AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

COURTNEY ALYSSA PAYNE, for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in PSYCHOLOGY, presented on June 21\textsuperscript{st}, 2017, at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale.

TITLE: AT THE MARGINS OF INTERSECTING IDENTITIES: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A BLACK QUEER WOMAN?

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Women of color who are also sexual minorities face an interesting position of being marginalized on multiple dimensions of their identity. Psychological health and well being can be negatively impacted by having a minority status, so it is imperative that psychologists are aware of cultural differences and are competent in addressing them (APA, 2002). For persons with marginalized racial, gender, and sexual identities, identity is crafted in ways that create meaning for the individual despite experiences of racism, sexism, or homophobia. The purpose of this study was to give voice to the lived experiences of African American women who are sexual minorities. Ten interviews were conducted using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and used frameworks of Queer Theory and intersectionality to study the experience of having multiple marginalized identities (i.e., racial, sexual, and gender identities), in addition to the meaning that individuals derive from the experience of their identity. Eight Emergent Themes were identified: (1) Dichotomy of Identity, (2) (Dis)Comfort in Communities, (3) Cultural Expectations, (4) Power and Oppression, (5) Movement between Categories, (6) Congruence, (7) Challenges to Identity, and (8) Expression and Performance of Self.