

Testimonios of Black queer students navigating school

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The Study

- Narrative inquiry study of how queer students of color navigate school, negotiate multiple intersecting identities, and conceptualize the purpose of formal education.
- 9 month design (6 months of data collection and 3 months for analysis), 3 In-depth, semi-structured, phenomenological one-on-one interviews, focus group, life map (visual narrative), researcher journal, analytic memos, artifacts
- 10 racially, gender and sexually diverse queer student participants of color (ages 18-24)
- Queer of color critique (Ferguson, 2004; Hong & Ferguson, 2011)



Review of Literature

- The extant body of research on queer students has tended to privilege victimizing narratives and deficit discourses of queer youth (Hackford-Peer, 2010)
- Queer youth identities are still overwhelmingly represented as White, middle class and cisgender (Driver, 2008; Kumashiro, 2001; Paceley & Flynn, 2012)
- Few scholars (Blackburn & McCready, 2009; Cruz, 2012; Diaz & Kosciw, 2009; Harley et al., 2002; Harper, Wardell, McGuire, 2011; Johnson, 2008; Kumashiro, 2001; Majied, 2010; Marquez & Brockenbrough, 2013; Misawa, 2004; 2009; 2010; Monteiro & Fuqua, 1995; Parks, 2001; Quinn, 2007; Russell & Truong, 2001; Sausa, 2005; Vaught, 2004; Wall & Washington, 1991) have explored how multiple intersecting forms of discrimination based on race, sexual orientation and gender identity impact the academic lives of queer youth in formal school settings.



Today's Presentation

- Presentation of emerging themes drawn from the interview narratives of 7 Black queer student participants.
- Data is taken from a larger narrative inquiry study
- Challenges or obstacles that participants identified
 - gender policing
 - navigating violent school climate
- Strategies that participants identified as supporting academic progress
 - utilizing friendships for emotional support



Testimonios

A testimonio involves radical listening which offers in-depth understanding of a particular social context, and sees collective sharing as a political project.

A testimonio is a dialogical confrontation that elicits active reflection on the audience's part, and positions those involved as both listener and witness to the speaker's lived experience (Cruz, 2012, p. 263).



7 Black queer student Participants

NAME	AGE	RACE	SEXUAL ORIENT.	GENDER/ SEX	STUDENT STATUS
CAT	23	BLACK	Gay	Gender Queer	A.A.
AE	23	BLACK	Gay	CISmale	B.A.*
RONNIE	23	BLACK	Gay	CISmale	M.A.
GOGO YUBARI	22	Mixed Black Latino	Homo - Flexible	Cunt Male	A.A.
ARCHIE	24	Jamaican American	Gay	CISmale	DDS
SAM	18	African American	Bisexual	CISfemale	B.A
NIQKO	24	Mixed Black Latino	Hetero	TransMan	A.A.



Emerging themes: gender policing

AE: There's the negative where, when it comes to expressing emotions or your feminine side, if you have one, that's a little bit more difficult particularly in the black community, where there is this image where I have to live up to hypermasculine identity that may not even be my own. That's where the difficulty comes in and that's where I see a lot of basis for psychological trauma in many cases. There's a level of stress from trying to live up to other people's expectations, and other people's image of what you should be as a black man.

Archie: Being a man, there's a lot of pressure to like always be like emotionless, or be less compassionate, or don't be too wishy washy. I'm a very emotional guy so that where I don't satisfy the whole "be a man" thing. That comes from my Black straight friends. They're really more like, you have to be tough. You have to endure a lot.



Emerging themes: gender policing

Ronnie: People assume that if you identify as male that you have to be strong. Especially in Black culture, you gotta be that alpha male. You can't cry. You can't do this. Or you can't wear that.

I didn't like half the stuff that was on the list of what a stereotypical male would like. The challenge was just being different and trying to break the mold. Being from a family that focuses on the stereotypes and being different was tough. And when you're trying to do things different, they look at you different.

Sam: Compared to a lot of the girls in my class, I wasn't as pretty or stylist or whatever kids do, so I'd get bullied for that. One, I was bigger than everybody, so automatically comes the fat jokes. Then I always wore a certain style of clothing, so I looked really weird all the time. So, there came those jokes. And I never hung out with all the girls or flirted with the guys like all the girls did. So that was like really weird. From like 3rd to like junior year I was bullied. It was really weird for me to try to fit in with people and I was bullied because I was so different. I hated being made fun of. It's a really crappy feeling to know that you're not wanted 'cause you're this way other than being the same.



Emerging themes: gender policing

Niqko: The thing challenging about it is for someone to not out you [intentionally] but out you. I'd had some managers who didn't know how to respect my pronouns. Other than that just trying not to get outted



Emerging themes: navigating violent school climate

CAT: I think in high school it was always the social repercussions of—the social consequences and repercussions of who I was. I don't think there was anything necessarily in my way. It was always the environment. You know, from fighting in my earlier part of school, and then sorta like the anxiety that developed from, you know the fallout from the more physical stuff. The physical aspect didn't really last too long. I kicked a few asses, and then after that it was like, okay we don't mess with this one. But there was a lot of emotional kind of fallout from like learned violence. And learned violence was always part of my schooling, even in elementary school. So, it was just social challenges like –taunting, leering, jeering, you know

AE: High school was very different but it was a lot more violent. You have this violent atmosphere that I'm already being warned about. I don't need to become a target for any freaking reason.



Emerging themes: utilizing friendships for emotional support

Gogo Yubari: I would say my friends cause even if my friends don't identify exactly as I do, I think there's a little piece of me in all of my friends. There is a little bit of my identity in everyone I associate myself with. And I associate with them because I feel like they help me grow. They help me learn about certain aspects of my own identity, and it keeps pushing me forward because I want to be as well versed as they are.

AE: I do feel support in my friends and my parents because there's a lot of stupid things that I've done and people have stood by me through, and I'm like that tells a lot when people stand by you through the stupid stuff, as opposed to just the good times.



Emerging themes: utilizing friendships for emotional support

CAT: I have mentors. I have girlfriends. I have gay family. I feel that my biological family loves me. I don't feel very support but I don't think that's malicious. I think there's just a lot of things they just don't understand. I get a lot of my emotional needs and supports from my friends. I have amazing friends. I always have had a really good group of friends. We wear each other out sometimes, but for the most part, my friendships have been very important and sacred to me. That's where I get most of my support.

Ronnie: My really good core group of friends. My mentor has always been there—even for the more personal things. My family is there, but I don't really relay the black gay male issues on them because they respect me but they don't accept it. So, I don't put the issues on them. It's all I need from them and that's that.



Questions/Comments

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