersectionality:

The way I try to understand the interconnection of all forms of subordination is through a method I call ‘ask the other question.’ When I see something that looks racist, I ask, ‘Where is the patriarchy in this?’ When I see something that looks sexist, I ask, ‘Where is the heterosexism in this?’ When I see something that looks homophobic, I ask, ‘Where are the class interests in this?’ (p. 1189)

The “ask the other question” in the quotation above signals that the interview questions need to incorporate intersectionality directly and precisely. For instance, the interview questions in this study may be constructed as “how do you describe your educational experiences with regard to
race and sexuality as a woman?” Windsong (2016) suggested researchers “craft interview questions that specifically incorporated intersectionality” (p. 141). Windsong (2016) argued that interview questions regarding race and gender asked separately did not encourage participants to share their perspectives from an intersectionality view. Simply put, the design directly mentions the theme intersectionality in the interviews in order to guide participants to share their lived experiences from an intersectional perspective.

Overall, the most effective method to capture AAFSM college students’ educational experience at the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation was to employ in-depth interviews with open-ended questions. As Weiss (1994) stated, “In-depth interviews are well suited for developing detailed and holistic descriptions, integrating multiple perspectives, and describing process” (also cited in Windsong, 2016, p. 140). Therefore, the in-depth interview was a valid measure of AAFSMs’ educational experiences.

**Data Generation**

Creswell and Poth (2018) viewed data collection as a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering rich information to address research questions. To this end, this study was designed to use a qualitative data collection method. These methods included dynamic and complex in-depth interviews and in-field observations as the primary means of data collection. Specifically, according to Creswell and Poth (2018), interviews can range from one-on-one in person interactions to group interactions. In this study, data were collected by interviewing AAFSM college students one-by-one. Each interview ranged from one to two hours. In the interviews, the participants were asked open-ended interview questions to collect narrative data. During the data collection processes, this researcher paid strict attention to the *intra-categorical complexity* by asking questions about the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation.
aligning with racism, sexism, and heterosexism. Instead of asking race-related, gender-related, and sexuality-related questions separately, giving emphasis to single-axis, this data collection process encouraged participants to think about race, gender, and sexuality in line with the intersection of racial, sexual, and gendered social practices simultaneously. In addition, this research employed Crenshaw’s (1991) data collection strategy, which asked participants to think about their lived experiences on campus from structural, representational, and political aspects.

To this end, nine AAFSM college students were interviewed until saturation of information was reached. The initial interviews were followed by at least one phone or face-to-face follow up to ask for any further clarification or explanation. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed carefully and precisely in order to generate data, code, cluster codes into themes, and summarize findings. All recordings of the interviews were secured in my personal laptop with passcode access to protect the confidentiality of my respondents. This personal laptop was locked in a secure location when not in use. All recordings of the interviews will be deleted and transcripts will be shredded after five years.

**Interview Methods for Intersectionality Studies**

Gubrium and Holstein (2001) noted various forms of interview methods that could be utilized to gain insight into people’s experiences. For instance, interviews could take place in either one-on-one or a focus group setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016, Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Qu & Dumay, 2011). The choice of which method to employ mainly depends on the sensitivity of research topics. Thus, a focus group interview may not be encouraged for studying sensitive topics such as sexuality. Since this study explored the topic of sexual preference, which participants might be reluctant to discuss in public, the interviews were
designed to be one-on-one in a safe space for them to share their experiences, including but not limited to coming out experiences.

In addition, interviews can be designed to be unstructured, semi-structured, or structured. Specifically, Conrad and Schober (2008) delineated that the structured interview was conducted by researchers who “read questions exactly as worded to every respondent and are trained never to provide information beyond what is scripted in the questionnaire” (p. 173). Brinkmann (2018) concurred viewing structured interviews as “passive recordings of people’s opinions and attitudes, and they often reveal more about that cultural conventions of how to answer questions than about the conversational production of social life itself” (p. 579). On the other end of the continuum was the unstructured interview which highlighted “the most important influences, experiences, circumstances, issues, themes, and lessons of a lifetime” (Atkinson, 2002, p. 125). The data can only be generated in the course of giving full voices to interviewees. In this type of interviews, interviewer’s main role is to listen and facilitate the telling of a story rather than devising specific questions (Brinkmann, 2018). However, a common critique of both structured or unstructured interviews is that it is impossible to avoid structure in an unstructured interview, and vice versa. Therefore, the semi-structured interview tends to be most common in the human and social science fields (Brinkmann, 2018). The semi-structured interview can give relatively full voices to participants who can naturally produce knowledge from an unrestricted dialogic and can guide conversation between interviewees and interviewers back on track to keep the focus on the research questions.

Having reviewed Roulston’s (2010) four interview forms and Alvesson and Deetz’s (2000) three methodological approaches, I examined five interview forms on intersectionality research — neopositivist, localist, romanticist, constructionism, and postmodernism. The
neopositivist attempts to uncover “a context-free truth about the reality” (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p.16). This approach, like the structured interview, may lead research participants to produce superficial and uncritical responses. The romanticist seeks to explore deeper and genuine experienced social realities of the interviewees, which aligns with the unstructured interview. The predominant goal of this approach is to accomplish “deeper, fuller conceptualizations of those aspects of our subjects’ lives we are most interested in understanding” (Miller and Glassner, 1997, p. 103). This approach tends to treat participants as equals by emphasizing the development of rapport with the interviewees. As Fontana and Frey (1994) wrote:

This makes the interview more honest, morally sound, and reliable, because it treats the respondent as an equal, allows him or her to express personal feelings, and therefore presents a more “realistic” picture that can be uncovered using traditional interview methods. (p. 371)

Romanticists’ epistemological position is to treat research participants as active knowledge-producing individuals rather than as merely a vessel of answers.

The third approach is localism, which is aimed at socially contextualizing the individual’s lived experiences for the purpose of uncovering its situational meanings (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000). Constructivists share similar epistemological standpoints with localism by also focusing on “the situational practice of interviewing, and there is a disbelief in conceptions of data as stable nuggets to be mined by the interviewer” (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p. 586). However, constructivists interpret the interview as a social practice rather than a research instrument because it emphasizes the “how” instead of the “what” (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, pp. 586-587). Finally, postmodernism aims to bring new kinds of people and worlds into being (Denzin, 2001).
Bellah et al. (1985) indicated that postmodernists actively practiced interviews to capture new understandings of social values through the conversations between interviewees and interviewers where the roles between interviewees and interviewers were blurred, but the collaborative nature of the interviews was highlighted (Borer & Fontana, 2012).

**Figure 1**

*Dynamicity and Complexity (D&C) Model*

![Dynamicity and Complexity (D&C) Model](image)

Drawing on Roulston’s (2010) four interview forms and Alvesson and Deetz’s (2000) three methodological approaches while taking into account the complexity of intersectionality research, I constantly reflected on the process of interviewing rather than utilizing the interview as a mere tool. In order to ensure interviews were as effective as possible, the intersectionality interview method should move from one dimension to a more complex model, which I called the Dynamicity and Complexity (D&C) model (see Figure 1 above). You may take the neopositivist’s epistemological position to design a structured one-on-one interview or conduct an unstructured focus group interview from a romanticist’s standpoint. You may also conduct a
one-on-one semi-structured interview from the perspective of localism, constructionism, or postmodernism. But whatever you choose, it should be in line with your research purpose and focus. To ensure that I could arrive at a meaningful understanding, I began each interview with questions from Table 1 (see below). In the interviews, we talked about their understandings of the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality.

**Table 1**

*Dynamic roles of PI in an interview*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview questions</th>
<th>Epistemological positions and methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is it like to be an Asian American female sexual minority on campus in your educational institution or in the U.S. in general?</td>
<td>Romanticism, Unstructured, One-on-One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you rank your three identities? Like your race, gender, and sexual orientation?</td>
<td>Neopositivism, Structured, One-on-One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did cause you to make this ranking decision? Would this ranking change?</td>
<td>Localism/Constructionism, Semi-structured, One-on-One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would it be if in a different situation?</td>
<td>One-on-One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What voices do you want universities to hear in order to make a change?</td>
<td>Postmodernism, Unstructured, One-on-One</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My intention throughout the entire interview was to dynamically adapt my epistemological positions and interview structures. To capture rich narratives with thick descriptions of lived and educational experiences, I used the unstructured interview form to open
the conversation with the broad question, “What is it like to be an AAFSM on campus in your educational institution or in the U.S. in general?” Meanwhile, I positioned myself in the standpoint of romanticists to remain a listener rather than a participant in this participant/listener continuum. In this way, interviewees had a greater space to chronologically share their most memorable experiences ranging as far back as elementary school to their most recent schooling. This open space also allowed them to include influences from family, peers, social media, the society, or their community. Then I purposefully changed my role as an interviewer to ensure dynamicity. I started from the neopositivist perspective with a relatively structured question, “do you rank your three identities—race, gender, and sexual orientation?” to capture a superficial yes or no answer regarding whether the individual’s multiple identities were ranked. Nine participants from the study said yes. Then, I switched to a semi-structured interview question from a constructivism/localism epistemology to focus attention on how and why they made their ranking. Thus, my attention was switched from simply getting a yes or no response to wanting to capture more critical responses on how social practices had impacted their ranking. More importantly, I purposefully changed my position to postmodernism because I aimed to capture an emerging theme—a new understanding of social value—from my conversation with the research participant. A new understanding of social value emerged from my study that promoted an intersectional inclusion on campus that could eliminate intersectional marginalization for students with multiple underrepresented identities.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is very challenging for most qualitative researchers. As Creswell and Poth asserted, “Analyzing text and multiple other forms of data presents a challenging task for qualitative researchers” (p. 181). Data analysis includes several processes, such as organizing the
data, conducting a preliminary read-through of the database, coding the organizing themes, representing the data, and forming an interpretation of them. In the case study, Leavy (2015) introduced two distinct analyses—a formal inductive process and a more intuitive process. Both has three stages to generate findings: initial sense making, identification of themes, and examination of patterns and relationship between them (p. 464). This study takes a formal analytic approach to analyze the data through two main steps: breaking it down into segments or datasets, and exploring the data for themes, patterns, and possible propositions (Leavy, 2015).

In the data analysis stage, I utilized the qualitative data analysis application—MAXQDA 2020—to work on data analysis process. In the MAXQDA 2020 application, I employed Johnny Saldaña’s (2015) coding types to analyze data. The coding types employed were process coding, narrative coding, dramaturgical coding, causation coding, value coding, domain and taxonomic coding, emotion coding, versus coding, concept coding, initial coding, in vivo coding, descriptive coding, subcoding, magnitude coding, and attribute coding. By using these coding types, I generated 1,089 code segments during the first coding cycle. In the second coding cycle, themes were emerged based on these one thousand and eighty-nine code segments.

To interpret the data as accurately as possible and to ensure the trustworthiness of analysis, triangulation needs to be carefully taken into consideration. Bogdan and Biklen (2016) delineated a vivid example to explain how triangulation increased trustworthiness. If you planned to take a train, you might get confident and believe that you could catch up to the train because you got information from a friend who knows the exact arrival time at a certain station. But the friend might have been inaccurate. Your confidence would raise if you could get the train schedule in addition to the information from the friend. The train could also get delayed due to weather or other events. So, if you could confirm the information from local mediums in addition
to the train schedule and the friend’s information, then you would have no doubt that you could catch up the train. Denzin discussed investigator triangulation, which employs different people to control or correct any subjective bias in this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). An example is member checking, which asks participants from the research to review the themes, findings, and conclusions to verify the interpretations are accurate and unbiased. In addition to research participants, a dissertation committee chairperson will review the themes to correct any possible subjective bias.

In addition to investigator triangulation, a second type of triangulation has been introduced by Denzin. That is methodological triangulation. This requires reviewing the data several times, each time choosing a different methodological lens from which to analyze the data. For instance, the phenomenological methodological approach may be used to check the essence. Last but not least, this multi-cases-study had data triangulation embedded in it. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) delineated that “data triangulation refers to the combination of different data sources that are examined at different times, places, and persons” (p. 446). This study collected data in multiple places at different times with different individuals. During the data analysis process, each of the cases was examined independently to triangulate the data and ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

Limitations of the Study

The nature of intersectionality is complex, simultaneous, and multidimensional. This section discusses the limitations from a methodological perspective. First, one must delineate the main weakness of intersectionality research and suggest how to apply intersectionality in exploring the complexity of social phenomena, social practices, and identity. McCall (2005) described three distinct intersectional methodologies: anti-categorical complexity, inter-
categorical complexity, and intra-categorical complexity. This study employed intra-categorical complexity to make the research manageable. Specifically, this study began with an exploration of how race (racialization), gender (gendering process), and sexual orientation (sexualization) intersect with one another by examining AAFSM college students’ educational experiences. However, the subcategories do not take into account the goal of reducing complexity to make the research manageable. For instance, Lee (2009) categorized Asian Americans into different subgroups, such as Asian Americans, Asians, Korean Americans, and Asian new wavers. The intersection of subgroups within a category, such as Chinese American female sexual minorities, or Asian new wavers female sexual minorities, needs to be explored in future studies when employing intersectionality.

Another limitation of this research is the interview protocol design. In order to capture unique perspectives from an intersectional point of view, the term intersectionality was addressed directly on the interview question list and was emphasized many times during the in-depth interviews. However, the theme of intersectionality might not have naturally emerged from the participants without the researcher’s specific prompting and guiding the participants toward this concept. The role of researcher is to encourage participants to focus on the specific facet of the study through the discussion of the topic. In future studies, researchers should use intersectionality as a departure rather than arrival. Rather than settling down with intersectionality, the researcher should engage with its anticipatory promise.

**Positionality and Reflexivity**

In the intersectionality research, understanding the researcher’s positioning at the outset is extremely important because it can help bracket the researcher’s pre-assumptions, biases, and prejudices. The extent to which researchers can control their pre-assumptions, biases, and
prejudices is still debated, though having the idea of positionality in mind at the outset of inquiry can help. One of the strategies to situate yourself at the outset of the research is to think about your own identities. For instance, I am an Asian, male, heterosexual, English as a second language learner, middle-class, able-bodied… The list of identities can be endless because it will never be complete. Therefore, Davis (2014) argued that “such a list does not do much work and may, ironically, even end up becoming an excuse for not doing the necessary analysis of situating one’s self” (p. 20). Further, Davis (2014) suggested that researchers consider how their specific location shapes or influences them and their research instead of merely including an endless list of multiple identities. To this end, I developed a narrative about how my specific location influenced my research as well as the theoretical framework employed. This strategy was derived from Perry’s (2001) research. Pamela Perry, a researcher of critical Whiteness studies, discussed the construction of cultureless identities. Specifically, Perry (2001) suggested that Whites asserted racial superiority because they had no culture. This culturelessness can (re)produce and reinforce racial superiority. As Perry stated, “Culturelessness can serve, even if unintentionally, as a measure of White racial superiority” (p. 59). Whiteness, as an advantaged identity, often times produces “feelings of cultural lack among White students” (p. 57).

Personally, as a male, middle-class, heterosexual, and able-bodied person, I never have to consider these privileges. However, I see disadvantages when I review my other identities such as Asian and recall how my sexual orientation is perceived due to my physical appearance and Asian culture.

Based on Davis’s (2014) suggestion, here is the narrative that I developed of how my location shapes my thinking on intersectionality. In 2018, I had a chance to visit Doha Qatar. I was walking through an historical landmark called the Souq Waqif. It is basically a market.
unexpectedly heard a group of young kids yelled at me “gay” and “chink.” At that moment, I felt extremely insulted because it was the first time I had been harassed verbally and labeled with these discriminatory slurs. I pretended that I did not hear those discriminatory slurs from the young kids and kept walking. Suddenly, I realized that I was different. I was different because of my overt racial identity and covert heterosexual identity. I was trying to figure out why these kids called me “chink” and “gay” despite knowing nothing about me. They discriminated against me on the basis of race because of my distinct racial identity, which is an Asian face. They discriminated against me on the basis of sexuality because of my long hair, less masculinity, and a man bag that I carried with me in spite of my heterosexual identity. I had lived with my identities for 24 years in China before I came to the United States in 2013, and I continued to carry these identities for another 5 years living in the U.S. Ironically, I had never encountered discrimination due to my Asian and non-masculinity identities. But this aforementioned unpleasant experience distinctly aroused the connections between my lived experience and “unworthy identities” that I recalled from Goffman’s (1963) depiction. He stated,

In an important sense there is only one complete unblushing male in America: a young, married, White, urban, northern, heterosexual, Protestant, father, of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight, and height, and a recent record in sports…Any male who fails to qualify in any one of these ways is likely to view himself—during moments at least—as unworthy, incomplete, and inferior. (p. 128)

Goffman’s (1963) description prompted me to acknowledge my “unworthy, incomplete, and inferior” identities in both racial and sexuality aspects. Despite my race and less masculine identities not perfectly fitting into the abovementioned stereotyped male group, I realized that I also carried at least one advantaged identity—male—with me. Nevertheless, I have barely
acknowledged my privilege as a male person due to my other two marginalized identities. I realized that my racial, gender, and sexual orientation identities are not separate from one another; instead, they are co-influenced by one another. As an Asian, heterosexual with less masculinity, and male person, I always consider how race, gender, and sexuality as the intersecting identities affect my lived experiences. Therefore, this personal experience was the catalyst that stimulated my exploration of intersectionality—the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation. My understandings on how race, gender, and sexual orientation intersect with one another were limited and partial: this caused me to wonder what AAFSM college students’ educational experiences looked like. As an Asian, male, and heterosexual person, with one advantaged but two disadvantage identities, I cannot authentically understand how race, gender, and sexual orientation intersectionally shape and influence people’s school experiences. My positioning motivated me to explore AAFSM college students’ educational experiences in Midwestern universities.

In addition to situating the self, it is also crucial to situate the self in relation to your research participant groups. According to Milner’s (2007) framework on positionality, searching for the self in relation to others can bring forth a researcher’s awareness regarding “seen, unseen, and unforeseen dangers in the practices of [researchers’] inquiry” (pp. 394-395). A researcher’s epistemological positions are typically derived from their experiences, subjective opinions, dogmatic beliefs, and popular ideas, which may pave a path for misinterpretations and misrepresentations of people. For example, consider two different interpretations of the same classroom intersection. I taught a college level course at a Midwestern university. At the end of the semester, I assigned a D letter grade to a student in my class, which prompted a grade appeal request by the student. Teachers and students in the same classroom may interpret the classroom
situation in a very different way or sometimes in an opposite way. I was required to share my perspectives from my position to a third party:

The student did not actively participate in the classroom activities, such as group discussion, pairs work discussion, and so forth. One of the requirements of my course was to evaluate students’ critical thinking skills. I could not evaluate this student’s professional identity based on the student’s passive in-class participation. I could not assign this student any grade letter above a D based on the student’s overall academic performance.

The student might disagree with the teacher’s understanding and epistemological position. The student was interviewed and shared:

The reason I did not actively participate in class was because of my personality. I am an introverted person. I chose music for my major for my undergraduate studies was because I preferred to use music to express myself.

Obviously, the interpretations based on the teacher’s and the student’s epistemological positions were different. Similarly, in this research study, the researcher’s epistemological position and understandings were different from the participants. As the researcher leads the interviews in the study, sometimes their interests and voices may overshadow the interests and voices of the participants. Therefore, it is incredibly important to take the multiple roles, identities, and positions of researchers and participants into account when conducting qualitative research (Milner, 2007).

Last, according to Milner’s (2007) framework on positionality, it is important to take one’s self-society relationship into consideration in addition to situating the self and the self in relation to others. One should acknowledge how societal forces have impacted the racialized,
gendered, and sexualized identities of the researcher and the participants. From an intersectionality perspective, issues of race, gender, and sexuality need to be situated in a broader context. In other words, intersectionality needs to drive social justice discussion from the micro-to the macro-level. As Bowleg (2012) addressed:

Intersectionality is a theoretical framework for understanding how multiple social identities such as race, gender, sexual orientation, SES [socioeconomic status], and disability intersect at the micro level of individual experience to reflect interlocking systems of privilege and oppression (i.e., racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism) at the macro social-structural level. (p. 1267)

Summary

Chapter Three began with a discussion of the purpose of the study and the research questions to determine the most effective and appropriate research methods to employ in this study. In accordance with the theoretical theme intersectionality, I delineated the specific strategies used to design the interview questions and to collect and analyze the data. First, this study employed McCall’s (2005) intra-categorical complexity methodology as the research design, which provisionally adopted analytical categories to explore how AAFSMs perceived them. Second, keeping the core theme of intersectionality in mind, I constructed in-depth interviews to explore the educational experiences of AAFSMs. Finally, I discussed the limitations of this research study and suggested how these limitations might be overcome in future studies. In Chapter Four, the results of the research study are presented.
SECTION II

In Section II, findings, themes, discussions, and suggestions for future research are presented. The first three chapters were organized to highlight the concept of intersectionalism. In this section, Chapter Four presents the research findings that demonstrated how my participants who are AAFSM students experienced intersectional objectifications, including racial objectification, gendered objectification, and sexual objectification. Chapter Five presents how participants intersectionally internalized racism, sexism, and heterosexism as accepted social behaviors and how society’s institutions have internalized these -isms as norms. The manifestations of intersectional internalizations reported by participants included racial stereotypes, Whitenization, stereotypical gender roles, gender norms, parental influences, and institutional influences. In Chapter Six, AAFSM students were found to experience intersectional blindness, which consequently affected their understandings of what it means to be Asian, women, and LGBTQ. Furthermore, this phenomenon was best categorized as intersectional post-racism, -(hetero)sexism. Discussions and Suggestions are presented in Chapter Seven and Eight.
CHAPTER FOUR: INTERSECTIONAL OBJECTIFICATIONS

It's a very interesting time, cause in the United States, It's, it's just the minority group stepped on top of minority group on another minority group because you know I'm not White. I'm not heterosexual. And I'm not a man. And so, they just kind of get put together. And sometimes I think what kind of mean joke was this? Like who gave me all of these intersecting minority identities and then put me in a country where I'm not a majority? (Lyric, Pos. 16)

This was the response I captured from a bi Asian American woman when I asked her what it was like to be an AAFSM in a predominantly White university in the U.S. Others were interviewed with the same interview question, and the most frequently cited experiences that research participants disclosed might be best categorized as intersectional exclusions. These intersectional exclusions frustrated my participants who were AAFSM college students, who believed intersectional exclusions were directly related to intersectionalitism. The intersectionalitism includes intersectional objectifications, intersectional internalizations, intersectional blindness, and intersectional post-racism, -(hetero)sexism. In this chapter, intersectional objectifications were well elaborated as follows.

Reported Experiences of Intersectional Objectifications

The research participants reported that, as AAFSMs, they were intersectionally objectified. These intersectional objectifications manifested through intersectional racialization, genderization, and sexualization. “Being an Asian queer woman is like…It's just a lot of them are with like how like guys sexualizing, racializing and stuff…,” one participant noted (Arden, Pos. 46). Other participants agreed that these sexualizing, racializing, and genderizing processes intersected to objectify them as hypersexual, model minority, and submissive. In response to
recurrent experiences of objectifications, participants also elaborated that they had to negatively adopt intersectional objectifications from others’ stereotypes and adapt how society, institutions, and people internalized such stereotypical objectifications as normalcy.

**Constructed Objectifications**

Socially, as illustrated in Chapter Two, racial minorities were at a disadvantaged status and perceived as inferior due to the racial prejudice and/or ethnocentrism (Jones, 1972; Tinsey-Jones, 2001). Historically, Asian Americans experienced microaggressions through discriminatory slurs such as yellow peril, Model Minority (Lee & Hong, 2020), forever/perpetual foreigners, honorary Whites (Tuan, 1998), and Otherness/Others (Wooden et al., 1983). Culturally, Asian Americans’ home cultures were seen as problematic (Lee, 2005). Living in a sociohistorical and sociocultural environment, AAFSM students were repeatedly objectified due to their race, gender, and sexual orientation. Although they have some degree of shared social experiences with women of color, LGBTQ women, LGBTQ of color, etc., AAFSM students’ experiences on objectifications were distinctive.

**Racially Constructed Objectification.** Sociohistorically, Asian Americans were perceived to be the Model Minority. This racial stereotype objectified all Asian Americans as super smart, which contributed to the devaluation of an AAFSM’s individuality. One participant explained,

> In my case, the racism faced as someone who's Asian, even though I was raised by White people. That doesn't matter because I don't look White. People are going to look at me and that's a lot of what racism is. It's on the surface like…they don't see my personality. They don't see who I am, what I do. All they see is my face and the fact that it doesn't look like theirs. I really think it's a matter of don't judge the book by its cover,
kind of, I don't know if you've heard that phrase before. And in terms of Asians and especially the eastern Chinese people, it's very much the idea of like a positive stereotype. They could like saying all Asians are good at math…it is still racist and it's still bad. Because it's a person making a generalization about an entire group of people that doesn't necessarily apply to all of them. It takes away from our individuality as people, just because they're saying something nice doesn't mean it isn't still bad. (Lyric, Pos. 114)

Socioculturally, many participants reported that they confronted cultural rejection and marginalization. For instance, several participants shared that their cultures were pervasively perceived as exotic by White Americans although they were adopted and raised by a White family with American culture. Asian Americans were objectified (e.g., Asian Americans and their cultures are exotic) based on their “cover” regardless of whether they were adopted and raised by a White family or not. Lyric indicated that racially constructed objectification occurred through White’s “generalization,” devaluation on Asian Americans’ “individuality,” and judgement “by its cover” (Lyric, Pos. 114). Another female bisexual Filipino American further explained, “The way I can explain it is the way I see racist people are very egocentric and just are too proud in their own culture and race” (Blake, Pos. 146).

Another racially constructed objectification was captured in an interview with a Filipino American female bisexual master student who felt devalued due to White’s “generalization.” She narrated,

Um I think I mean no hate against like anyone who's Chinese, Japanese, Korean, or any of those other things. But it made me feel invisible. Like it made me feel like the Philippines doesn't really exist...So, it very much felt like I…our ethnicity doesn't really
exist. And it always made me feel like I was the same as everyone else, which isn't bad.

(Merritt, Pos. 18)

Each of the participants I interviewed reported that they were always objectified merely as Asians regardless of other facets such as family background. For instance, one participant preferred to be called American Asians, who had no connections with the Asian side, because she was adopted and raised in a White household; whereas some preferred to be perceived as Asians because they were highly bounded with their home culture. Others preferred to be perceived as either Chinese, Korean, or Filipino due to their distinctive experiences. Asian Americans are not a broad homogenous group; instead, they have multiple subgroups.

Merritt added that racial objectifications also were produced by White’s preferences. As Merritt noted,

Like…Like I said, there's no hate against like Chinese, Japanese, Korean folks. But we're very different in terms of culture. And I think when people in particular assume that I'm Japanese or Korean, they wanna talk about J-pop or K-pop or K-dramas and things that are about like cultural element. And when they assume that I'm Chinese, they want to comment on like, the um political climate over there. Like, I'm not that I'm not actually that familiar. I don't I'm not Chinese. Or they want me to speak Chinese with them because they speak Mandarin or something like, I don't know any of this. Like, please leave me alone. I'm Filipino. I can barely even speak my own language. Um so I think when they ask me, in particular in my any of those, um was it like ethnicities? They want to connect with me because of those ethnicities. (Merritt, Pos. 18)

Thus, participants reported another manifestation of racial objectification was White’s preferences. In some cases, my participants who were AAFSMs were objectified as Chinese due
to White’s preferences on politics or language; whereas they were objectified as Korean or Japanese merely based on White’s preferences on cultures. People and society would get disappointed if they, as AAFSMs, did not fit into these objectifications. Merritt said, “And when they found out I'm not, they get disappointed. Like it's not my fault. You assumed. I'm sorry to disappoint you” (Merritt, Pos. 18). These mis-objectifications reflected the racially constructed objectifications my AAFSM participants experienced in their educational and everyday lives.

Racially constructed objectifications, as indicated above, delivered messages to my AAFSM participants that Asianness was devalued, exotic, and marginalized. However, these racial-related objectifications did not fully account for my AAFSM’s objectified experiences because they also encountered sexual and gendered objectification.

**Sexually Constructed Objectifications.** Based on analysis of the data, the theme emerged that Asian American women were stereotypically labeled as hypersexual. Each of the participants indicated that they did not like this hypersexual label because “[n]obody fits into a specific box or specific label” (Charlie, Pos. 16). The participants disclosed feelings that might best be characterized as sexually constructed objectifications—people and society mis-objectified Asian American women as only hypersexual. One Chinese American female sexual minority noted that these gendered and sexual objectifications misrepresented who she was. The explanation was best captured in the following narrative offered by this participant,

I am demi-panromantic, demi-homosexual…So demi means demi as a prefix is under the asexual and aromatic umbrella. So that means that although I am panromantic, so my romantic spectrum is I'm pan romantic. So, I…I…I am attracted to everyone. It doesn't matter the gender. It just matters like who they are as a person. Gender is not something that affects who I like. Versus like I believe like something like biromantic or bisexual is
like gender or something that affects. It's part of like what, you see as like what affects who likes and don't like so. Me, it doesn't and then homosexual wise like, I don't like the penis, no penis. that's just for me, a lot of people take it different ways. and then demi means that I, I do not usually like, have attraction. Like I'm not attracted to people generally. I have to get to know that person and have a connection with a person…like a full connection, like to know who they are and have spent time with them before I can develop an attraction to them, either romantically or sexually. (Charlie, Pos. 10-16)

Sexually, my participants reported that they were objectified as hypersexual. However, some participants, such as Charlie, did not admit to being was hypersexual in terms of sexuality. Charlie indicated that she was a demi-panromantic who needed to spend time with people to get to know them before developing attractions. Sexual objectifications denied individuality and uniqueness, which maintained oppression on my participants who were AAFSM students.

Furthermore, AAFSM participants reported that fetishization was another form of sexually constructed objectification that they had to face. One participant noted,

Especially being an Asian female. I was fetishized a lot. I was, you know people would ask really outlandish questions about you know my private parts. And different things like that or they would say, I was like when I was dating, it was like I was a box that a lot of White men wanted to check off their list. Like oh I was with an Asian woman and I found a lot of men that wanted to be with me specifically because I was Asian that's all they really cared about which to me was a huge red fly because I'm not a boxing check off your list…that's not who I am. I'm a person with feelings and emotions and um so that was really…just a no go. (Sherron, Pos. 14)
Sherron was sexually hyper-desirable merely due to her womenness and Asianness by White Americans. This hyper-desirability of AAFSM facilitated the racial and gendered objectifications, which objectified them as a commodity or checking box. This sexually constructed objectification also reinforced the objectification ideology by Whites, who believed that Asian American women were hyper-desirable because of the combination of womenness and Asianness.

**Gendered Constructed Objectification.** In the male and female continuum, Asian American women and men were placed at two extreme endpoints. Asian American women were stereotypically viewed as hypersexualized whereas Asian American men were deemed undesirable. One participant indicated, “Asian men in America is like Asian men are like, not sexualized, right? Like they are…there is no sex appeal to Asian men. Asian women are hypersexualized” (Lennon, Pos. 40).

The same theme was captured from another participant who studied at a predominantly White midwestern university,

Asian women are attended to work kind of viewed as either like innocent versions or we're seen as like nymphomaniac and there's no in between. And like navigating that kind of landscape where we're hypersexualized. But at the same time, we're almost nonsexual to some people. But I think in particular its Asian men who are like non sexualized because of, I forgot what it was. But I think the historic context was White people were afraid of like Asian men taking White women. So, they…Asian men as like non masculine or like, um and nonsexual and whatever. And that kind of just spiraled on. So, it's interesting to see that like Asian women are hypersexualized, but Asian men are not. (Merritt, Pos. 30)
Gendered objectifications are also socially constructed to trigger gender bias by promoting a sense of degradation. As Merritt elaborated, some Asian American women were objectified as hypersexual, whereas some were nonsexual. Asian American men were objectified as nonsexual because they were perceived as less masculine. Each of these gendered objectifications dehumanized Asian American females and males.

**Intersectional Objectifications.** It is important to acknowledge that objectifications are complicated and intersectional. The objectifications that my AAFSM participants experienced occurred through the interactions of racialization, genderization, and heterosexualization. These three objectifications are forms of racism, sexism, and heterosexism. In the previous sections, I presented findings regarding racial objectification, sexual objectification, and gendered objectification separately. However, neither racial objectification, gendered objectification, nor sexual objectification impacted AAFSMs separately; instead, they intersectionally co-existed. With gendered objectification, race and sexuality always come into play because they are intersectionally interwoven with one another. On one predominantly White campus at a Midwestern university, one research participant noted,

One big thing that I struggle with recently…I have a really close friend…and she's White…I helped her understand what LGBT is. And she discovered that she might be bi, or at least curious…she got a girlfriend like two months ago. And I was like, oh yeah, great. And then turns out that it didn't work out…then I got a message from my friend and she's just like, yeah, I guess that's not gonna work. I guess I'm gonna go back to Asian people now. I'm like, wait. What? Say that again, but slowly. And so, what happened then was she tried, I tried to tell her that it makes me uncomfortable as an
Asian person to be seen as a preference. And she said you don’t know what racism is.

(Charlie, Pos. 20)

Research participants reported that no single objectification stood alone. Multiple objectifications always came into play intersectionally. For instance, racialized, gendered, and sexualized objectifications intersectionally made my AAFSM participants feel preferred or as a commodity because they were either sexually desirable to some Whites or completely excluded from the dating pool due to their intersectional racial, gender, and sexual identities. One participant at a different Midwestern institution said, “…like you're an Asian woman and you're bisexual. Like they think it's just like the perfect package, everything that they could dream of” (Sherron, Pos. 14). Another participant at a different institution added, “…there have been multiple occasions where um I match with guys on gender. And they say, they bring up my race cause um like I’ve never been with an Asian girl before. I'm like, I am queer, and they are like, it’s cool. It's just like. Yeah. That's weird. So that's kind of like annoying” (Arden, Pos. 46).

AAFSM participants always experienced intersectional objectifications, including racialization/ethnicization, genderization, and sexualization. Intersectional gendered, racial, and sexual objectifications were deemed by some Whites as the perfect package and combination. All participants felt insulted and discriminated against by this “perfect package” objectification tied to their race, gender, and sexual orientation.

Summary

In this chapter, rich data was presented to illustrate experiences of AAFSM students in predominantly White midwestern universities. All participants reported that they had been objectified due to the intersections of their racial, gender, or sexual identities. In other words, participants reported that they encountered racially constructed objectification, gendered
constructed objectification, and sexually constructed objectification. Most importantly, research findings showed that no objectification stood alone. Rather, they intersectionally objectified participants as either a “perfect package” or completely off the preferred list. These intersectional objectifications denied participants’ their individuality because they were perceived as objects rather than individuals. The next chapter presents intersectional internalizations, another facet of intersectional exclusions that frustrate AAFSM college students.
CHAPTER FIVE: INTERSECTIONAL INTERNALIZATIONS OF RACISM, SEXISM, AND HETEROSEXISM.

Each of the participants reported that they had experienced the intersectional internalizations of racism, sexism, and heterosexism. Participants described in detail how these intersectional internalizations affected them as AAFSMs. Intersectional internalizations run along a two-way street, one direction reflecting self-internalizations and the other direction reflecting societal internalizations. The lived and educational experiences of AAFSMs revealed how self- and societal intersectional internalizations structured individuals’ lives along race, gender, and sexuality pathways.

Internalization of Racism

Internalized racism refers to self-internalization and societal, institutional, and familial internalizations of people of color. Each of the participants reported that they, as AAFSMs, had experienced internalized racism from both the individual level and the societal level. Regarding internalizations of racism, AAFSM students viewed racial stereotypes and Whitenization as strong contributors to this process.

Racial Stereotypes

At the individual level on internalization of racism, my participants felt they had internalized racism due to erroneous stereotypes. One participant said,

People think like the model minority…people see an Asian really good at piano. And they are super like for my example, they see an Asian like super good at piano…they continuously give and just because I'm Asian and I…they have like stereotypes like…like Asians so good at everything…there is like embedded in their brain. They're like, oh we would have to be better than everyone else. But like everyone, there's so much, you're
gonna be surpassed someday. But like someone who's had that mindset of oh I am the
gifted just hasn't learned how to fail. If they don't know how to handle failure. And so it
just ends up being like some, there's some like, like I still have to like think about how it's
not my fault (Dale, Pos. 74).

The model minority stereotype also contributed to the self-internalization process of AAFSMs.
This self-internalized ideology powerfully persuaded Asian Americans to act as persons they
didn’t want to be. For instance, each of the participants talked about how they had to be harder
on themselves because of the racial stereotypes held by their White peers. One participant
elaborated,

So like yeah in my chemistry group, we have like a group chat going on with like 300
plus people. And even though I know I don't have the responsibility to like tutor them. I
feel like because of my previous experiences and people's expectations of me, I like
actually try to work harder in classes where I do have a group chat and people ask
questions just cause I feel like they're going to expect me to know the answers. So Then I
kind of work harder. And I guess I didn't completely realize that until my partner pointed
out like, why are you still… why are you still like up? It's two am like you already
finished your homework. Why are you still helping them? Blah, blah, blah. And I'm just
like, cause I kind of just, they…they expect me to help them. And I don't know why I'm
letting myself be in the situation. But…but I am… because I guess I also expect myself
because of my previous experiences with people constantly saying, I should know this
stuff. I'm harder on myself when I don't know something. And so, then I spend so much
time on it that I feel like I expect myself to know it well enough to teach it to other
people. So when they ask me question, I expect myself to have the answer to it, which is
just like kind of a frustrating cycle because I'm telling myself like, I need to stop doing this. But then I hate feeling like there's expectations, but that there are all expectations I've set for myself because of expectations in the past. So, then it's just this aggressive cycle where I'm trying to stop. (Blake, Pos. 140)

The model minority stereotype produced expectations on Asian Americans, which forced Asian Americans to meet these expectations. As Blake indicated, she did not even realize that she worked hard for simply meeting the expectation. This is a strong example of how racial minorities subconsciously internalized racial stereotypes such as the model minority myth.

Participants offered additional ways that racial stereotypes had prevented AAFSM participants from being themselves. One participant noted “Like I said, you know, I, the Asian stereotype is to be very intelligent, very smart. And I was but I tried to hide that from a lot of people so they wouldn't see me as like, oh that She's just that other Asian girl” (Sherron, Pos. 16). Racial stereotypes motivated Asian Americans to either hide their intelligence or be harder on themselves. Asian Americans who accepted the model minority stereotype had to be harder on themselves to meet these expectations set by others; and, those who did not accept the stereotype had to hide their intelligence to appear the same as others.

Oppressive behaviors toward AAFSMs were facilitated by society’s internalization of racial stereotypes such as the model minority myth. From kindergarten through college, Merritt was the only Asian in many of her classes. She described how she shaped her educational experiences to fit other people’s internalized biases and entrenched stereotypes. For instance, it was difficult for Merritt to fit in academic life because she felt a mismatch between her experiences and the racially stereotyped model minority assumptions. When asked how the
model minority myth as an internalized mindset consciously and subconsciously impacted her capacity, she elaborated:

I think the whole model minority myth is kind of like…it’s kind of baked into a lot of people's minds, especially faculty members. So, it can go two ways, like they might think this Asian person is like really smart. Let me mentor them, let me provide more resources. Or it can go the other way where it's like this person is not asking any questions. They say we are doing great academically, but then all of a sudden you have depression and anxiety that person's dealing with and they come into the faculty’s office and then, I…I need help. And they don't help that person because they assume that they can handle it because of this model minority that has made us seem like we're robots can just do anything in academics and professional life…I think that's definitely something that's kind of just entrenched in academia in general, like this assumption that Asians and Asian Americans are inherently good at academics when that's not the case and. If students are not, their self-esteem is impacted, their grades can be impacted, and their mental health can be impacted. (Merritt, Pos. 65)

From a racial lens, the model minority stereotype regarding Asian Americans has been internalized into people’s mindset. In other words, in intergroup analysis (across race), the myth of the model minority becomes a normative label applied to Asian Americans. Any Asian American who did not demonstrate high ability in academic activities remained deviant.

In addition to the intergroup analysis, the model minority myth also contributed to intragroup oppressions. For instance, one participant elaborated,

Asian Americans who internalize Model Minority myth against other Asian Americans. And we aren't able to form the same kind of community that a lot of black and brown
folks are able to. And I think that's the struggle with Asian Americans is because we're such a huge, diverse group that there's so many cultural differences that it's hard for us to form the same community…And I think the later on in my life, and including now I really, really hate the model minority myth. I think that it's contributing to a lot of um it's contributing to like a cycle of um oppression within the Asian American community. (Merritt, Pos. 28)

Merritt indicated that within their racial group, Asian Americans were huge and diverse. Some participants who had “assimilated into White culture” did not buy into the model minority myth because they “did not want to even claim being Asian Americans” (Sherron, Pos. 81); yet others “bought into Model Minority myth” (Grace, Pos. 100). The process of internalizing the model minority stereotype was viewed as a process of internalizing racism within and across groups. AAFSMs internalized racism in multiple ways, including foreseeability on what might happen, expectations from intra- and intergroups, and strategies for survival.

My AAFSM participants also experienced ignorance and exclusion from both the White community and the Asian community. “Um yeah. Not really paying attention to Asian students because we're seeing as the model minority. And so, we're the smart ones. We're doing great. So, like…like they do not pay attention to us…” (Charlie, Pos. 250). One participant from another institute shared a similar sentiment, “…they consider underrepresented students as black African American, Hispanic, and multiracial students and Asian Americans are not included in that” (Merritt, Pos. 65). Due to the model minority myth and “honorable White” stereotypes, Asian Americans are seldom perceived as an underrepresented group. Yet they are not seen as a privileged group either because of race. Therefore, Asian Americans are excluded from both groups, rendering them non-existing.
Whitenization

Another theme based on the Whitenization ideology emerged out of discussions of their dual Asian and American identities and struggles as AAFSMs. Our dialogues exposed how the Whitenization ideology, as a racial internalization process, oppressed and discriminated AAFSMs. One of the factors that facilitated racism internalization was the frequent questioning by both their family culture and American culture. When asked how they internalized racism, Blake shared that her understanding on internalized racism was from experiences of being called “Whitewashed” by both her family members and American peers. After emigrating from the Philippines to the United States at a really young age, Blake’s understanding on internalized racism became more apparent. Living in an environment where her Asianness was questioned by her family members and her Americanness was minoritized by White peers made her feel she “didn't belong to either one” (Blake, Pos. 14). Blake, as well as other AAFSMs, reported that they were often the targets of intense questioning on Whitewashed from both original family and institutions. “…like my cousins would call me Whitewash, even though I don't really necessarily be connected to America either” (Blake, Pos. 14), Blake continued by indicating how institutions had promoted Whitewashing as a strategy to avoid being ostracized or questioned,

…in my previous experiences, even though my university became more diverse, they still tried to push the agenda of the American dream and kind of Whitewash them rather than to just say, you're welcome here and we appreciate your culture. And it'd be nice if, like, the university systems would teach us more about other cultures even. And not just kind of dismissed them and belittle them. (Blake, Pos. 189)

One participant from another Midwestern University offered similar experiences on how she utilized Whitewashing as a strategy to avoid ostracism,
...but there were a ton of micro aggressions that kind of made me ashamed to be Asian...

I think at that point because being Asian was what was most visible about me. That was kind of what I focused on a lot more on what people tend to focus on. So I kind of tried to push away my Asianness and honestly kind of became um what's the term Whitewashed? Like trying to be perceived as White, like as much as possible. Like shunning my traditional culture...my food. Like I wanted sandwiches, which were boring and bland but like that's acceptable instead of um bringing a Pilipino food, which is a little more smelly, but like great. So I thought a little bad for shunning my Asianness. But it was a way for me to adjust and not be um ostracized. (Merritt, Pos. 12)

Without prompting, each of the participants revealed experiences of being called “Whitewashed” and reported how they felt insulted by the label. These feelings often compelled them to strategically accept Whitewashing for the purpose of not being ostracized, which contributed to the process of racism internalization. My participants’ understanding on internalized racism was shaped by their situational and sociohistorical locations. Situationally, some interviewees recognized that their situational location had been formed to adopt Whitewashing as a strategy for acceptance. As mentioned, Merritt “tried to push away [her] Asianness and honestly kind of became um what's the term Whitewashed” (Merritt, Pos. 12). Some interviewees revealed their struggle “over the same things as [other Filipinos] where [they]'re like Filipino Americans where [they] want to still be connected to [their] culture. But still feel connected in the American culture” (Blake, Pos. 72). It was important to them to maintain two cultures and identities. They did not want to choose one identity over the other. Sociohistorically, all participants admitted that they had been perceived as “forever foreigners” through Whitenization ideology, which denied both their American and Asian identities.
And just you know the way that I’ve internalized that and how all of the forms of racism that I’ve experienced have contributed to my identity and how I internalize it. And then you know it…it affects the way that I move through life and my schema. And just the way that I think about myself and my self-worth in my position within the world, I think it does…it does…it has a huge impact on who I am. (Sherron, Pos. 83)

Thus, inter- and intra-group expectations, entrenched racial stereotypes, previous experiences with ignorance, and self and societal pressures contributed to the racial internalization of both my participants who were AAFSMs as well as toward other privileged people. Participants internalized and accepted the oppressing racial stereotypes in order to meet their White peers’ expectations. Blake reported that she had to be harder on herself and her “hated feeling like there's expectations, but that there are all expectations I’ve set for myself because of expectations in the past. So, then it's just this aggressive cycle where I'm trying to stop” (Blake, Pos. 140). Meanwhile, because my participants themselves internalized racial stereotypes as the norm, White peers reinforced the racial stereotypes.

Internalization of Sexism

Experiences of sexism were prevalent among my AAFSM participants. Stereotypical gender roles and gender norms perpetuated oppressions and contributed to the internalization of sexism as the norm. In turn, the society/institutions/White males reinforced sexism through the process of internalization.

Stereotypical Gender Roles

Historically and traditionally, Asian culture and American culture have been patriarchal ones. In American culture, women are stereotypically expected to be a good wife and mother. One Filipino American female queer shared her frustration in one of our interviews, “Asian
women are seen as subservient. They're not seen as leaders” (Merritt, Pos. 75). The stereotypical gender expectation in both Asian and American patriarchal worlds set standards for Asian Americans to internalize sexism. Beliefs that “Um sexism, treating somebody differently because they present as different gender. Um uh I mean usually misogyny. Because Um We live in a very patriarchal world” (Charlie, Pos. 254) were expressed many times by participants across interviews. It is not uncommon for White Americans to set gender roles as guidelines for AAFSMs. Here is a narrative and illustrative example of being stereotyped expressed by one participant:

Um best example I can give is we were told that we had to build a bridge out of popsicle sticks…I’ve used to be in my grandpa's workshop. I used to help him build things. I used to work with the materials um with the saw and all these different things…And when we were task to build this bridge, I made mine out of liquid nails…And the day finally came to test out all our bridges. And I have people that can stand on mine. You know we put it in between two seats and someone could stand on it. And everyone else is broke. And I of course I was in a class with all men…And then all these excuses started to come like oh well we weren't supposed to use that. And I was just like he didn't tell us what we could and couldn't use. It's just like, here's the stuff that we have use it. And So I did. And it's like it's not my fault that you didn't think of these things to use for your project. And now you guys are all looking dumb because in your big egos are getting in the way. And your sexism is showing by saying that my project should be disqualified or shouldn't be taken seriously because I use this material when it really ultimately it it's not me because I did what the assignment said to do. It's you that didn't figure it out. (Sherron, Pos. 89)
This personal experience is in many ways reflective of societal gender role expectations that White males set for AAFSM persons. To be sure, a gender difference exists in educational majors. Females are less likely than males to major in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM). With the differences in educational major and gender role expectations, it was not surprising that all participants I interviewed believed they were not expected to be in STEM majors. Stereotypical gender roles and gender expectations towards my AAFSM participants worsened when they were in STEM majors because they were devalued as being forever unsuccessful. The story shared by Sherron demonstrated how as one of only three women in the engineering class, her success in the project had been denied and not admitted by other males, who believed Sherron should not succeed in the project.

**Gender Norm**

Participants reported that there was usually a dual gender norm for Asian American women. That is, they were expected to take a matriarchal role in the family and live in a patriarchal society. Many participants elaborated on the nexus between matriarchy and patriarchy. A female bisexual Filipino American graduate student from one midwestern university narrated,

…at the same time, women fit into like traditional roles like the home keeper. And the person who cooks all the time cleans and takes care of the children. And we're expected to get married and like, just be a good wife and stuff like that. But at the same time, we have a lot of say, cause I feel like my mom's been a strong figure in my life. And she's always been kind of like the head of the household. She gets things done. So, it's interesting to see the duality of it. Like we have some leadership, but we have to be
subservient in some sense is like we have well I mean the way that I’ve been taught…(Merritt, Pos. 30)

Misperceptions regarding matriarchy in the family and patriarchy in society have facilitated gender conceptualizations and internalizations of sexism. As Merritt continued to explain, “…that's kind of the way I kind of started conceptualizing genders from like parents and you know how your first socialized” (Merritt Eunice, Pos. 30). Others recognized the duality of gender norms as being both socially and familialy conceptualized and constructed.

Participants from various midwestern universities discussed the unfair burden of sexism placed on AAFSMs by White Americans. These various forms of sexism have facilitated the internalization process among AAFSM groups. Within society, the internalization of sexist misperceptions reinforced the gender norms that White Americans had about Asian Americans (e.g., duality).

**Internalization of Heterosexism**

Sexual orientation is an integral part of an individual’s identity. To authentically examine and understand how my AAFSM participants internalized heterosexism, it was important to consider parental influences and institutional influences. In the following sections, findings were presented to indicate that parental and institutional influences facilitated the process of heterosexism internalization.

**Parental Influences**

The internalization of heterosexism was closely connected to parental influences. A direct consequence of parental influences was self-internalized heterosexism, whereby my participants internalized heteronormativity. Each participant reported that this internalized heteronormativity often creates fear. For instance, one participant narrated,
I fear, I fear about almost every day I'm more since I'm in college, I'm away from my family. I'm more open about my sexuality… Last year, I was forced to go back home. So, I had to completely shut some part of my life away from very my traditional parents. And so, I would have to hide everything in my backpack like everything that remind that like I bought for my girlfriend and I would every day…I would fear that my parents would find them. And everything so, yeah, I it's…it’s just that fear like, now I don't have it as much now since I'm away from home. But every time I go back to my parents’ house or when my mom visits. It's like, it's there. It's still there. (Dale, Pos. 18)

Another example was captured from Blake,

…because of my parents. So, I like always push down my like feelings towards women. I'm like, I just push it off as like, I don't like them that way. I just think this person is great and I don't actually like them. Like they're just a really good friend. And they're just I can find women attractive without liking them. And like I just convinced myself that I didn't like women. I just was like, they just look great. Just like men look great. Everyone looks great. And I just tried to convince myself really hard that I'm not a part of that community. I'm just an ally of the community. I even now, I'm not even out to my parents. (Blake, Pos. 50)

The most frequently mentioned reason that participants felt fear was because “[their] parents are very conservative and very traditional” (Blake, Pos. 32). The traditional and conservative mindsets of their parents triggered AAFSMs to believe that homosexuality was unacceptable and abnormal. Another reason my participants as AAFSMs feared to be out of the closet to their parents was because of how their parents internalized and reacted to homophobia and
heteronormativity. Blake shared another experience with me regarding how her parents reacted to her sister’s same-sex relationship:

My second oldest sister came out as pansexual to parents when she was in college… And she told them that she was seeing a girl and that they were together for about half a year, that she wanted them to know. My parents were angry… My parents immediately like yelled at her. And her girlfriend at the time came to the door, which was not very good timing because my sister was getting yelled… And her girlfriend came in or like knocked on the door and my parents saw who it was. And they let her in. And we just heard like a really loud smack. And like when my sister, my older sister, and I kind of ran down the stairs and they smacked the girl on her face… My dad dragged my sister to one of the empty rooms. And I tried to follow them crying because I didn't want them to hurt her. Or like, yell at her any more than they already had. I just kept trying to beg them to just calm down and listen to her. I dad shut the door. And like when I opened the door, he was like, hitting her. And like kind of like accusing a bell and like smacking her and yelling at her. I tried to grab him, but he pushed me, and my aunt grab me by the arm and told me that it was none of my business. And they shut the door. She was just crying in the room. after that I decided that I did not want to like women because I didn't want that to happen to me. So, I never That's also the reason why I haven't come out to my parents. So, I kept hiding. (Blake, Pos. 58-62)

All participants indicated that their hidden sexuality status was attributed to their parents’ internalized heterosexism; in turn, AAFSMs self-internalized nonheterosexuality as rejection, denigration, denial, and degradation. Furthermore, self-internalization and parental
internalization reinforced heterosexism and heteronormativity as a societal form of oppression that produced and reproduced negative attitudes and policies toward AAFSMs.

**Institutional Influences**

Participants also internalized sexuality and heterosexism through religious institutions. Universities with a religious atmosphere influenced the participants’ perspectives on sexual orientation identity. For instance, LGBTQ topics and same-sex marriage topics were regarded as taboo. A bisexual female Chinese American explained,

> Not all religious people are like this, but the ones I went to were…it was a Catholic university, Catholic. The Catholic church does not support homosexuality or a gay marriage. So, we were taught homosexuality is wrong. You will burn in hell, or that no good Catholic parent would keep their gay child around. They would convince me and convince my friends who are also LGBT that we were sinners, that we were going to hell, that our parents wouldn't want us if we came out. That was most definitely homophobia and heterosexism. (Lyric, Pos. 140)

My participants reported that they frequently received explicit religious messages such as “homosexuality is wrong” and “you will burn in hell” from religious institutions. These explicit messages suggested that homosexuality and sexual minorities were shameful and abnormal.

In addition to the conflict between Christianity and sexuality, the beliefs of AAFSM students regarding sexual orientation institutionalized through the power disparity between the religious university and students. One participant who self-identified as a non-binary Korean American lesbian further explained,

> Um I guess in the personal experiences…In our school we were required to take a religion course. Um and…and I think part of it's because we have…we were we're all
Lutheran college. Um we like…I think just recently we decided to like not focus on that aspect. Um But we are still required take a religion course. And while…some while some religion courses are okay, like I know some of them can be a little iffy like for like I heard that one religion course, you, one of your assignments is to go to church and attend a service. Um And as a lesbian that can be very uncomfortable to me. Um I know another class like you would get a bad grade if you speak bad about Christianity. Um I was so I just feel like a religion is one thing. But if when I feel like religion and sexuality, they have a lot of tension with each other. And um and just having some of those classes being mandated like that, I feel like is very to be very…it can be very triggering for some people. I know…what I know it's indefinitely be a little triggering for me because I haven't had good experiences with religion um in my life. (Dale, Pos. 121)

As shown by Dale’s story, many participants who were AAFSMs reported that they had to hide their beliefs on Christianity and sexuality in order to avoid tensions and oppressions.

Heterosexism was very apparent on many religious campuses. Thus, my participants who were AAFSMs gradually and negatively accepted homophobia and internalized it as norm. Even in the predominantly White public universities, heterosexism was perceived as the norm. For instance, as Merritt noted, “In general, like the term heterosexual, it's like the assumption that everyone is straight or heterosexual. It's the assumption that the norm is being heterosexual, that anything that falls outside of that is not natural or different and not just like. It's like the norm” (Merritt, Pos. 87). At the midwestern religious campuses and midwestern private and public universities where my participants studied, heterosexism was perceived as the norm.
**Intersectionality on Internalization of Racism, Sexism, and Heterosexism**

Thus far, I have described how my participants as AAFSMs internalized racism, sexism, and heterosexism separately. However, their experiences of racial, gendered, and sexual internalizations were not separate instances but they intersected with one another. Using the intersectionality lens allowed me to highlight how the intersections of racism, sexism, and heterosexism were internalized by my AAFSM participants. Furthermore, institutional internalization formulated and perpetuated the beliefs that heteronormativity, White supremacy, and patriarchy were the established norms, impacting AAFSMs in an intersectional way. Many participants noted that it was difficult to deal with multiple oppressions that intersected with one another. This feeling was captured numerous times during interviews. Here is the feeling that one participant narrated,

I just really shape my understanding of like what is acceptable and what is not. And it really, I had to outgrow that mindset in college and learn um that it's not bad to be a woman. It's not bad to be feminine. It's not bad to be whatever you are…So those aspects definitely shaped my understanding of gender and sexual orientation. Um I think race…it was like that internalized racism of like being Asian is bad. And particular being an Asian woman is not to be…it…it's weird. Like I talked to my friends before we're being an Asian woman is both admired because a lot of men fetishized us. So, we're attractive in that sense…But like, um but then at the same time, some guys think that we're ugly and like, okay what do I do here? So I think growing up I always thought okay maybe I'm just like not attractive. Maybe I'm not wanted. So, it made it difficult. (Merritt, Pos. 48-49)

It was always difficult for the group of AAFSMs because they metaphorically stood at an intersectional location, where all directions had a “dead end” sign for them.
Summary

This chapter presented findings regarding intersectional internalizations of race, gender, and sexuality. Participants reported that they frequently internalized racism, sexism, and heterosexism through racial stereotypical biases, Whitenization, gender norms, stereotypical gender roles, and familial and institutional influences. Most importantly, this research found that participants internalized racism, sexism, and heterosexism in an intersectional way rather than a separate way. For instance, the racism that participants experienced inevitably involved sexism and heterosexism. This significance of this finding led to a third theme, which is presented in the next Chapter. This theme could be best categorized as intersectional post-racism, -(hetero)sexism because participants reported that they experienced racialized-genderized-heterosexism, sexualized-genderized-racism, or racialized-sexualized-sexism.
CHAPTER SIX: INTERSECTIONAL BLINDNESS AND POST-ISMS

In Chapter Six, three themes emerged from the data analysis. Participants reported that they experienced intersectional blindness by White heterosexual American males. The intersectional blindness included colorblindness, gender blindness, and sexuality blindness. As we have moved into the twenty-first century, our lack of understanding, power hierarchies, and carelessness has continued to silence the voices of women, has remained blind on people of color, and has denied that LGBTQ has become a visible social and institutional issue. The manifestation of blindness has ranged from intentional to unintentional and from conscious to unconscious. In addition, participants reported that the racism, sexism, and heterosexism they experienced all involved the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation, which I best categorized as intersectional post-racism, -(hetero)sexism. In the last section of this chapter, participants discuss how their race, gender, and sexuality have been contextualized.

Intersectional Blindness

Participants reported that they had experienced color blindness, gender blindness, and sexuality blindness in an intersectional way. This intersectional blindness stemmed from two facets. First, participants reported that the intersectional blindness was produced by intersectional ignorance on race, gender, and sexuality. Second, at the institutional level, the lack of representations of racial minorities, gender minorities, and sexual minorities in curricula played a tremendous role in this intersectional blindness.

Intersectional Ignorance

In the study, many participants reported that their racial identity had been ignored due to other’s color blindness. For instance, one participant’s family was intentionally colorblind because her family avoided asking her, “What does it feel like to be Asian American? What does
it feel like to be in an all-White family” (Sherron, Pos. 79)? When she tried to speak up for herself or make her feelings known, her White family always responded, “…I don't even really see you as being Asian, you know…you're just [Sherron] and which is fine” (Sherron, Pos. 79). Her family’s racial blindness facilitated her development and internalization of shame for being Asian American because her family’s response denied her Asianness. Sherron continuously explained,

You know, when you go to take I-Step in the state of Indiana, it's the standardized test. You bubbled in your race. And I had to ask like, I don't understand because I didn't know what I'm supposed to put. And that was something that was never really talked about in my house. And I was the only one that had to put something different, and it was in my you know, little mind, it’s shameful (Sherron, Pos. 48)

Another participant at a different institution admitted that her family’s colorblindness acted as an obstruction to her discovery of her racial identity. “You know they tried to treat it as a colorblind sort of thing. Like, I don't see color. And so, I didn't actually realize until I was older that I wasn't White. It took me a little while to figure that one out” (Lyric, Pos. 56-57), Lyric noted.

The same participant offered an additional example regarding the manifestation of blindness—lack of understanding. She found it unbelievable that her friend had never seen a Black person in real life:

Yeah, there are some people who just don't, they don't realize that other identities exist and that other experiences besides their own are happening, like I had a friend in one of my classes once say, you know coming to college is the first time I ever saw a Black person in real life. so, for some of them, it's it isn't said to be malicious or to be mean. It's said because they don't know any better. They never encountered different and they never
learned. Not that's necessarily an excuse, but in terms of intentions, I would take ignorance over straight up trying to be mean of bigotry. (Lyric, Pos. 98)

This story, although unique to this individual, is in many ways reflective of the lack of understanding White Americans had on racial minorities.

Many participants believed that colorblindness was a form of racism. As a non-binary demi-homosexual Chinese American said,

By not seeing color. Um You are like, yeah, I want you to treat me like without just like thinking about like my race as like my whole identity, but also like I also don't want you to treat me as if it is not a part of my identity at all. It is this balance of knowing the person you're talking to, knowing their background that like if you look at me like yeah I look Asian, so I probably have a history of being descended from Asia. So, like just having acknowledging that, um like uh acknowledging that and knowing that that is part of my identity. And that is part of somebody's identity without being their entire who they are is kind of in treating people as such like um yeah. (Charlie, Pos. 243)

Colorblindness is not respectful. Instead, it manifests as a form of oppression and discrimination due to ignorance. In this study, colorblindness intentionally removed a part of the individual’s racial identity by denying their Asianness. Colorblindness is reflective of the ignorance, devaluation, and denial AAFSMs faced.

In addition to colorblindness, my participants simultaneously experienced sexuality blindness. One of the manifestations of sexuality blindness was how people viewed homosexuality as “a phase.” Each of the participants reported that their parents, college peers, and friends had ascribed their homosexual preference to a phase rather than admitting that it was part of that individual’s wholeness. The participants believed that their minority sexual identities
were not as valued by their parents, heterosexual friends, and college peers. For instance, one participant told her parents that she was bisexual. Her parents “didn't understand it exactly. And they were kind of in denial. And they still kind of are, thinking oh this is a phase…Eventually she'll meet a nice man” (Lyric, Pos. 24). A similar reflection was offered in another interview: “This is just a phase like that kind of thing” (Merritt, Pos. 38), Merritt noted that this was how her family had responded when she came out of the closet to her family.

In addition to the family denial noted thus far, AAFSM students also felt insulted by their peer’s denials of their identity. One participant shared her experiences regarding coming out to peers and friends. The most frequent response she received was: “No, you are not!” (Anna, Pos. 27). These denials were best categorized as sexuality blindness because homosexuality was not acceptable or valued. Heterosexual people were not willing to accept the homosexual identity as part of the AAFSMs’ wholeness.

Gender blind is another manifestation of the blindness my AAFSM participants experienced on an everyday basis. As one participant explained, “You know…[as women,] you cannot be taken...sometimes you're not even taken seriously within your profession. Um even if you could be one of the best at your craft. It's hard…It's extremely hard to kind of get that space” (Sherron, Pos. 95).

To be racial blind, gender blind, and sexuality blind denies my participants’ existence, power, and value as AAFSMs. It is also a silent way to maintain White supremacy, male dominance, and heteronormativity. This blindness continuously stabilizes the dominant power while marginalizing the others. The blindness is a way for privileged people to avoid talking about race, gender, and sexuality, which makes them uncomfortable. They are reluctant to
openly discuss these topics because they fear that their social status or power might be destabilized.

*Lack of Intersectional Representations in Curricula*

Chapter Two discussed how curricula promotes institutional racism, sexism, and heterosexism. The dominant White culture and/or Eurocentric character expressed in the curriculum (re)produces and reinforces inequalities and causes a “clash of cultures” among students. The student body is not only comprised of White heterosexual male students but also by racial, gender, and sexual minorities. Therefore, curriculum should not enculturate marginalized students to adopt values dominant in the mainstream cultures (i.e., White, heteronormativity, and patriarchy). Instead, for the sake of students who are marginalized, the curriculum needs to be changed to increase representations of people with intersectional identities. Institutionally, the lack of intersectional representations in curricula has played a role in excluding and blinding my participants on campus. For instance, one Korean American female lesbian participant shared,

But then as I started doing more research and start thinking about okay…I never saw myself in the curriculum. I never…we never read books about Asian American lesbian. We never um you know talked about my culture, my history, or what it even is like to be an adopted person. (Dale, Pos. 87)

Other participants agreed that the lack of intersectional representations in curricula prevented race, gender, and sexuality to “come to people’s mind” (Merritt, Pos. 64 & Arrow, Pos. 120).

Participants also shared their concerns about speaking out to make themselves visible rather than blind. Because they were not represented in the curricula, participants admitted that they feared speaking out. One participant indicated,
When it comes to like education side of things, um when it comes to like representation, like they have lots of people to do the represent representation to speak out. And a lot of them aren't afraid to do that because like they've been doing it for years. They [African Americans] have representations in curricula like Martin Luther King. But as an Asian American bi woman, I can't speak out. There were no representations in curricula to like to be my role model... (Charlie, Pos. 250)

Another participant from a different predominantly White midwestern university further added that people did not really pay attention to them because there was not really any representation of them.

And there's just not really have representation in curricula. Um So that's...that's the one thing um I mean like. There's the whole thing of. Um yeah. Not really paying attention to Asian American lesbian students because we're not seeing in curricula... we’re not seeing everywhere... (Lyric, Pos. 148)

My research concluded that the lack of intersectional representations in curricula facilitated the silencing of women’s voices, the blinding of people of color, and the denial of the LGBTQ experience. The lack of intersectional representations in curricula also contributed to intersectional blindness because “people did not really pay attention to them” (Lyric, Pos. 148).

**Intersectional Post-Racism, Post-Sexism, and Post Heterosexism**

Traditional notions of racism, sexism, or heterosexism reflect of how people were treated differently based on either their race, gender, or sexuality. Racism, sexism, and heterosexism towards AAFSMs worsened in the post-ism era. This post-ism era includes post-racism, post-sexism, and post-heterosexism, which are far more complex and intersectional. Their race, gender, or sexual identities inevitably interplay with other aspects of their identity, generating
genderized-sexualized-racism, racialized-genderized-heterosexism, or sexualized-racialized-
sexism.

For instance, one participant, who is bisexual female Chinese American, noted that her
White mother did not understand race-related feminism,

like she considers herself like a feminist. And ah but in the beginning, when I started
talking to her about like race, she didn't understand that like me being a minority is
somehow like different and like different aspects than just being like a woman because
she's a White woman. And honestly, I think they work through the world much
differently than we do like based on like race like gender discrimination. Like I'm very
aware of that. But they also have certain privileges up the belt. And like, I have to deal
with a lot of stuff that she's like never even like thought about. Oh, so that was like hard
because like she kept trying to be like oh like in a like totally like understand where
you're coming from. Like it's hard being a member of like group that's like oppressed.
And I'm like, yeah but I'm not just oppressed by one. It's like multiple and like it affects
me like differently from you. (Arrow, Pos. 50)

Traditional feminists did not take race into full consideration because traditional feminists
mainly gave emphasis to White women. The post-feminist became more intersectional and
complex because its manifestations were racialized feminist or sexualized feminist. Traditional
feminists primarily objected to the oppression of White women while neglecting other oppressed
groups, which were oppressed not only by sexism but also by racialized sexism and sexualized
sexism.

Similarly, traditional racism, as understood by participants, mainly emphasized race. By
contrast, post-racism located AAFSMs at the intersection of gendered racism and sexualized
racism. Numerous experiences of racism were noted in the interviews, and many involved
gender and sexuality. For instance, as mentioned in the previous section, a female queer Filipino
American narrated, “Asian men are like, not sexualized, right? Like they are…there is no sex
appeal to Asian men. Asian women are hypersexualized” (Lennon, Pos. 40). The participants
believed this tokenization applied not only to racism, but also extended to include genderized
racism and sexualized racism.

Heterosexism is an entrenched oppression that discriminates against sexual minorities.
Yet the experiences of heterosexism by AAFSMs were distinctive and complex. To examine and
understand how heterosexism is experienced, it is important to take into consideration post-
heterosexism such as genderized heterosexism and racialized heterosexism. Post-heterosexism as
genderized heterosexism was captured in an interview with a bisexual female Chinese American
who shared her feelings of frustration regarding her heterosexual White male college peer’s
negative attitude towards LGBTQ:

I mentioned it like eventually, and like he was like pretty okay with it. But I feel like it
was like the classic like oh like men are okay with like women being like bisexual, but
not men. So, he definitely was like still a little like homophobic towards like men being
gay. And like that was really frustrating to me because I'm like, there I…I taught him
about, I was like there's no different than like me, like being with like a woman and like a
guy being like a man. And you're just like, oh it's like gross. And like, that was I don't
know. That was like so frustrating to me. (Arrow, Pos. 86)

All participants reported that heterosexism was genderized because female LGBTQs were more
acceptable in comparison to male gays. Another post-heterosexism—racialized heterosexism was
brought to light in an interview with a female queer Filipino American:
Because I think when you're an Asian lesbian, there's a lot of fetishization. And um it's this weird mix of guys in particular think that you're ugly. But then some of them think that you're really attractive. And it's like, where exactly do I fall? Right? (Merritt, Pos. 12)

Similar feelings were mentioned by many participants who believed that their unstable status was not merely based on racism, sexism, or heterosexism. Instead, they experienced intersectional post-racism, -sexism, and -heterosexism. Its manifestation could be either racialized-genderized-heterosexism, racialized-sexualized-sexism, or sexualized-genderized-racism.

**Contextualized Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation**

Bell hooks, a proponent of intersectional study, admitted that one of an individual’s identities would be forefront. The reason why an individual highlighted one identity over another could be because they were forced or had inadvertently been asked to choose to just one. Miville and Ferguson (2004) argued that sexual minority people of color are often forced to choose one community over another - their religion, or LGBTQ community, or their racial community. In this regard, people of color developed a negative sense of separateness rather than a positive sense of wholeness. As Anzáldua (1998) stated:

> Often, I am asked, what is your primary identity, being a lesbian or working-class or Chicana? … to put each in a separate compartment is to put them in contradiction or in isolation, when in actuality they are all constantly in a shifting dialogue/relationship…All the multiple aspects of identities are part of the “lesbian.” (p. 267)

In this study, each of the participants reported that the ranking of their identities was not actively practiced or performed by the individuals themselves; it was forced onto them by
privileged people. Their identity ranking subconsciously brought forth discussions based on the context, situation, and the people participating in the conversation. According to participants’ responses, their race, gender, and sexual orientation could not be ranked. The evidence was captured and showed as follows,

Oh, no. there is no way to rank them cause they're all just like a part of me. And it's not like something I could rank as in like, like my hair versus my eyes versus like, I don't know, like things that I can like I could put in contacts, change my eyes. I can like color my hair to change my hair. But I can't change my race. I can't just take it off at the end of the day, I can't change how I feel about people that I love romantically or sexually. I cannot change that. I had those feelings. And I can't change that. I and the gender I that I am not confirmative to a specific gender. And if like I need to have that freedom of being the gender and expressing how I am, or else I feel like I am restricted. I cannot take any of that off at the end of the day. It is a part of me forever. And it is an important part of me as a human. (Charlie, Pos. 94)

Nevertheless, many participants admitted that they often emphasized one of their race, gender, or sexual orientation identities. They also admitted that they had to oppress some part of themselves due to the context and situation. Both foreground and background identities produced micro and micra oppressions towards my participants who were AAFSMs. Their visible identities produced visible exclusions and their invisible identities caused invisible exclusions. These intersectional exclusions made people invisible in many communities.

When I asked another participant if one of her identities was placed at foreground, she elaborated,
I think that's a really interesting question because I do actually rank them depending on uh like we were talking about earlier context matters. So, say, for example, I'm in America and I walk into a room and it's only White people then definitely being Asian and my race is at the foreground. Whereas if I walk into a room and there are several Asian people and couple other races and what not...then being an Asian and a woman kind of rank on the same scale. And like uh sexual orientation is kind of in the background a little bit just because it's not as visible. And then um if we're in a room full of Asian people or Filipino people, then being a woman is the foreground. And then I think in all of these situations, sexual orientation tends to take the background just because it's more invisible. Like it's not very obvious that I'm in that community. So um it tends to take the backseat unless we are actively talking about it. Um say, for example, a class session is about the LGBTQ community. Then I think that identity is on equal weight as the other ones. But I think in America, in almost all contexts, being Asian is the most salient. And then being a woman comes in a close second and sometimes equal depending on the context. Um but I definitely had situations where being a woman is like on the foreground just because someone's being sexist. So, I'm like okay time to leave. But it depends on the room and like who's there and what we're discussing. But in general, I think races the top um on the foreground and then being a woman and then being queer. (Merritt, Pos. 42)

AAFSMs stepped up their identity ranking when privileged people saw either the individual’s Asianness, womenness, or LGBTQness, or when people talked about these identities with stereotypes and ignorance. Therefore, identity ranking was situational and often aligned with societal norms such as White-supremacy, heterosexual-supremacy, and masculine-
supremacy. For example, on a predominantly White campus, race comes first; on a large diverse campus, gender probably comes first. It can be argued that the more pressure an individual encountered, the more the individual wanted to express him or herself. When one identity is silenced and ignored, it seems to pop to the forefront.

Summary

Chapter Six presented the results of the data analysis regarding intersectional blindness, intersectional post-racism, -(hetero)sexism, and contextualized race, gender, and sexual orientation. In each section, three aspects—race, gender, and sexual orientation—were examined to determine how they intersected with one another. In the next chapter, discussions as well as implications are presented.
CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSIONS

Participants reported that being AAFSMs in predominantly White universities was far more challenging because they were located at the intersection of racism, sexism, and heterosexism. As mentioned in the previous chapter, they had to deal with intersectional objectifications, intersectional internalizations, intersectional blindness, and intersectional post-racism, -(hetero)sexism. Recommendations and implications derived from the findings of this study are provided in this chapter. Although, the findings regarding intersectional exclusions cannot be generalized to the experiences of all AAFSM college students, this qualitative study does contribute to the body of literature by suggesting how educators and policymakers at Midwestern universities can provide an intersectional inclusive educational environment for AAFSM students attending Midwestern universities. The suggestions and implications include: a) de-internalizing the intersectional internalizations, 2) implementing intersectionality, and 3) increasing intersectional connections, visibilities, and representations.

Intersectional-Internalization, De-intersectional-internalization, and Re-intersectional-internalization

In the context of racial, gendered, and sexual stratifications, intersectional internalization is a process whereby my participants who are AAFSMs in the U.S negatively accept devaluation, marginalization, and low sociohistorical and sociocultural status regarding their race, gender, and sexuality identities. Meanwhile, their acceptance is facilitated and reinforced by the dominant ideologies of White supremacy, patriarchy, and heteronormativity. The intersectional internalizations on race, gender, and sexuality were exemplified by denying their Asianness, degrading their homosexuality, devaluing their womenness, and strategically accepting the White heterosexual male as superior to not feel ostracized. Both self-internalization and social and
institutional internalizations burdened my participants who are AAFSMs through intersectional oppressions, exclusions, and discriminations. Many scholars have discussed the concept of internalization on either race, gender, or sexuality separately (Brown et al., 2002; Ford et al., 2002; Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012), however, the suggestions about “what next” were not fully delineated.

A review of the literature by numerous critical race theorists in Chapter Two found that Asian Americans experienced racism at the individual level (e.g., yellow peril, model minority, forever/perpetual foreigners, honorary Whites and Otherness/Others), cultural level (e.g., Americanization vs. Traditionalization), and institutional level (e.g., policy exclusions) (Lee, 2005; Lee & Hong, 2020; Tuan, 1998; Wooden, et al., 1983; Wollenberg & Nishida, 1994). Similarly, feminists found that Asian women experienced sexism at the individual level (e.g., stereotypically labeled as hypersexual, sexually permissive, and subservient), cultural level (e.g., traditional and nontraditional roles), and sociopolitical level (Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Hall, 2009). In terms of sexuality, many queer theorists pointed out that LGBTQ college students experienced overt and covert homophobia (Rankin et al., 2010). Further, many scholars pointed out that it was unauthentic to understand individual’s experiences of either racism, sexism, or heterosexism. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Miville and Ferguson (2006) suggested that “[Race, ethnicity, gender, etc.] need to be considered when assessing and inquiring about individual’s experiences of heterosexism” (p. 94). In terms of sexism, Guinier and Torres (2002) remarked that it was impossible to fully understand the meaning and significance of gender without recognizing the ways that gender intersects with race and other identities. Furthermore, based on the literature review in Chapter Two, intersections of two identities were well studied, including the intersection of race and sexuality (Han, et al., 2014; Icard, 1986; Wooden et al.,
1983), the intersection of race and gender (Crenshaw, 1989), and the intersection of gender and sexuality (Hom, 1994). However, very limited research had been conducted on how the three factors—race, gender, and sexuality—intersected to affect the experiences of my participants who are AAFSMs in predominantly Midwestern universities. The findings supported my contention that participants experienced intersectional racism, sexism, and heterosexism by internalizing racial stereotypes, Whitenization, gender norms, stereotypical gender roles, and parental, social, and institutional beliefs. My research findings also contributed to the literature by showing that the aforementioned factors served as internalizing function for both my participants and White/society/institutions insofar as they internalized stereotypical norms.

As a result, these internalized norms in the mindsets of both the marginalized and the dominant White/society/institution produced and reproduced intersectional inequalities and reinforced heterosexual White males’ social status. In other words, the findings showed that participants internalized the intersectional social hatred in their mindset and then, in turn, produced intersectional internal phobia, which oppressed them in an intersectional way. Specifically, both heterosexual and homosexual individuals internalized sexual related social hatreds, such as homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, and then formed internal phobia. The sexual related phobia internalized by heterosexual people reinforced the social norms and heteronormativity. At the same time, the phobias internalized by sexual minority individuals caused self-oppression. Gender-related and race-related internalizations applied as well.

From an intersectional perspective, multiple societal stereotypes and the norms of the dominant culture can facilitate a marginalized individual to internalize intersectional phobias. These intersectional phobias include homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, xenophobia, racism, sexism, heterosexism, etc. Therefore, I suggest that marginalized minorities should de-internalize
these intersectional norms. Privileged people should de-internalize their entrenched biases on race, gender, and sexual orientation, which tend to produce intersectional inequalities and discrimination toward my participants who are AAFSMs. If internalized biases, stereotypes, and prejudices can be de-internalized, people will have space to re-internalize new understandings into their mindsets. The processes of internalization, de-internalization, and re-internalization are dynamic processes.

I also suggest that universities increase the visibility and representations of individuals who are multiply marginalized. Improved representation can de-internalize the entrenched “only one complete unblushing male in America” ideology which has excluded my participants who were AAFSMs as perpetual outsiders (Goffman, 1963). The perfect being, in terms of sexuality, has been either gay or straight. In-between identities have been excluded and rejected. Several participants reported that they didn’t fit into the LGBTQ or heterosexual group due to the fluidity of their sexual identity. In terms of race, the perfect being has been socially and historically portrayed as European Americans. Thus, Asian Americans have been excluded because they are located at the intersection of Americanization and traditionalization. They have also been excluded due to their fluid racial identities. According to the research, Asian American groups were very diverse because they could be categorized as Asians, Asian Americans, American Asians, Americans, Filipinos, Chinese, and Korean due to sociohistorical and sociocultural contexts. For instance, one participant preferred to be self-identified as American Asian because she had no connections with her Asian side (e.g., culture, language, etc.). However, another participant self-identified as Filipino instead of American because of the enormous impact of her traditional and conservative Filipino family. Thus, understanding race as simply biological blood traits can trigger oppressions; instead, the diversity of race needs to be explained and understood.
in accordance with sociocultural and sociohistorical contexts. Nevertheless, fluid racial identities have become the biggest obstacle for my participants who are AAFSMs to feeling included.

Similarly, with respect to gender, the perfect being has been either male or female rather than non-binary because gender fluidity has been unacceptable, questioned, and degraded. Therefore, monoracial, monogender, and monosexual have become the norm in both privileged and marginalized people’s mindset. Consequently, when intersectionality has not been considered, biracial-phobia, multiracial-phobia, racism, xenophobia, homophobia, biphobia, non-binary-phobia, and the like have been internalized. With this being said, I also suggest that predominantly White universities initiate discussions and conversations on what it is like to be a person with multiple marginalized identities. This dialogue can de-internalize privilege people's biases, stereotypes, and entrenched knowledge and can reinternalize new cultures and understandings. Increased visibility and representation of individuals with multiple marginalized identities as well as discussions and conversations dedicated to understanding the experiences of individuals with intersecting marginalized identities could help students, faculty, staff, and the university in general to unlearn stereotypes, biases, and prejudices. I suggest universities should inculcate students to adopt a “blank slate” when learning about new cultures. This “blank slate” attitude can de-internalize societal stereotypes and biases embedded in people's mindsets and can re-internalize new understandings.

The Implementation of Intersectionality

My findings also were consistent with assumptions that my participants who were AAFSMs’ race, gender, and sexual orientation shaped their lived and educational experiences intersectionally. My participants reported that their lived and educational experiences were unique. Racially, they were sometimes lumped with Whittess because they had lighter skin color.
Nevertheless, they were considered as “perpetual foreigners” (Tuan, 1998). Sometimes, they were grouped with Asians due to their visibility of Asianness. Gender wise, they were grouped as weak, submissive, and “not useful” (Lyric, Pos. 82). Sexually, my participants were grouped as sick. My research showed that the grouping of my AAFSM participants into multiple derogatory categories was a form of oppression. My findings also indicated that no one fit into a certain group perfectly. Grouping produces boundaries and limitations. Therefore, the implementation of intersectionality at the institutional level is extremely important. Intersectionality operates as a critical ideology and theory to deconstruct groupings and eliminate generalizations about an entire group of people. On campuses, the ideology of intersectionality should be implemented in student organizations such as Asian American students’ organization, women’s club, LGBTQ organization, etc. Each of my participants noted that the focus on one master marginalized identity (i.e., race, gender, or sexuality) in student organizations was a way to ignore individuals’ invisible identities. Considering only the master identity limited people’s understanding, which produced and reproduced intersectional inequalities and oppressions. As shown in the literature, it became apparent that some of our students did not neatly fit into any of these overarching programs because of their intersectional identities. For instance, Bourgeois (2014) indicated that “over 600 Women’s Study programs have been established at colleges and universities…[to] focusing on women’s varied and unique experiences” (p. 6). Asian Americans who are female and sexual minorities do not fit into most of the overarching programs. Greene (1997) demonstrated “the process of acknowledging an LGB[TQ] orientation (i.e., ‘coming out’) may translate into greater potential for losses because of the number of communities of which LGB[TQ] People of Color may be a part” (also cited in Miville & Ferguson, 2006, p. 95). In addition, to solve the problems that marginalized students faced on a daily basis, the
abovementioned programs used a “one-at-a-time approach” (Collins & Bilge, 2018, p.3) that emphasized a master marginalized identity. The consistency between my findings and arguments mentioned in the Chapter Two confirmed that intersectionality needs to be implemented into student organizations in Midwestern universities. Specifically, in Asian American student organizations, visible (e.g., gender) and invisible identities (e.g., sexuality) should be welcomed and appreciated. I suggest that one way to foster inclusion is to increase the visibility and representations of persons who are Asian American but also LGBTQ or women. These representations need to be welcomed in both member and leader groups. Employing and implementing intersectionality in each student organization on campus is extremely important because it could actively make invisible identities more visible. Intersectionality, I believe, is a breakthrough idea that serves to deconstruct the dominance of a master identity on people. It inspires people to view individuals in a more holistic way, rather than using a limited and stereotypical lens.

In addition to student organizations, I also suggest that intersectionality should be introduced into class discussions, conferences, and seminars on campuses. Many privileged people felt exhausted and were reluctant to talk about race, gender, sexuality, etc. because they had listened to the minority experience for a long time. However, privileged people did not listen carefully to marginalized people. On-campus academic activities that promote intersectionality can provide opportunities for privileged people to listen again to others’ experiences, this time with careful attention, because the post-racial, -gendered, and -sexual era is different from the traditional era. Intersectionality reminds privileged people to carefully re-listen to the voices of multiply marginalized individuals whose experiences are intersectional, complex, and different.
Intersectional Connections, Visibilities, and Representations

The consistency between my findings and earlier theorists mentioned in Chapter Two confirmed that much remained to be done to make university campus environments more inclusive for students with multiple marginalized identities. I suggest that university administrators should increase visibilities and representations of both visible (e.g., race, gender, etc.) and invisible (e.g., sexuality) identities on campus. Depending on the situation and context, my participants felt they needed to strategically put certain identities into the foreground or background to survive in classes and on campus. Many referenced the lack of intersectional visibilities and representations on campus, which disconnected participants from others. Connections and disconnections emerged simultaneously when an individual’s visible identities were perceived while their invisible identities were ignored. Therefore, increasing intersectional visibilities and representations regarding both visible and invisible identities can provide a wide range of connections leading to a more inclusive environment.

First and foremost, I suggest that universities, especially predominantly White universities, should increase the population of people with multiple marginalized identities, including professors, staff, students, and administrators. Many participants reported that they felt disconnected, ignored, and excluded because “there’s not enough of us on campus” (Charlie, Pos. 250). Another participant shared a similar experience, “None of my professors have ever explicitly told me their sexual orientation. So, I am actually not sure if any of them were LGBTQ or not… I’ve never had an Asian professor… Everyone else has been White” (Lyric, Pos. 136). My findings suggest that increasing visibilities or representations of professors with multiple marginalized identities could make students feel much safer. One participant asserted, “I can tell you that for sure, if I had an LGBTQ professor, I would immediately feel more comfortable
around them” (Lyric, Pos. 134). In addition, professors, educators, and administrators should actively and intentionally deliver positive messages regarding intersectionality to make invisible identities more visible to both marginalized and privileged students. In environments that did not expressly embrace the ideas of intersectionality, students were reluctant to disclose their identities, which oppressed and disconnected them. One participant elaborated,

There've been a couple of times where doing essays in class or something. The topic has come up and. I have to find a way to either just tell them that I'm not straight or hide it, because I'm not sure if the professor will end up discriminating against me or not. (Lyric, Pos. 136)

Furthermore, I suggest that each campus student organizations should implement intersectionality to increase awareness of invisible identities thereby providing greater opportunities to forge connections. For instance, participants offered numerous examples of situations in which they felt disconnected in the LGBTQ student organization, Asian American student organization, or the women’s club. Due to the lack of intersectional visibilities and representations in these groups and their focus on one marginalized identity, my AAFSM students related that although they felt connected to the master identity, they felt disconnected from other parts of themselves. One participant shared her feelings regarding the LGBTQ student organization, “There is like places I can relate to as because I'm a lesbian...But I as someone who is in multiple [race, gender, sexuality], it's like…I can't relate to everything” (Dale, Pos. 10). Therefore, increasing visibilities and representations in student organizations is one way to connect individuals and provide an intersectional inclusive campus for students with multiple marginalized identities.
Furthermore, my findings confirmed existing literature regarding how the curriculum should promote intersectionality to further the awareness of invisible identities and increase intersectional representations on race, gender, and sexuality. As I argued in Chapter Two, many schools lack a LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum for sexual minority students. Similarly, the majority of schools do not teach the histories of Asian American or other ethnicities as an integral part of American history curriculum. Though select schools have adopted curricula that includes the study of the history of LGBTQs, women studies, or Asian American history, I view it as a discrete improvement. My findings suggested that increasing intersectional representations of race, gender, and sexuality could serve as a way to let these identities “come to people’s mind” intersectionally (Merritt, Pos. 64 & Arrow, Pos. 120).

My findings also indicated that the reason my AAFSM participants felt disconnected from their Asainness, womenness, and LGBTQness was due to the scarcity of intersectional representations and visibilities. Therefore, increasing intersectional visibilities and representations could reconnect AAFSMs with their Asainness, womenness, and LGBTQness.

**Intersectionalism**

My findings extended the work—increase intersectional connections, visibilities, and representations—by suggesting that the implementation of affirmative action initiatives that support campus diversity did not effectively eliminate intersectional inequalities. As I elaborated in Chapters Four, Five, and Six, my research participants reported that they experienced intersectional exclusions directly related to intersectionalitism. This intersectionalitism included intersectional objectification, intersectional internalization, intersectional blindness, and intersectional post-racism, -(hetero)sexism. Therefore, I suggest three steps that Midwestern universities should implement to eliminate intersectional exclusions. These three steps are: (a)
intersectional racial-gendered-sexual awareness, (b) intersectional racial-gendered-sexual competences, and (c) intersectional racial-gendered-sexual emancipations. Implementation of these steps in Midwestern universities could be best categorized as omniculturalism, which could create an intersectional inclusive campus environment.

The first step is to raise intersectional racial-gendered-sexual awareness. Specifically, educators, educational administrators, and universities should foster intersectionality through academic activities, teaching, curriculum content, etc. to raise people’s awareness of race, gender, and sexual orientation via an intersectional lens. This first step is designed to deinternalize entrenched biases, stereotypes, and prejudices that privileged people, institutions, and society held regarding individuals with multiple marginalized identities.

The second step that I suggest, intersectional racial-gendered-sexual competences, aims to give equal competences and values to Asianness, womenness, and LGBTQness. My participants reported that their Asianness, womenness, and LGBTQness were devalued. These findings are consistent with the notion that devaluation on Asianness, womenness, and LGBTQness was associated with power relations. As I introduced Lorde’s (1984) concept regarding power in Chapter Two,

In America, this norm is usually defined as White, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure. It is with this mythical norm that the trappings of power reside within this society. Those of us who stand outside that power often identify one way in which we are different, and we assume that to be the primary cause of all oppression, forgetting other distortions around difference, some of which we ourselves may be practicing. (p.554)
Thus, identities such as race, gender, and sexual orientation are tightly connected to power relations, which prioritize heteronormativity, White supremacy, and masculinity. This second step aims to deconstruct the power relations sociohistorically constructed by privileged people, society, and institutions. Therefore, society and institutions should cooperate with educators and administrators to deconstruct the power relations that devalue my participants who are AAFSMs. Further, universities need to give intersectional equal competences to racial minorities, gender minorities, and sexuality minorities to eliminate intersectional inequalities produced by intersectional power relations.

The last step aims, ideally and eventually, to emancipate my participants who are AAFSMs. The emancipation means to succeed AAFSM students by valuing their cultures equally. In addition, emancipation also means that universities should provide equal and equitable educational opportunities and resources to this population.

Implementation of intersectionalism in universities, especially Midwestern predominantly White universities, can foster an intersectional inclusive campus environment for students with multiple intersectional identities.

**Summary**

In this chapter, 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 in this chapter, as a milestone, provided meaningful suggestions for educators, administrators, and
universities to effectively create an intersectional inclusive educational environment for my participants.
CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The concept of intersectionality appears with great frequency in many scholarly fields in social science such as educational studies. This concept was coined and introduced by the legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) who gave emphasis to the lived experiences of African American women. Crenshaw (1989) argued that “single-axis analysis” (i.e., focusing on gender or race only) was not effective when including multiple marginalized subjects from feminist theory and anti-racist policy discourse scholarship. In a review of intersectionality scholarship, works mainly presented two marginalized categories (out of the categories of race, gender, sexual orientation, social class, and other types of social subordination) as closely intertwined. The lived and educational experiences of my participants who were AAFSM college students have been overlooked due to an insufficient amount of research on this population. This study explored AAFSM college students’ lived and educational experiences and its findings contribute to the growing body of existing scholarly literature.

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 AAFSM college students attending Midwestern universities in the U.S. By better understanding the school experiences of AAFSM college students, I sought to provide research results that could bring forth concrete policy recommendations for the promotion of intersectional-inclusive educational environments. To this end, three research questions guided the study. They were:

1) What is it like to be an Asian American female sexual minority in a predominately White Midwestern university?

2) How do race, gender, and sexual orientation intersectionally shape the lived and educational experiences of Asian American female sexual minority college students?
3) How do AAFSM students with multiple identities navigate through previous and present schooling and what identity steers this navigation (e.g., race, gender, or sexual orientation)?

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 did not attempt to generalize AAFSM college students’ lived and educational experiences in the U.S. but rather sought to give emphasis to how the participants in this study made sense of their lives as students attending predominantly White campuses in Midwestern universities. The main purpose of this qualitative multi-cases study was to explore the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality; hence, intersectionality best served as the methodological approach, critical inquiry, and critical praxis for capturing the complexity of experiences of AAFSM college students. For the sake of comprehension and manageability, this study employed one of McCall’s (2005) three intersectionality methodological approaches—*intra-categorical complexity*. Instead of examining the multiple dimensions across and within analytical categories, which would make the study more complex, less comprehensible, and less manageable, *intra-categorical complexity* focused on a single dimension of each category. Specifically, this study limited its scope to one dimension of each category, rather than from the wide range of dimensions of a wide range of categories. One dimension could be Asian American from the racial category, women from the gender category, and sexual minority from the sexuality category. This is how I managed complexity in this study.

This study sought to explore AAFSM college students’ lived and educational experiences in the Midwestern universities in the U.S. Therefore, I used participant-to-researcher and snowball sampling methods to recruit participants. Eventually, I recruited nine AAFSM students,
who all attended Midwestern universities in the U.S. Three self-identified as female bisexual Chinese Americans; two participants identified themselves as female bisexual Filipino Americans; one believed she was a gender fluid demi-homosexual Chinese American; the other three self-identified as female queer Filipino American, gender fluid bisexual Asian American, and non-binary lesbian Korean American.

To generate rich data from these participants, this study was designed to use a qualitative data collection method. The primary method of data collection included the dynamicity and complexity in-depth interview model. In the data analysis stage, I utilized the qualitative data analysis application—MAXQDA 2020—to facilitate the data analysis process. In the MAXQDA 2020 application, I employed Johnny Saldaña’s (2015) coding types to analyze data. The coding types used were process coding, narrative coding, dramaturgical coding, causation coding, value coding, domain and taxonomic coding, emotion coding, versus coding, concept coding, initial coding, in vivo coding, descriptive coding, subcoding, magnitude coding, and attribute coding. By using these coding types, I generated 1,089 segments during the first coding cycle. In the second coding cycle, themes emerged based on these 1,089 code segments.

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, womenness, 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.

This study on intersectionality drew attention to an under-represented AAFSM college student group and stressed that their voices should be heard. The study employed the lens of intersectionality to explore how issues of race, gender, and sexual orientation had intersectionally impacted my AAFSM college student participants as they navigated through education. In addition, this study contributed to research on intersectionality by giving emphasis to the voices of my participants who are AAFSM college students attending Midwestern universities in the United States. The results provided crucial information for stakeholders (e.g., school policymakers) to use to develop interventions designed to create an intersectional-inclusive educational environment. The study added a new field of scholarship dedicated to the study of AAFSMs, and added further knowledge to the study of what is known as intersectionality scholarship. The meaningful contributions include intersectional objectifications, intersectional internalizations, intersectional blindness, and intersectional post-racism, -(hetero)sexism.

Here are some suggestions for future studies.

1. Emerging scholars, student researchers, and educators could employ McCall’s (2005) other two methodological approaches—anti-categorical complexity and inter-categorical
complexity—to explore the intersectionality studies. If researchers employed the *inter-categorical complexity* methodological approach, then comparative studies would be suggested for future research on intersectionality. Since the aim of this approach is to investigate the multiple groups within and across analytical categories, then other analytical categories, such as race, would need to be incorporated, such as Asian Americans. Then researchers would need to incorporate multiple ethnic dimensions within a racial category—say, Chinese Americans, Korean Americans, and Asian new wavers. The number of groups would then expand to six by cross-classifying with sexuality category (i.e., heterosexual Chinese Americans, heterosexual Korean Americans, heterosexual Asian new wavers, homosexual Chinese Americans, homosexual Korean Americans, and homosexual Asian new wavers). In this respect, comparative design within qualitative research would best serve the study. This study attempts to explore the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation.

2. In my research, I directly referenced the concept of intersectionality conducting interviews. Some intersectionality researchers (e.g., Windsong, 2016) argued that interview questions needed to incorporate intersectionality directly and precisely. For instance, the interview questions in this study would be constructed as “how do you describe your educational experiences with regard to race and sexuality as a woman?” Alternately, Windsong (2016) suggested that researchers “craft interview questions that specifically incorporated intersectionality” (p. 141). Windsong (2016) argued that when interview questions regarding race and gender being were asked separately, participants did not share their perspectives from an intersectionality view. However, some researchers argued that directly pointing out the theme intersectionality in the interviews
could impact the authenticity of the study if the theme of intersectionality did not emerge naturally. Therefore, I suggest that researchers should conduct their research by using two different designs on interview questions.

3. Most importantly, intersectionality aims to explore how an individual’s specific location shapes or influences them in specific ways, instead of merely including an endless list of multiple identities. Everyone has endless identities. For instance, I am an Asian, male, an English as a second language learner, middle-class, and able-bodied. The list of identities is endless because it will never be completed. Therefore, Davis (2014) argued that “such a list does not do much work and may, ironically, even end up becoming an excuse for not doing the necessary analysis of situating one’s self” (p. 20). Therefore, the intent of intersectionality is to explore how intersectional identities interact with interlocking systems of oppressions and exclusions.
Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Tell me your name please. How do you want me to call your name please? what is your major? where are you study at? which year are you in?
2. Can you tell me about your background please? what is your race? what is your gender? what is your sexual orientation? where did you go to high school ?
3. Could you please say something more about how you understand your race, gender, and sexual orientation? You are more than welcome to talk about them simultaneously or separately.
4. Can you tell me about your university a little bit? what does it look like? is it a racial diversity university?
5. Can you tell me what it is like to be Asian American female sexual minority on a predominately White campus?
6. Could you please say something about how you rank your race, gender, and sexual orientation identities?
7. can you give a more detailed description of why you ranked it in this way?
8. Do you go to any student organization on campus? Are you a member of any student organization on campus? If you want to join one, which one do you want to join in? Can you please give a more detailed description of your decision process?
9. Do you remember an experience or moment that required you to choose one your identity over the another? How did you react on that?
10. Do you have any moment or experience that is related to your race, gender, and sexual orientation?
11. Have you ever been treated differently based on your race, gender, and sexual orientation?

12. I am so curious about one thing, have you ever thought about your intersectional identity—the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation? What is it like to be Asian American female sexual orientation, can you say something more about that?

13. Do you feel like your race, gender, and sexual orientation intersectionally shape your educational experience or lived experience on campus, or vice versa?
DATE: September 16, 2020

TO: Bin Zhang

FROM: Ball State University IRB

RE: IRB protocol # 1651509-1

TITLE: Protecting Asian American Female Sexual Minorities: A Qualitative Study Investigating the Intersection of Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

BOARD DECISION: APPROVED

PROJECT STATUS: ACTIVE

DECISION DATE: September 16, 2020

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited: This protocol had been determined by the board to meet the definition of minimal risk.

The Institutional Review Board has approved your New Project for the above protocol, effective on September 16, 2020. Your project falls into the Expedited Category indicated below. As such, there will be no further review of your protocol, and you are cleared to proceed with the procedures outlined in your protocol. As an expedited study, there is no requirement for continuing review. Your protocol will remain on file with the IRB as a matter of record. All research under this protocol must be conducted in accordance with the approved submission and in accordance with the principles of the Belmont Report.

Your project falls under the indicated Expedited Categories:

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<th>Category 1:</th>
<th>Clinical studies of drugs and medical devices</th>
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<td>Category 2:</td>
<td>Collection of blood samples by Finger stick, Heel stick, Ear stick, or Venipuncture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Category 3:</td>
<td>Prospective collection of biological specimens for research purposes by noninvasive means</td>
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<td>Category 4:</td>
<td>Collection of data through Non-Invasive Procedures Routinely Employed in Clinical Practice, excluding procedures involving Material (Data, Documents, Records, or Specimens) that have been collected, or will be collected solely for non-research purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis)</td>
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<td>Category 5:</td>
<td>Research involving materials that have been collected or will be collected solely for non-research purposes.</td>
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<td>Category 6:</td>
<td>Collection of Data from Voice, Video, Digital, or Image Recordings Made for Research Purposes</td>
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<td>Category 7:</td>
<td>Research on Individual or Group Characteristics or Behavior or Research Employing Survey, Interview Oral History, Focus Group, Program Evaluation, Human Factors, Evaluation, or Quality Assurance Methodologies</td>
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<td>Category 8:</td>
<td>Continuing review of research previously approved by the convened IRB</td>
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<td>Category 9:</td>
<td>Continuing review of research, not conducted under an investigational new drug application or investigational device exemption where categories 2-8 do not apply but the IRB has determined and documented at a convened meeting that the research involves no greater than minimal risk and not additional risks have been identified.</td>
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**Categories where the IRB has decided to downgrade protocol to Expedited review:**

| Category 1: | Continuing review of research previously approved by the convened IRB, where research activities are limited to data analysis only. |
| Category 2: | Continuing review of research, not conducted under an investigational new drug application or investigational device exemption where categories two (2) through eight (8) research involves no greater than minimal risk and no additional risks have been identified. |
| Category 3: | Protocol modifications have resulted in the protocol becoming minimal risk and qualifying for Expedited review. |

**Editorial Notes:**

1. Approved.

While your project does not require continuing review, it is the responsibility of the P.I. (and, if applicable, faculty supervisor) to inform the IRB if the procedures presented in this protocol are to be modified or if problems related to human research participants arise in connection with this project. Any of these notifications must be addressed in writing and submitted electronically to IRBNet (www.irbnet.org). Please reference your IRB protocol number 1651509-1 in any communication to the IRB regarding this project. Be sure to allow sufficient time for review and
approval of requests for modification or continuation. If you have questions, please contact Sena Lim at (765)285-5034 or slim2@bsu.edu.

In the case of an adverse event and/or unanticipated problem, you will need to submit written documentation of the event to IRBNet under this protocol number and you will need to directly notify the Office of Research Integrity (http://www.bsu.edu/irb) within 5 business days. If you have questions, please contact Sena Lim at (765)285-5034 or slim2@bsu.edu.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project or as required under Federal and/or State regulations (ex. HIPAA, FERPA, etc.). Additional requirements may apply.
Appendix C  IRB Approval 2/2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE:</th>
<th>September 21, 2020</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TO:</td>
<td>Bin Zhang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FROM:</td>
<td>Ball State University IRB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RE:</td>
<td>IRB protocol # 1651509-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TITLE:</td>
<td>Protecting Asian American Female Sexual Minorities: A Qualitative Study Investigating the Intersection of Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBMISSION TYPE:</td>
<td>Amendment/Modification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE:</td>
<td>September 16, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTION:</td>
<td>APPROVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROJECT STATUS:</td>
<td>ACTIVE</td>
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<td>DECISION DATE:</td>
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<td>EXPIRATION DATE:</td>
<td></td>
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The Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your Amendment/Modification for Protecting Asian American Female Sexual Minorities: A Qualitative Study Investigating the Intersection of Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation. Your project was deemed MINIMAL RISK and approved on September 16, 2020. The changes you requested were reviewed at the Expedited Review level and were approved on September 21, 2020. Your project has been reviewed at the Expedited Board Level.

Editorial Notes:

1. Approved.

As a reminder, it is the responsibility of the P.I. and/or faculty sponsor to inform the IRB in a timely manner:
• when the project is completed,
• if the project is to be continued beyond the approved end date (if applicable),
• if the project is to be modified further,
• if the project encounters problems, or
• if the project is discontinued.

Any of the above notifications should be addressed in writing and submitted electronically to IRBNet (www.irbnet.org). Please reference the IRB protocol number 1651509-2 in any communication to the IRB regarding this project. Be sure to allow sufficient time for review and approval of requests for modification or continuation. If you have questions, please contact Sena Lim at (765)285-5034 or slim2@bsu.edu.

In the case of an adverse event and/or unanticipated problem, you will need to submit written documentation of the event to IRBNet under this protocol number and you will need to directly notify the Office of Research Integrity (http://www.bsu.edu/irb) within 5 business days. In case of any emergency do not wait 5 days to submit the report, contact the office at once. If you have questions, please contact Sena Lim at (765)285-5034 or slim2@bsu.edu.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project or as required under Federal and/or State regulations (ex. HIPAA, FERPA, etc.). Additional requirements may apply.
Appendix D  Ball State University Consent Form

Ball State University Consent Form

Study Title: Protecting Asian American Female Sexual Minorities: A Qualitative Study Investigating the Intersection of Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation
IRBNet number: 1651509-1

Principal Investigator: Bin Zhang, Ball State University, bzhang8@bsu.edu

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation as they relate to Asian American female sexual minority college students’ lived and educational experiences in Midwestern universities. You are being asked to participate in a study addressing how educational experiences were influenced by race, gender, and sexual orientation simultaneously. The study is being conducted as part of the requirements of a Ball State University PhD program.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria: To be eligible for this study, you must be at least 18 years of age and be an Asian American who is LGBTQ and female; in other words, you need to be a female and LGBTQ and have American citizenship with Asian descent. Non-Asian American, including but not limited to, White, African American, Latino/a American, Asian international students, and the like are not qualified for this study. You also need to be enrolled in a Midwestern university.

Procedure and Duration: The interview questions will be focusing on Asian American female sexual minority college students’ lived and educational experiences. My interview questions will be emphasizing on exploring the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation as they relate to Asian American female sexual minority college students’ lived and educational experiences in Midwestern universities. If you agree to participate in this study, you will participate in at least one virtual interview via Webex or other similar online meeting application. Due to the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic, the interviews may be conducted via Webex, phone, or other online meeting applications. The duration of each of the interviews will be approximately one to two hours.

Audio Recordings: For the purpose of accuracy, interviews will be recorded using a digital recording device. Interview recordings will be transcribed following the interviews. Names used during interviews will be changed to pseudonyms during transcribing. The recordings will be kept in a secure, password protected location and will be erased at the conclusion of the end of this project, no later than August 1, 2025. Only the principal investigator (Bin Zhang) and my dissertation chairperson (Dr. Gilbert Park) will have access to data gathered during this study.

Data Confidentiality or Anonymity: All data gathered via interview recordings and transcriptions, will remain confidential and no identifying information such as names will appear in dissertation paper and other papers. Although disclosure of your identity is a possible risk, every precaution will be taken to protect your confidentiality in all records associated with this study.
Storage of Data: The interview transcriptions and researcher’s field notes will be kept on the researcher’s (Bin Zhang) password protected computers. Only the principal investigator (Bin Zhang) and my dissertation chairperson (Dr. Gilbert Park) will have access to data gathered during this study. All records (interview recordings, electronic and paper-based documents) will be kept in secure, password-protected computers and access-restricted physically locked locations (i.e., Bin Zhang’s apartment), and will be destroyed by August 1, 2025.

Risks or Discomforts: There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research study at this time.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. However, please know that your time, experiences, and opinions are of great value to the researcher to gain in-depth understanding about the Asian American female sexual minority college students’ educational and lived experiences.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may stop participating in this research at any time, or choose not to answer any question, without penalty. If you decide to withdraw from this study, the researcher will reserve the right the use information that was shared prior to that decision.

IRB Contact Information
For questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Office of Research Integrity, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5052 or at orihelp@bsu.edu.

************
If you do not understand any portion of what you are being asked to do, or the contents of this form, the researcher is available to provide a complete explanation. Questions are welcome at any time. Please contact Bin Zhang at bzhang8@bsu.edu, or Dr. Gilbert Park (gcpark@bsu.edu) or (765) 285-5350 (Office).
Consent

I, __________, agree to participate in this research project entitled, “Protecting Asian American Female Sexual Minorities: A Qualitative Study Investigating the Intersection of Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation.” IRBNet number: 1651509-1&2

I have read the statements contained herein, have had the opportunity to fully discuss my concerns and questions, and fully understand the nature and character of my involvement in this research project as a human subject. I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have been informed of any and all possible risks or discomforts. I have read the description of this project and give my consent to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.

To the best of my knowledge, I meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria for participation (described on the previous page) in this study.

I give my permission to audio/video record the interviews. ________ Yes

__________ No

Participant’s Signature  Date

Principal Investigator (Researcher) Signature

Researcher Contact Information

Principal Investigator:  Bin Zhang, Ph.D. candidate
Department of Educational Studies
Ball State University
Muncie, IN  47304
Email: bzhang8@bsu.edu

Research Project Supervisor

Dr. Gilbert Park
Associate Professor of Social Foundations of Education and Multicultural Education
Department of Educational Studies, TC 835
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Muncie, IN 47304
Office Phone Number: (765) 285-5350
Email: gcpark@bsu.edu
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