Abstract
Setting the tone for this qualitative study and the enriched data discovered, is a quote by bell hooks (2001), “if we love each other and embrace our diverse sexualities, we create an environment where there is no sexuality that cannot speak its name” (p. 207).” In this critical discourse analysis, I explored why BlackQueer adults choose to mentor and embolden BlackQueer youth. Life History methodology brought their experiences to life. Lesbian, Gay, and Gender Nonconforming (LGGNC) youth learn how to conceal certain attributes associated with being Queer. They are compelled to consider and give context to their parents, family members, K-12 school personnel, and community leaders using “eyes,” that do not embrace their truth. Striving to attain acceptance is a matter of significance. LGGNC individuals are often subjected to a greater level of surveillance, and Black bodies have been particularly targeted (Browne, 2015; Hartman, 2019). BlackQueer adults and youth seem to be responsible for finding their own community to belong, experiencing self-love, and navigating relationships. They also have early responsibilities that other youth may not have to negotiate in their quest for acceptance. Additionally, Black LGGNC youth from the Midwestern United States may face harsher experiences and have a more difficult time expressing themselves and finding safe spaces. This study engaged Black Feminist Thought theory (e.g. Hill-Collins, 2001), to explain what it means to be Black and Queer in regards to race and gender, and the Black Queer Identity Matrix, (e.g. Howard, 2014), to give insight on sexuality and what it means to be Black and Queer in this society. Using this combination allowed me to speak and interact with foundational research, while sharing the life histories of my participants. I interviewed six Black adults who identified as Non-Binary, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgender, and three Black young adults, who identified as Non-Binary and Bisexual. I found that my participants had to relearn boundaries and to seek approval from themselves instead of outside influence. My purpose is to illuminate the light in the gap of present research while allowing the voices of Black Queer Youth to stand tall in their identity.

Keywords: BlackQueer youth, BlackQueer adults, Mentoring, Belonging, K-12 Schools