MEETING BLACK GIRLS ON THE MOON: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF BLACK GIRLS' EXPERIENCES IN SCHOOLS

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by

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ABSTRACT

This manuscript style dissertation, *Meeting Black Girls on the Moon: A Qualitative Exploration of Black Girls' Experiences in Schools*, highlighted the experiences of thirty-one Black girls in middle schools and identified what supported or disrupted their learning and development. Paper 1,*"They told me what I was before I could tell them what I was:" Black Girls' Ethnic-Racial Identity Development Processes within Multiple Worlds*, explored the subjective definitions, meanings of race, and specific experiences within the social "worlds" of eleven Black girls from two racially diverse middle schools in the Southeastern United States that shape ethnic-racial identity meaning development. In this study, the multiple worlds of schools and classrooms, family, and peers were connected to racial meaning-making among Black girls. Findings from this study identified potential pathways for the production and reproduction of "damaging" and "controlling" ideologies (i.e. through school curriculum and among peers). Paper 2, *"Our Year to Shine:" Exploring How Media Affects Black Girls*, explored how media, including #BlackGirlMagic, affected Black girls as they worked to define their self and collective identities in adolescence. Findings indicated that Black girls selected, interpreted and were affected by media in different, multidimensional ways. #BlackGirlMagic, in particular, provided Black girls with a framework for developing an asset-based sense of self and conceptualization of Black girlhood. Paper 3, *"I don't really like, you know, love going to school, but I love learning new things:" Examining the Role of Teachers in Shaping the Educational "Journey" of Black Girls*, explored how ongoing practices, assumptions and processes across multiple levels of schooling (e.g., general ecological context, interactions with teachers and administrators) perpetuated racial inequalities or promoted racial equity. In addition to normative, developmentally-appropriate experiences of Black girls in middle schools (e.g. academic related pressures to succeed, "drama" among peers, and bias-based bullying), Black girls perceived that teachers, administrators, and peers held stereotypes about who they were and their capacity to succeed. Both positive and negative feedback from teachers had implications for their reactive coping responses. In culmination, the work in this dissertation suggests that (1) the school ecology (i.e. peers, curriculum, teachers, administrators, broader school culture) is a contentious space that requires Black girls to navigate unique social challenges along their educational journeys, (2) feedback from academic, media and peer environments influences Black girls' identities and understanding of oppression, and (3) institutions can play an important role in supporting or hindering the success of Black girls. My findings underscore the need to actively support the identity development of Black girls as they navigate educational spaces. Each paper is designed to better equip researchers, policymakers, and practitioners with critical and timely information to meet Black girls on the moon.

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APPROVAL OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation, "Meeting Black Girls on the Moon: A Qualitative Exploration of Black Girls' Experiences in Schools" has been approved by the Graduate Faculty of the Curry School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Joanna Lee Williams (Chair)

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Meredith Clark

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Nancy Deutsch

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Chauncey Smith

March 5, 2019

DEDICATION

To Granny, Great, Grandpa and Pa-Pa
To Darnisha Johnson and Lynette Jones

"I wrote the first book because I wanted to read it. I thought that kind of book, with that subject—those most vulnerable, most undescribed, not taken seriously little Black girls—had never existed seriously in literature. No one had ever written about them except as props. Since I couldn't find a book that did that, I thought, 'Well, I'll write it and then I'll read it.' It was really the reading impulse that got me into the writing thing."

Toni Morrison, 2014

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Family, WE DID IT!! Thank you for reminding me to shoot for the moon, Mom and Dad! Grandma, thank you for your endless support. Nicholas, thank you for covering my house in affirming post-it notes and routinely texting "you got this!" Grace, I love you! Aunties, uncles, cousins, Dr. Lauren Mims is finally in the house! Thank you, thank you, thank you!

The limitless support and confidence from colleagues, family members and friends put wind beneath my wings. The work of #MeetingBlackGirlsontheMoon has only just begun!

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Lunella Lafayette, a nine-year-old Black girl in the Marvel Universe is the "smartest person in the whole wide world" (Reeder et. al., 2016) yet her brilliance is unrecognized and unchallenged in P.S. 20. Lower East Side School (See Image 1). Instead of being provided opportunities to solve the complex math equations running through her mind, Lunella is placed in a regular education class where, because she is unchallenged, she daydreams. As a result, is nicknamed "Moon Girl" because her head is always in the clouds. She is cast as a troublemaker and behind in class although she knows all the correct answers. Lunella is a fictional comic book superhero, but her story rings true among Black girls who are underserved in classrooms across the nation.

While #BlackGirlMagic (Thompson, 2013) trends on the Internet as society uplifts and praises the brilliance of Black women and girls, the ever-present 'magic' of Black girls in K-12 public schools throughout the United States remains contested. The pernicious stereotype that Black children are "troublemakers" or "achieving at significantly lower rates than their white peers" mediates Black children's experiences in the school system (Bullock, Alexander & Gholston, 2012). For instance, when a Black girl asks a challenging question in class, she is perceived as abrasive and aggressive, rather than assertive and outspoken (Morris, 2007). Additionally, school districts across the Nation have dress code policies based in race, gender and class stereotypes that reinforce the marginalization and oppression of Black girls (e.g. policies that punish

Black girls for traditionally Black hairstyles and head coverings and policies that ban clothes that are "inappropriate" in size) (National Women's Law Center, 2018). In turn, Black girls are more likely to be pushed out of classrooms and schools rather than nominated for gifted services, as evidenced by the overrepresentation of Black girls in school discipline and the underrepresentation of Black girls in gifted and talented education (Morris, 2016; Civil Rights Data Collection, 2016).

The U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights reported that in the 2013-2014 academic year, Black girls were 5.5 times more likely to be suspended from school than white girls and more likely than any other race or gender to be suspended more than once. In K-12 schools, Black girls were 8% of enrolled students, but 13% of students receiving one or more out-of-school suspensions. Black and Latinx students are also underrepresented in gifted and talented education as well as advanced placement coursework. Notably, a study by Grissom (2015) found that Black students are half as likely as white students to be put on a "gifted" track in math and reading—even when they have comparable test scores.

Research that documents discipline disproportionality and opportunity gaps is important in holding school systems accountable for prohibiting discrimination in public and charter school (see Title VI, Title IX, Title II and Section 504 federal legislation), however research that only focuses on gaps may perpetuate and reproduce negative discourses about Black students (see Bullock, Alexander & Gholston, 2012 for a larger discussion). For example, if the criminalization of Black girls and/or the underrepresentation of Black girls in gifted programming is the "single story" (Adichie,

2009) of Black girls' educational experiences, researchers, policymakers and practitioners may presume that Black girls are "at risk" or "deficient."

It is important to presume that the brilliance of Black girls is ever present and any gaps in achievement and/or discipline are examples of how systemic racism suppresses the "intellectual rights of minority children" (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Young, 2011). This shifts the work from an examination of the actions and behaviors of Black girls and their consequences to an examination that "locates and highlights the unique characteristics of Black students" (Bullock, Alexander & Gholston, 2012). My dissertation, *Meeting Black Girls on the Moon,* is comprised of three papers: *"They told me what I was before I could tell them what I was:" Black Girls' Ethnic-Racial Identity Development Processes within Multiple Worlds* (Paper 1), *"Our Year to Shine:" Exploring How Media Affects Black Girls* (Paper 2), and *"I don't really like, you know, love going to school, but I love learning new things:" Examining the Role of Teachers in Shaping the Educational "Journey" of Black Girls* (Paper 3). Each paper examines the positive journeys of brilliant Black girls in schools, what disrupts their learning and development, and what educators can do to better support Black girls in adolescence.

Theoretical perspectives on the identity development of Black girls in schools

Meeting Black Girls on the Moon was guided by theoretical perspectives that consider development in context (See Conceptual Model 1). Developmental theorists have posited that identity development and meaning making are shaped largely by youths' developmental status as well as ecological context (Spencer, 1995). Development occurs as a transaction between an individual and their context, as well as between and among contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Lerner, et al., 2002). During early adolescence,

Black youth work to answer "who am I" and "what does it mean to be a Black youth in contemporary society" within a sociocultural context of racism and prejudice (Spencer, 1995). Black youth are tasked with understanding what it means to be "a member of a group targeted by racism" (Tatum, 1997). For Black girls, in particular, messages about race, skin color, class, gender, as well as maturational differences play a critical role in shaping their developing social identities because they are "tied to interconnected systems of power" (Collins, 2016; Crenshaw, 1997; Spencer, Dupree & Hartmann, 1997). In turn, Black adolescents' navigation of the unique social challenges such as perceived racial stigmatization and discrimination informs their perceptions of self and group identities, as well as academic outcomes (Garcia Coll et al, 1996; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003; Yip, 2018).

According to the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST), adolescents experience a self-appraisal process (e.g. How do others see me?) in response to stereotypes and biases about their social identities (e.g. race, gender, class, skin tone, maturation) that is "unavoidably linked" to stress (Spencer, 1995; Spencer, Dupree & Hartmann, 1997). The PVEST model predicts that in response, youth must determine how to react and cope with either a maladaptive or an adaptive solution (Spencer, 1995). Perceived social supports, such as perceived positive teacher expectations or perceived popularity with peers can mediate the experience and interpretation of the stressor, which has implications for coping behavior. An adaptive solution like self-acceptance is linked to a productive outcome like resiliency, while a maladaptive solution like a negative learning attitude is associated with an unproductive outcome like school dropout (Spencer, 1995). As an example framed using PVEST,

Spencer (1995) explains that an African American student who repeatedly receives negative feedback about their identity in school may react by "shutting off" from the schooling experience so that they can align themselves more closely with sites of more positive feedback, such as among peers or outside of the school.

In alignment with PVEST and other developmental theories, all three of my papers are grounded in the perspective that the experience of growing up as a Black girl is not monolithic. Identity focused ecological theories provide a framework to explore the multidimensional ways Black girls work to resolve the key development quandaries of "Who am I?," "How do others see me?," and "What does it mean to be a Black girl in contemporary society?" While Black girls may report similar stereotypes and instances of bias and discrimination, their reactions and coping strategies may differ based on their individual ecologies. My work acknowledges this by focusing both on common themes and individual narratives in order to better understand the process of identity development among Black girls.

My perspective on the identity development of Black girls as a Black feminist researcher

A Black feminist perspective recognizes the strengths of every Black woman and girl. This perspective shapes the objectives of my research, the guiding theoretical framework(s), methodologies, as well as interpretations of the results. Collins (2002) argues that Black feminist intellectuals approach research on women and girls as "situated knowers"--possessing a unique and important way of knowing the conditions of oppression. Black feminist intellectuals center the voices of Black women and girls in research, acknowledging both the marginalization and resilience among Black women

and girls. Additionally, Black feminist intellectuals function as intermediaries between the Black community and the academy.

Overall, this perspective advocates for the generation of new knowledge and actions to promote social change (i.e. #MeetingBlackGirlsontheMoon). Accordingly, my dissertation aims to comprehensively examine the experiences of Black girls in schools from a perspective of promise, not risk. I contend that every Black girl will excel in school with the proper instruction, resources, and supports. In serving at the nexus between research, policy, practice and lived experiences, the overarching goal is to identify ways to actively support the identity development of Black girls as they negotiate social environments that convey messages that Black girls are devalued. I discuss my perspective in more detail in Appendix 1.

Methods

The analytic sample in Paper 1 included eleven Black girls drawn from a larger, mixed-methods study focusing on understanding how racial/ethnic diversity plays a role in students' social experiences. Black girls in the sample attended two racially diverse middle schools in the Southeastern United States. The analyses drew from individual and group interview data. Students in the analytic sample were interviewed by Black women researchers once within their friend groups and once individually in sixth grade. Interviews were designed to guide students through a set of questions on social relationships as well as their sense of belonging in school. In the group interview, students also collaborated on drawing, labeling, and discussing a “cafeteria map” of peer groups in their grade. Then, students were asked to answer questions about the map like “which groups get along and which groups may not get along and why?” In the

individual interview, students were asked to reflect on their experiences with topics related to cultural diversity.

Papers 2 and 3 drew from the experiences of Black girls in sixth, seventh and eighth grade (n=21), who were recruited from a summer program for Black girls located in a mid-sized, Southern city. In the nine-week summer program, formed almost twenty years ago with a mission to empower girls of color, Black girls explore science, technology, engineering and math in a culturally affirming space. In the City, nearly 50% of the population is African American, and during the school year, most girls attended predominantly Black, racially segregated public schools. Girls' ages ranged from ten to fourteen years old (M=12). Data were collected within the first two weeks of enrollment in the program through individual and group interviews as well as observations. I developed and piloted a Black girl-centered qualitative interview protocol designed to guide Black girls through a set of questions and activities to learn more about Black girlhood, which included a self-portrait activity as well as student-centered interview questions to facilitate rich dialogue.

Data Analysis

Individual and focus group interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using narrative analysis and interpretation. Following data collection, all group and individual interview transcriptions were transcribed, cleaned, and preliminarily processed by a team of researchers using a Google form in order to promote data familiarity. The process of data analysis adopted the inductive analysis process via mapping and writing around data (Bhattacharya, 2017). Through an iterative process of reading, writing, reflection, and peer and subject matter expert debriefing, I identified a preliminary

organizational pattern within the data. Individual story arcs (Saldana, 2017) as well as visual maps (Bhattacharya, 2017) were also created to ensure the capturing of multiple viewpoints and experiences, as well as make connections across cases. After repeating the process of visual mapping and writing many times and making revisions based on reflection and conversation, I created themes to organize the data.

Results

Paper 1 explored the subjective definitions, meanings of race, and specific experiences within the social "worlds" of eleven Black girls from two racially diverse middle schools in the Southeastern United States that shape ethnic-racial identity meaning development. We found that the multiple worlds of schools and classrooms, family, and peers were connected to racial meaning-making among Black girls. Black girls' responses highlighted the phenomenological component of ERI development, however, there were a number of common processes by which girls are learning and developing their identities.

Many of the messages to which girls seemed most attuned to were associated with negative stereotypes or shallow, decontextualized historical accounts (e.g., of enslaved Africans). Learning about race was associated with learning about slavery in history class and the messages Black girls heard about their race among their peers mirrored the stereotypical or shallow messages the girls reported about what they learned about race in history class. Importantly, this study also illustrated potential pathways for the production and reproduction of "damaging" and "controlling" ideologies (i.e. through school curriculum and among peers). These pathways may be important in understanding other marginalized students experiences in schools, which may have implications for youths'

sense of group pride, affirmation, and belonging, and their views on how others feel about their group.

Paper 2 employed an intersectional developmental perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Lerner, et al., 2002; Spencer, Dupree & Hartmann, 1997; Valkenburg & Peter, 2013) to better understand how media, including #BlackGirlMagic, affected Black girls as they work to define their self and collective identities in adolescence. In addition to the theoretical perspectives described above, Paper 2 also used Valkenburg & Peter's (2013) Differential Susceptibility to Media Effects Model (DSMM) to conceptualize how media can affect youth in different ways. Valkenburg & Peter (2013) propose that the effects of media are conditional, not universal, and a number of factors (developmental status, cognitive and affective differences, etc.) can influence how youth make-meaning of media. Accordingly, this study provided space for Black girls to describe and define what images they see in the media as well as reflect on how the images related to their individual as well as collective identities as Black girls. Additionally, the study sought to understand what additional representation Black girls wished to see.

Findings were in alignment with DSMM propositions (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013). Black girls selected, interpreted and were affected by media in different, multidimensional ways. The images that appeared to elicit the greatest affective arousal (e.g. excitement, deep reflection) were images that tied to the main developmental questions, "Who am I" and "What does it mean to be a Black female in society?" (Collins, 2016; Spencer, Dupree & Hartmann, 1997). Second, Black girls constructed affirming interpretations of the images and actions of Black women and girls in the media. Third, #BlackGirlMagic (Thompson, 2018) provided Black girls with a

framework for developing an asset-based sense of self and conceptualization of Black girlhood. Black girls provided rich descriptions of what Black girl magic meant, using words and phrases like "our power that shines through," "how we are," to "be you" and "have something that nobody else has." The answers provided by Black girls in response to "Are there images of Black women and girls that you wish you could see more of in the media" illustrate the capabilities of Black girls to "restory." Finally, Black girls identified a need for more women to share their stories to affirm and inspire a Black girl navigating the same experiences.

Paper 3 centered and privileged the voices of Black girls to explore how ongoing practices, assumptions and processes across multiple levels of schooling (e.g., general ecological context, interactions with teachers and administrators) perpetuate racial inequalities or promote racial equity. In addition to normative, developmentally-appropriate experiences of Black girls in middle school (e.g. academic related pressures to succeed, "drama" among peers, and bias-based bullying), I also found that Black girls perceived that teachers, administrators and peers held stereotypes about who they are and their capacity to succeed.

Black girls' descriptions of their interactions and relationships with teachers and administrators confirmed that relationships can be powerful resources for students (Pianta, 2016), however that power can either positively or negatively contribute to their academic success and wellbeing. In alignment with recent research on teachers' racialized expectations of Black girls (Morris, 2012; Joseph, Viesca & Bianco, 2016; Wun, 2016), girls described specific ways they were "othered" based on pervasive racial stereotypes about their academic abilities, perceived femininity, and perceived sexual

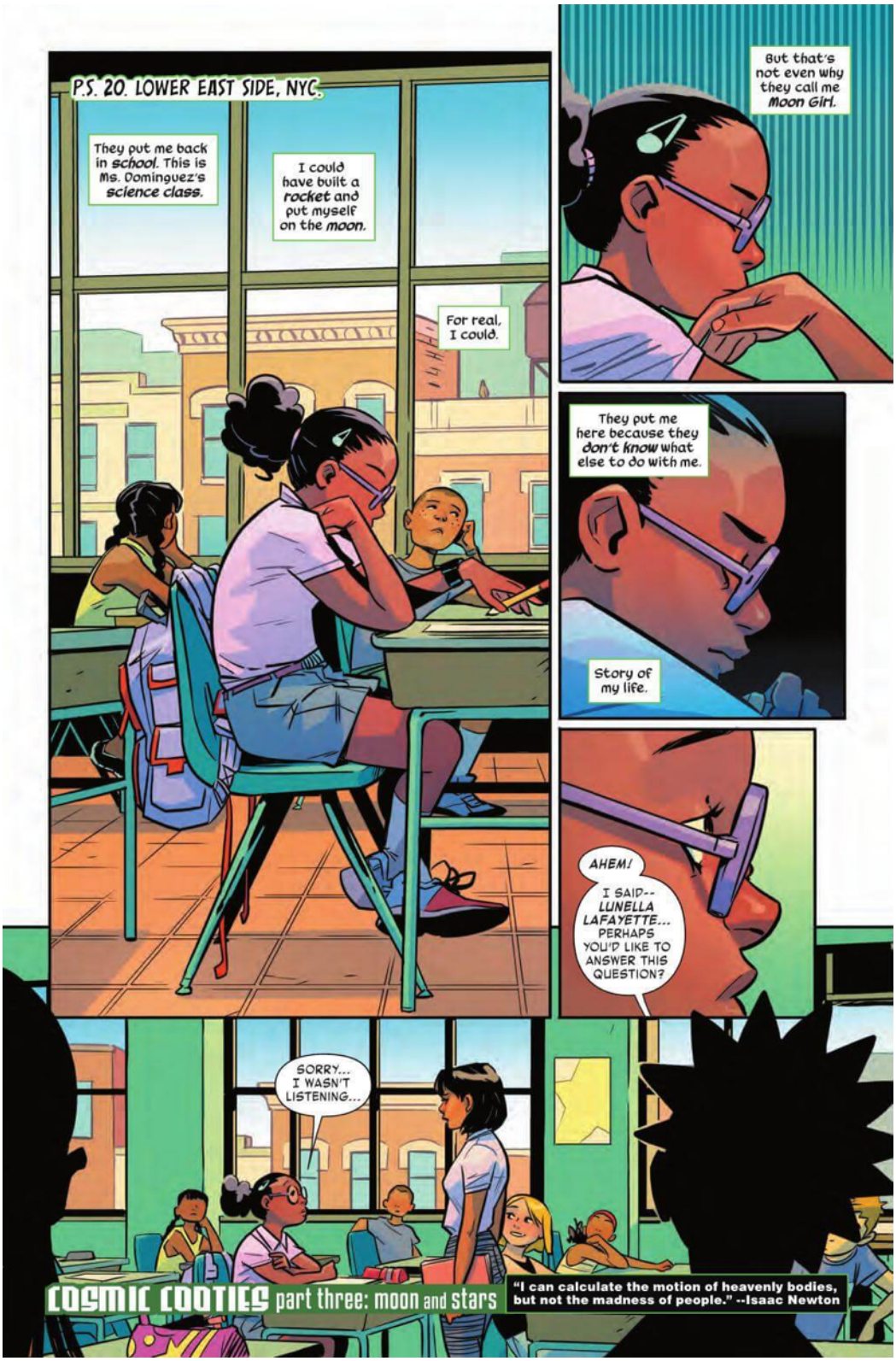
knowledge and activity. Black girls also perceived how successful teachers rejected deficit thinking. Their descriptions illustrated how *dreamkeepers*, successful teachers of African American students, teachers taught "to and through" (Gay, 2000) rather than "despite" girls identities.

Finally, my analyses identified two categories of feedback from teachers that had implications for their reactive coping responses. Negative feedback included *ignoring, providing negative verbal feedback and disciplining* and positive feedback included *acknowledging and providing academic support and providing positive verbal feedback.* Additionally, *dreamkeepers buffered* students from toxic situations with a high likelihood of future discipline. In alignment with PVEST (Spencer, 1995; Spencer, Dupree & Hartmann, 1997), the reactions and coping strategies in response to negative incidents varied across individuals. Future research must continue to identify inequalities without questioning the strengths and resilience of Black girls.

Conclusion

In culmination, the work in this dissertation suggests that (1) the school ecology (i.e. peers, curriculum, teachers, administrators, broader school culture) is a contentious space that requires Black girls to navigate unique social challenges along their educational journeys, (2) feedback from academic, media and peer environments influences Black girls' identities and understanding of oppression, and (3) institutions can play an important role in supporting or hindering the success of Black girls. My findings underscore the need to actively support the identity development of Black girls as they navigate educational spaces. Each paper hopes to better equip researchers, policymakers and practitioners with knowledge that can be applied when researching and working with

Black girls. I have submitted Paper 1 and Paper 2 for publication. Paper 3 will be submitted early spring. In addition to the ongoing development of scholarly publications from my data, I have a research advocacy plan that includes research parties with Black girls and meetings with legislators and community members to discuss findings and provide suggestions for responding supportively to Black girls as they define their identities. Together, we can meet Black girls on the moon!



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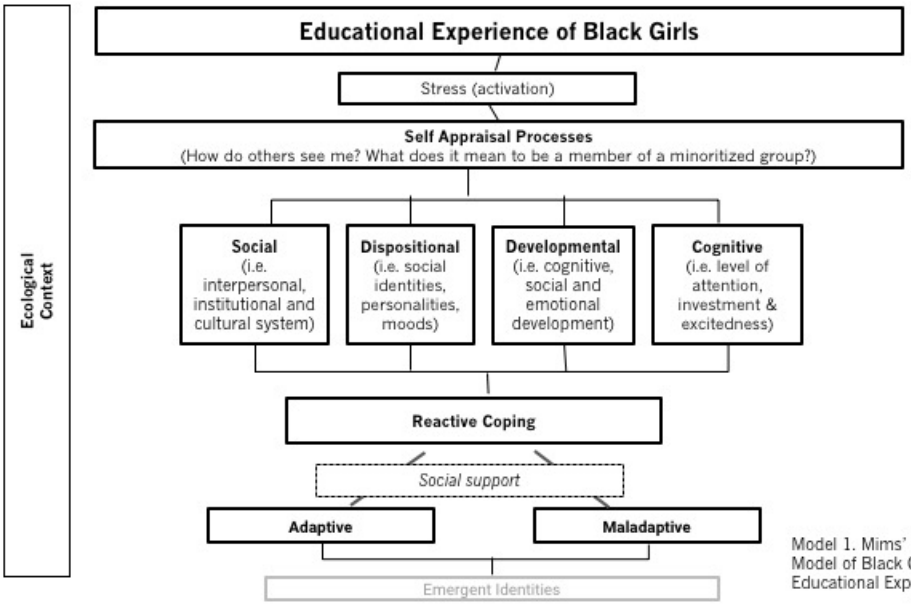

Model 1. Mims' Conceptual Model of Black Girls' Educational Experiences

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"They told me what I was before I could tell them what I was:" Black Girls' Ethnic-Racial Identity Development Processes Within Multiple Worlds

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"They told me what I was before I could tell them what I was:" Black Girls' Ethnic-Racial Identity Development Processes Within Multiple Worlds

Abstract

In utilizing qualitative methods, this study explores the subjective definitions, meanings of race, and specific experiences within the social "worlds" of eleven Black girls from two racially diverse middle schools in the Southeastern United States that shape ethnic-racial identity meaning development. Individual and group interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using an inductive analysis process via mapping and writing around the data. We find that the multiple worlds of schools and classrooms, family, and peers are connected to racial meaning-making among Black girls. Black girls' responses highlight the phenomenological component of ERI development, however, there are a number of common processes by which girls are learning and developing their identities. Many of the messages to which girls seem most attuned are associated with negative stereotypes or shallow, decontextualized historical accounts (e.g., of enslaved Africans). Learning about race was associated with learning about slavery in history class and the messages Black girls heard about their race among their peers mirrored the stereotypical or shallow messages the girls reported about what they learned about race in history class. Importantly, this study also illustrates potential pathways for the production and reproduction of "damaging" and "controlling" ideologies (i.e. through school curriculum and among peers). These pathways may be important in understanding other marginalized students experiences in schools, which may have implications for youth's sense of group pride, affirmation, and belonging, and their views on how others feel about their group.

"They told me what I was before I could tell them what I was:" Black Girls' Ethnic-Racial Identity Development Processes Within Multiple Worlds

Indiya, [1]a biracial American Indian and African American girl in sixth grade, was instructed by her teacher to go home and learn about the origins of her first and last name. Once home, Indiya learned from her parents that her last name is "like, a slave last name." During the talk with her parents, she also learned that her dad's side of the family "—they, like, they, like, they, some of them were slaves –but some were, like, light enough to, like pretend that they weren't slaves –and then, my mom's family was, like, they were all slaves. Yeah." Although she felt "comfortable because you get to learn more about what happens," she also felt "sad and stuff" that her family members had been enslaved. The next day, Indiya had to tell the class about her "slave last name" in an environment where she had previously heard her classmates say that "African Americans deserved [slavery]" and the most frequent images of African Americans in history have been "a slave with, like, whips on his back—the welts or whatever-and it, like, made me –I don't know." Instead of feeling a sense of pride or affirmation in sharing the origins of her name with her peers, Indiya "felt like, I don't know, that my family was, like—there was something wrong that they were, like slaves."

The narrative that opens this article illustrates the complexity of answering "who am I" and "what does it mean to be a Black youth in contemporary society" within a sociocultural context of racism and prejudice (Tatum, 2017). Black adolescents'

[1] The names of all study participants are pseudonyms

navigation of unique social challenges such as perceived racial stigmatization and discrimination informs their perceptions of self and group identities, as well as academic outcomes (Garcia Coll et al, 1996; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003; Yip, 2018). Youths own understanding of themselves as a member of a particular racial or ethnic group has been investigated through theory and research on ethnic-racial identity development. Ethnic-racial identity (ERI) is defined as "a multidimensional, psychological construct that reflects the *beliefs and attitudes* that individuals have about their ethnic–racial group memberships, as well as the *processes* by which these beliefs and attitudes develop over time" (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014, p. 23; italics added). This definition takes an integrative approach to understanding dimensions of ERI, informed by multiple theoretical frameworks grounded in developmental and social psychology (e.g., Cross, YR; Phinney, 1992; Sellers et al., 1998; Williams et al., 2012).

From a theoretical perspective, ERI "processes" generally refer to the kinds of actions a young person takes to learn more about their ethnic or racial group (i.e., "exploration;" Phinney, 1992; Phinny & Ong, 2007). The "beliefs and attitudes" are reflected in a number of ERI dimensions, including a youth's sense of group pride, affirmation, and belonging, and their views on how others feel about their group (i.e., public regard; Sellers et al., 1998; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). ERI dimensions also include labels youth apply to themselves (Nishina, Bellmore, Witkow, & Nylund-Gibson, 2010), the level of centrality or importance placed on ethnic-racial group membership (Sellers et al., 1998), and one's sense of resolution about being a member of their group (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2004; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). Although increases in dimensions of ERI are expected as youth develop the cognitive capacity to reflect on them, studies of ERI in

early adolescence generally show heterogeneity across youth in how it changes over time (e.g., Huang & Stormshak, 2011). Some studies show increases in exploration occurring after early adolescence (French et al., 2006); in contrast, feelings of racial/ethnic-group connection and pride tend to be high and/or increase in early adolescence (French et al., 2006).

In the present study, we explore Black girls' subjective definitions and meanings of race and what social experiences in Black girls' social "worlds" drive ERI meaning development; thus, dimensions of self-categorization and public and private regard are particularly relevant. Nishina and colleagues (2010) found that while most middle school students had constant ethnic self-labels over time, other youth in their ethnically diverse sample were less consistent. Youth often move from literal meanings of race to more abstract definitions that account for the social realities of being their race (Quintana, 2008). While labels are only one aspect of ERI, to some extent the labeling process may be tied to ERI exploration (Nishina et al., 2010; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). Research on racial regard in early adolescence shows that Black youth who have positive views of their own group and who feel others' see their group as positive report higher self-esteem, fewer depressive and somatic symptoms, positive coping, less stress, and less antisocial behavior (see Rivas-Drake et al., 2014 for a review).

Thus, among Black youth, ERI dimensions have generally been associated with positive indicators of psychological, academic, and psychosocial well-being; however, there have been some gender differences documented in the associations between ERI and outcomes. For instance, Chavous and colleagues (2008) found racial centrality was a less consistent moderator of the association between discrimination and academic

attitudes for Black girls compared to Black boys. Other studies have documented positive associations between a strong ERI and indicators of psychosocial well-being among Black adolescent girls (Buckley & Carter, 2005; Mandara, Gaylord-Harden, Richards, & Ragsdale, 2009). Overall, however, gender differences in the associations between ERI and developmental outcomes have been inconsistent.

One reason for a lack of consistent findings related to race and gender may be because ERI theories and the associated measures tend to focus on ERI at the exclusion of other aspects of identity (Cross & Cross, 2008; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). ERI scholars readily acknowledge that ERI gets integrated as one element of identity that is not separate from others and is shaped by experiences in context (Cross & Cross, 2008; Neblett et al., 2012; Umana-Taylor et al., 2014). Despite this acknowledgement, quantitative measures assessing ERI constructs (e.g., centrality, regard, exploration) are not designed to capture the intersectionality of youths' identities or lived experiences. Youth make-meaning of the direct and indirect messages they receive about race in their daily interactions, and their interpretations get mediated by a number of other factors (e.g., other salient dimensions of identity, cognitive maturation, phenotype, etc.; Spencer, 1995; Tatum, 2017). These are complex processes that are not accounted for by ERI theories alone. Thus, we next discuss an identity-focused, cultural-ecological model that considers adolescent ethnic-racial identity development in context.

Guiding Framework

The Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST). In the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST), Spencer, Dupree & Hartmann (1997) emphasize that for youth of color, feedback from ecological systems as

it relates to race, skin color, class, gender and maturational differences is of the utmost importance as youth develop their racial-ethnic and gender identities. Adolescents experience a self-appraisal process (e.g. How do others see me?) in response to stereotypes and biases about their social identities (e.g. race, gender, class, skin tone, maturation) (Spencer, 1995; Spencer, Dupree & Hartmann, 1997). The PVEST model predicts that in response to appraisals of their identities, youth must determine how to react and cope (Spencer, 1995). Perceived social supports can mediate the experience and interpretation of the stressor, which has implications for coping behavior. An adaptive solution like self-acceptance is linked to a productive outcome like resiliency, while a maladaptive solution like a negative learning attitude is associated with an unproductive outcome like school dropout (Spencer, 1995).

In recent work, Spencer and colleagues (2018) articulated connections between PVEST and intersectionality:

> [An] intersectional approach argues that different categories—connected to gender, race, sexuality, etc.—cannot be conceptualized as isolated; foundationally, they interrelate and are embedded within systems of oppression that must be highlighted, understood, and combated by studying their interlocking webs of influence (Collins, 2015; Davis, 2008). Accordingly, our conceptual orientation uses intersectionality in reference to the study of identity (Velez & Spencer, 2018, p. 83).

While Spencer and colleagues recognize that social categories are connected to social positions in a socially stratified society like the United States, they also argue for the importance of the individual meaning-making process (i.e., the "phenomenological" component of PVEST), particularly in adolescence. The present study centers the voices of Black girls to better understand the messages they receive about race across settings and actors. First-hand accounts are important for exploring youths' interpretation of racial

messages; and as Velez and Spencer note, the messages *and* the way they are interpreted may vary at the intersection of race and gender:

> Phenomenological experience is central because individuals inhabit multiple social positions connected to power relations, specifying how they experience the world in addition to how they are treated are core given unavoidable coping responses (Cole, 2009). For example, racial centrality differentially moderates the relationship between discrimination and academic outcomes for boys and girls, demonstrating the role of both social categories and power dynamics around race, and individual characteristics and their psychological impacts (Velez & Spencer, 2018, p. 84).

Collins (2016) affirms this view, arguing that it is the choices an individual makes across their lifetime within the greater context of lived race, class and gender oppression that shape their of experiences and relationships with other people. In other words, the experiences of Black girls in school, influenced by larger systems of oppression, influence how Black girls understand themselves and their social identities.

In keeping with these arguments, the present study adopts a "race-gender experience" (Lopez, 2003) and intersectional perspective (Crenshaw, 1997) to understand Black girls' self-beliefs and perceptions of race and racial messages. A race-gender experience perspective emphasizes that although race and gender have no biological basis, there can be different experiences and outcomes among boys and girls of color based on how society is race(ing)" and "gender(ing)" youth. In other words, Black people are constantly being viewed through gendered and racialized lenses that shapes their lived experiences and outcomes at a micro-level within social relationships, as well as at a macro institutional level in convergent and divergent ways. Crenshaw (1997) argues that Black women and girls, in particular, have been marginalized by research that either focuses on race or on gender because focusing on either race or gender does not account

for intersecting marginalized identities. Therefore, we focus exclusively on Black girls in the present study; while we examine their understanding of race, we also note ways in which the messages they receive may be unique to their experiences as Black girls.

Students' Multiple Worlds

PVEST provides a framework for understanding identity development in context, however, to further ground the present study, additional theorizing about the primary social contexts adolescents move through is necessary. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model suggests that the most proximal, "microsystem" environments play an essential role in shaping youth development through bi-directional, person-context interactions. Further, Bronfenbrenner conceptualized the "mesosystem" to highlight the importance of considering how these microsystem settings intersect with one another (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Phelan, Davidson and Cao's (1991) "Multiple Worlds" model identified four microsystem settings (or "worlds") that are central in adolescence: families, peer groups, classrooms and schools. Although these worlds are often studied individually, consistent with the concept of mesosystem, Phelan and colleagues posit that they are interrelated, and youths' movement within and between them has implications for development. In particular, they note that messages received in each setting may or may not be consistent or congruent. A student with congruent worlds and smooth transitions between worlds may discuss the same things with teachers, peer and friends and transition easily between worlds. However, a student with different worlds must manage the crossing between worlds by developing strategies in order to cope with feelings of dissonance, such as between family and school worlds. For example, Indiya, the student in the introduction, must cope with feelings of dissonance

between family and school worlds about her heritage. While their model emphasized implications for academic experiences, the concept has relevance for considering the myriad messages youth receive about race across their microsystem contexts, which are discussed next.

Schools and classrooms. Schools are a critical social context for socialization. Collins (1991; 2016) argues that there is a system of dominant ideologies within institutions based on a combination of racism and sexism that function to justify race, gender and class inequalities between white and Black women and girls. Within this system, socially constructed "stereotypical" and "controlling" images dehumanize and invalidate the lived experiences of marginalized people, particularly Black women and girls (Brittan & Maynard, 1984; Collins, 1991). These ideologies are ingrained within institutions and reflected in decisions concerning classroom structure, academic content and school norms (King & Swartz, 2015). Therefore, curriculum and instruction may serve as a form of socialization by influencing students' beliefs and orientations about topics related to race (Banks, 2007; King & Swartz, 2015). Swartz (2013) and Swartz & Goodwin (1992) argue that educators teach history through a Eurocentric frame that perpetuates the "master script:" a Eurocentric "agreed upon version of knowledge" that centers on topics such as exploration, settlement and colonization that elevate the controlling images of the elite "founding fathers," while obscuring and erasing the knowledge and experiences of African Americans as well as Indigenous people (e.g. describing enslaved Africans as if they had no homeland, describing "enslavement without enslavers," and excluding the voices and works of African American and Indigenous people during that time period).

A nationwide survey of 525 elementary, middle, and high school teachers surmised that only 1-2 classes, approximately 8%-9% of the total class time, is devoted to Black history (King, 2017). Further, in surveying 1,000 high school seniors, 1,786 social studies teachers, 10 state standards, and 12 popular textbooks, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC, 2018) found that high school seniors do not have a basic understanding of American enslavement, teachers have difficulties in teaching the subject, and textbooks fail to discuss the history in complicated and meaningful ways.

In conducting a content analysis and compositional interpretation of three widely used history texts, Woyshner & Schocker (2015) found that Black women, in particular, were marginalized in history textbooks. For example, in one textbook titled "The Americas," only 53 of the 306 images of women were Black women and 232 were images of white women. An additional 686 images were of men (see Woyshner and Shocker for a discussion of additional findings). Both the inclusion (or lack of) and the depictions of Black women and girls in classroom material can influence students' knowledge, understanding, and interactions with Black women and girls.

Peer Groups and Families. Collective identity and peer group membership for youth of color become more meaningful during adolescence and can play a role in adolescents' subjective meanings of race. Crosnoe (2011) observed that schools function as mini "adolescent societies," complete with their own shared rules, customs and guidelines. These rules, customs and guidelines mirror macro-societal norms and images as they relate to race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability status and, therefore, students may hold stereotypes and biases about marginalized groups of students. In turn, social interactions are affected by status and hierarchies (i.e., social position, Coll et. al., 1996),

where some students and groups are teased and ostracized on the basis of their social identities (see Mulvey and colleagues, 2018 for a greater discussion of nonbias-based bullying and bias-based bullying). Accordingly, Suarez-Orozco (2004) and Lei (2003) found that peer group norms can reproduce stereotypical or controlling images as they relate to race and ethnicity and reinforce the pattern of marginalization among peers.

There is a robust literature on the ways in which families socialize youth in relation to racial beliefs and ideologies (e.g., Hughes et al., 2009; Hughes et al., 2018). As Hughes and colleagues notes, "Some parents teach group differences, discrimination, and disadvantage; others teach history, culture, and traditions; others emphasize the value of diversity and egalitarian perspectives; still others do some combination or all of these" (p. 10). While messages from families are not a central focus in the present study, from the perspective of "multiple worlds," it is expected that what Black youth learn about race in school and from peers is interpreted in relation to messages they learn in the family context.

Current Study

Youth's ERI is shaped by experiences in context, with the messages and feedback Black girls receive and adapt to from their family, peer and school worlds having potential implications for their learning and engagement in school. In a recent review, Aldana and Byrd (2015) documented how racial socialization messages documented in families (e.g., cultural socialization, egalitarianism, preparation for bias; Hughes et al., 2006) may or may not be conveyed in educational practices. There is little empirical work in this area; however, Aldana and Byrd identified ways in which particular curricular approaches (e.g., multicultural education) may perpetuate particular messages

(e.g., egalitarianism). Of relevance to the present study, the authors argue that "future research must examine how youth coordinate the messages they receive from multiple sources. Similar socialization messages may be expected to have a stronger impact, whereas lack of synergy between sources may create conflict, making it difficult for the individual to maintain connections within multiple contexts" (Aldana & Byrd, 2015, p. 572). The present study begins to address this gap by examining messages Black girls receive about race from schools, peers, and to a lesser extent, families, focusing on girls' subjective definitions and meanings of race and what social experiences in Black girls' social "worlds" drive ERI meaning development.

Method

Participants

Data for the present study were drawn from a longitudinal, mixed methods study of more than 200 middle school students. The larger project was focused on how racial/ethnic diversity plays a role in students' social experience, and included participants from two racially diverse public middle schools in the Southeastern United States. Based on initial survey data, a total of eleven girls self-identified as Black or African American (including both mono-racial and multiracial identities). The eleven girls were divided fairly evenly across the two schools (six and one and five at the other), and nine of them qualified for free or reduced-price lunch.

Procedure

All procedures and materials were approved by and in compliance with the university's Institutional Review Board. Students were recruited in the cafeteria and their homeroom class and a letter was sent home to participate in this study. Students and their

caregivers who were interested in participating in this study were asked to sign and return assent and consent forms. In the current study, face-to-face individual interviews and friend group interviews conducted during the 2016-2017 academic year were analyzed. This data collection process took place in schools, with the race and gender of the interviewers matching the race and gender of the youth. Friend group interviews were organized based on students' friend nominations. Among the eleven Black girls, five of the six Black girls in School 1 and three of the four Black girls in school 2 were interviewed together as a friend group. The other two students at each school were interviewed with friends who did not identify as Black/African American. The face-to-face interviews took approximately 15 minutes, and the group interviews took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Interviews. As part of the larger study, interviews were designed to guide students through a set of questions on social relationships as well as their sense of belonging in school. In the group interview, students also collaborated on drawing, labeling, and discussing a "cafeteria map" of peer groups in their grade. Then, students were asked to answer questions about the map like "which groups get along and which groups may not get along and why?" All group interviews were both audio and video recorded.

In the individual interview, students were asked to reflect on their experiences with topics related to cultural diversity. Data from this article came from a series of questions about race, ethnicity and culture. Sample questions included: "Can you tell me what the word "race" means to you?" How do you define your own racial [ethnic/cultural] background?" "How did you learn about the term(s)?" and "What does

being [your race] mean to you?" All individual interviews were audio recorded. Following data collection, all group and individual interview transcriptions were transcribed, cleaned to ensure transcription accuracy, and preliminarily processed by a team of researchers using a standardized form in order to promote data familiarity.

Data Analysis

Qualitative methods can "provide a window into the process of identity construction" (Riessman, 2008) by allowing individuals to "form and re-form who they have been, are presently, and hope to become" (Alpine, 2016). In the current study, an inductive analysis process via mapping and writing around data was used (Bhattacharya, 2017). Inductive analysis refers to "approaches that primarily use detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data by an evaluator or researcher" (Thomas, 2006 p. 238). The data analysis process involves an iterative process of reading, writing, reflecting, visualizing, and debriefing with peer and subject matter experts. Individual story arcs (i.e. visualizations that depict the events and meaning making in sequence) (Saldana, 2017) as well as visual maps (e.g. the drawing of connections among students' responses within focus group interviews) (Bhattacharya, 2017) were created to examine similarities and differences among students. From this process, the raw data are summarized and key themes and processes are conveyed.

Importantly, the authors also drew upon Black feminist perspectives that emphasize the importance of privileging and centering the voices of Black women and girls in research as well as acknowledging both the marginalization and resilience among Black girls (Collins, 2002). Therefore, within each category, quotes and rich descriptions

that include temporality, social context, complicating events, and an evaluative conclusion were included to ensure the highlighting of Black girls' voices and experiences, while still conveying key themes and processes across girls.

Results

Black Girls' Subjective Definitions and Meanings of Race

In order to better understand how the girls defined their racial background, the girls were asked "can you tell me what the word "race" means to you?," "how do you define your racial background?" and "what does being [your race] mean to you?" We discuss these findings next, and provide a summary by student in Table 1. As described next, we found that while most girls had similar definitions of race, their answers to how they defined their racial background and what being Black meant to them was unique.

Black Girls' Definitions of Race. In alignment with previous research, many girls used concrete, literal definitions of race, reporting that race is skin color and "difference" (Table 1). For instance, Indiya said, "So, race, it means to me –it means to me, like, what color you are." However, Melissa, Naomi and Terry's definitions accounted for the social processes associated with race (Quintana, 2008). Melissa did not provide a definition of race, instead emphasizing to the interviewer that race "doesn't mean anything to me because I don't make fun of people's race," Naomi said "white versus Black," and Terry's definition included "the way you act" and differences she perceived within and between racial-ethnic groups, which will be discussed in greater detail below.

Racial Self-Categorizations and Subjective Meaning. In the interviews, six girls self-identified as Black or African American, four girls identified as more than one

race, and one student, Terry, did not directly identify her race. Instead, Terry shared how she and her friends used other identifiers to describe skin tone and appearance (e.g., "chocolate truffle" or "dark chocolate") because of the stigma associated with racial categorizations. When asked, "what does being [your race] mean to you," Black girls' beliefs and attitudes varied; which illustrates the individual process of ERI meaning making. For example, Mya defined being African American as "what I am and what my parents are," Naomi defined being Black as "uh Black and proud, I guess," and Shara said "I don't know [what it means to me]." Aaliyah negatively interpreted what it meant to be African American in response to negative feedback about her race from her environment. To her, being "um, African American [pause] basically. That's it" was "um, being something people don't like, and yeah." She continued, describing how being "African American" has been used as a means to "disrespect people" and enslave them and it is associated with "how, like, we act bad and, like, all that stuff."

In responding to what race meant to her, Terry discussed what being Black meant for different people based on responses she witnessed from her peers at school. According to Terry, African students were less affected by the negative connotation of "acting bad" than African American students. Terry described how there are "two types of Black" at her school –the "ghetto one" and the "African one" when describing where students sit in the cafeteria. In using the cafeteria map provided during the interview, Terry pointed to where "pretty much all the people that were Black sit," however she distinguished between the spot where Black students with one or both parents who are from Africa sit (where she sits) and where the other group where "the ghetto, like African Americans sit." She continued to say that she thought her group was more approachable

by non-Black peers because "when they think of ghetto, then you relate that to, like, bad stuff, like shootings—and like braids and stuff like that."

Ezra, Desiree, Indiya and Jasmine identified as more than one race, but used different terms to describe their ERI and had different perspectives on what being more than one race meant to them. Desiree, for example, defined her own racial background as being "mixed with white, American Indian, and African American," but clarified that she "don't have nothing to do with American Indian and white" because of her social experiences. She clarified that she did not know she was multiracial until she was ten and most of her living family members are Black. Therefore, her Black racial identity was most salient to her. Accordingly, what being Black meant to her was also grounded in her social reality: she said being Black was having "a darker skin tone" and "um, [pauses] – maybe the projects, maybe." She said she once lived in a bad neighborhood that would be considered the projects and had to move, but one side of her family still lived there.

Ezra defined herself as "a mutt" with "a lot of different races" including "Indian, French, Puerto Rican, Black, White, I forget the rest" but was not seen by others as "a mutt." Ezra discussed how she was frustrated because people often think she is "fully Black" and make assumptions about her race that make her "uncomfortable" because people "expected me to be something I'm not." She elaborated, saying, "because, like, like, if you like...it bothered me because, like, they told me what I was before I could tell them what I was." Similarly, as quoted in the introduction, Indiya discussed a particular social experience where discussing her ERI and heritage made her uncomfortable in the classroom. She had learned that her family's last name was a "slave name," and said she

"felt like, I don't know, that my family was, like—there was something wrong that they were, like slaves."

Interpreting Messages from Multiple Worlds

Black girls discussed a variety of direct and indirect messages they received about race in their daily interactions, particularly in schools and classrooms through lessons in history, socially through interactions with peers, and within their families. Again, girls' responses and ERI meaning development varied.

Schools and Classrooms. Many girls described learning about race in school starting in early elementary school. For example, Shara said she started learning about her race as early as first or second grade. In describing what she learned, she said, "well, we do it like in between because it's like back in the 18s and 19s and stuff like that, that they were—maybe racism and stuff. But yeah, we mainly do it in history." She continued to describe the last time she learned about race being in the current school year when she learned about "slavery and stuff." She commented that she does not remember learning anything else about race.

To Shara, learning about race was associated with learning about slavery. Other girls in the study had similar responses, describing memories of learning about race that centered on enslavement, replying that they learned "how slaves be—like, how did—how slaves, like began," and viewed images in history books like "a slave with, like whips on his back—the welts or whatever—." Desiree described how learning about race in school was important, but acknowledged the limited scope of what she was taught, saying

> [Pauses] Like when I was little, I already knew I was Black, but I didn't really know the meaning. But at school, like when we started talk about slaves and all that, that's what I really learned it from. But they never really talked about what black people did. They just talked about how they were slaves."

Family. Although most of the girls responded that they learned about race in history, some students described the role of family in addition to school in teaching them about race. For instance, Naomi said that she learned about race from her mom, history class and books, but she clarified that she only talked about race when she learned it in history class first. Then, after learning about it in history, she would tell her mom and discuss it further. Another student, Melissa, described the differences between the conversations she had in history class and the conversations she had at home. In class, conversations about race were about "how it was back then and that we should be treated equally and stuff" and conversations with her dad were about "how important our race is." For her, race was "important because it's how, well, it was basically how I was born and how the rest of my life is going to be." Finally, Mya, who said that being African American meant "what I am and who my parents are" described the racial socialization practices she had received from her parents, e.g. conversations at the dinner table that instilled a sense of pride as well as the sharing of stories about her parents, grandparents, and "past family members." She said she felt comfortable with talking about ethnicity with people outside of her family (e.g. peers or in school) as long as it centered on "positive things" "like, we're all equal, and we can do everything."

Peers. Many girls described how negative stereotypes about their race stemming from the media portrayed Black people as "bad." Terry described the interrelations between negative messages she received through the media and among peers, saying

> Because I mean, like, when you're younger, you get bored a lot and so, you just, like, sit with your parents and you just look at news. And you just see, like, then you'll see, like,
> people, like, I just remember, like, looking at the news and then it'll be, like, a picture, like, um, like, a Black person mugshot. And then it'll be, like, "This

> person, we're looking for this person. Or this person did something bad." And then I guess after seeing that multiple times, it just ends up being like that. And also hanging out around people in, like, elementary school. Just or, like, when you're on the bus, you just hear people over, like, talking about it. And then you just remember it and as you grow up, the more you realize that's how it is.

The previous section highlighted how lessons in the classroom on slavery played a key role in how Black girls learned about their own race. Lessons on slavery also contributed to the bullying and teasing of Black girls. Much of the bullying described by the girls centered on being called "slaves" or in being told to "go back to Africa." For example, Mya described how a group of white boys who she called "the hunter boys" were "a little rude to most people…if your skin color is different" and told her "we don't like you because you're Black and, like, you should go back to Africa." She also shared that one time in science class, a group of boys shared that she was "not good enough" and "shouldn't really be here." Aaliyah described how other students in her school acted differently around her and her other African American friends, saying how other students "act different and, like, think that, uh, we will hit them or something like that. And we don't." She said that she could try and change other people's opinions about them, but "they probably still believe it" so it was not really worth it.

Terry described a system of how boys ranked girls in school based on appearance, particularly skin lightness. She described her rank as a three or two, on a scale of one to ten (with one being the highest and ten being the lowest). She described her friend, who is "lighter skinned" and dating a boy as a two. She told the interviewer that "most of the dark-skinned girls" are "lower." In reflecting on why she thought the ranking system existed, she said

> I feel bad. I don't feel like, I don't know why people do it. I don't see, like, the problem is. It might just be because, like, a long time ago, how they—how we

were, like slaves and stuff like that. And that might influence how it is now. And it, like, gets me upset sometimes how people think about it like that. And it doesn't really matter. We're just –we're all the same. Doesn't matter about your skin tone. It's just like –mellinus or melleniunnus in your skin.
Interviewer: Melanin?
Yeah. [Both laugh]

Discussion

The current study explored Black girls' subjective definitions and meanings of race and highlights experiences across Black girls' social "worlds" that inform ERI development. Findings from this study suggest that the multiple worlds of schools and classrooms, family, and peers are connected to racial meaning-making among Black girls. Moreover, many of the messages to which girls seem most attuned are associated with negative stereotypes or shallow, decontextualized historical accounts (e.g., of enslaved Africans). Their responses highlight the phenomenological component of ERI development, however, there are a number of common processes by which girls are learning and developing their identities.

First, Black girls' subjective definitions and meanings of race indicated that many of them are in the early phases of understanding their ERI. For example, when asked about their own race, girls often paused or seemed uncertain about their reported labels. From a developmental perspective, this is consistent with quantitative studies showing lower levels of ERI exploration in early adolescence (e.g., French et al., 2006). The uncertainty and variation in racial labels is also in keeping with work by Nishina and colleagues (2010) who found that a moderate percentage of youth shift their racial labels over time, particularly students who are African American or multi-ethnic. In terms of content, girls' definitions of race tended to focus on more concrete concepts, such as skin color and differences, rather than more complex definitions reflecting the "social

realities" of race (e.g., race as a collective identity tied to a sociopolitical history). At the same time, however, many girls included negative stereotypes in their explanations of what being Black meant, both in general and to them personally. This is consistent with other research showing that stereotypes frequently serve as a context for ERI development (Way, Hernandez, Rogers, & Hughes, 2013).

Indeed, girls in the present study are making meaning of their ERI, in part, in response to stereotypical and biased messages about their identities within their multiple worlds (i.e. schools, classrooms, families and peers). For example, girls described seeing images of "a slave with, like whips on his back-the welts or whatever—" without ever learning, as Desiree commented, "what Black people did." One girl succinctly summarized what she had learning through history as "maybe racism and stuff" and none of the girls described learning that included the voices of African American and/or Indigenous persons. Student's depictions of what was learned reflected the "master narrative" of teaching about history (Swartz, 2013; Swartz & Goodwin, 1992). In turn, learning about race through the lens of slavery seemed to cause stress and highlight differences between students, particularly Black and white students, without providing students with the language and background to understand institutional and symbolic oppression. In his model of racial perspective-taking ability, Quintana (2008) posits that when youth move from a "literal" perspective on race (e.g., focused on foods, holidays and physical markers) to a "social" perspective, they "observe patterns associated with race that are not literally connected to racial group membership. They connect social processes with race such as social norms, friendship patterns and also spontaneously mention discrimination and bias as being associated with race" (p. 20).

While many girls mentioned concrete markers of race as they defined it, most also brought up negative stereotypes or historical events. Most shared these markers in a matter-of-fact sort of manner (i.e., "this is all I know right now"), although as part of the ERI developmental process, it is likely that many will engage in contestation of and resistance to these stereotypical images as they move through adolescence (Way et al., 2013). Thus, although it is concerning to know that negative images feature most prominently in girls' definitions of what it means to be Black, as suggested by PVEST, this does not mean that girls have or will develop a negative sense of private racial regard (Spencer, 1995; Velez & Spencer, 2018). At the same time, the findings underscore the idea that racial categories are part of a system of oppression, and that at the individual level, youth make meaning of racial group membership against this sociohistorical backdrop.

The messages Black girls heard about their race among their peers mirrored the main messages the girls reported about what they learned about race in history class. In alignment with previous research that "adolescent societies" mirror macro-societal norms and images, many of the messages directed at Black girls were "stereotypical" and "controlling" (Collins, 2016). For example, girls were called "slaves" or told to "go back to Africa" and attributed a social "ranking" system, where girls were judged based partially on skin color, as something that began "a long time ago" because of slavery. Notably, many girls indicated that the messages they heard within their school and peer worlds seemed equally or more important than messages they heard in other contexts. Desiree, for instance, said "when I was little, I already knew I was Black, but I didn't really know the meaning [until school through lessons on slavery]" and Terry said that

ideas about race are cemented when "hanging out around people in, like, elementary school"… and then "you just remember it." However, the level of congruency between girls' home, school and classroom, and peer worlds differed. Melissa and Indiya, for example, described differences in the messages they received about race in their home and school worlds. Melissa distinguished between learning about "how it was back then and that we should be treated equally and stuff" in school while the conversations she had with her dad was about "how important our race is."

Intersections between race and gender emerged infrequently, and were generally limited to students' discussions of peer interactions. Terry's account of how girls were ranked by boys based on skin tone and other aspects of physical appearance illuminated one way in which a "race-gender" experience was at play. Terry also emphasized the social approachability of some "types" of Black girls compared to other types, and argued that the more "ghetto" type of Black girls was associated with "like braids and stuff like that." However, most of the girls did not explicitly discuss gender in their definitions of race. Instead, the definitions and examples they gave demonstrate how they see race operating in their lives regardless of gender.

Limitations. First, by design, we only focused on exploring the perspectives of Black girls and the perspectives of other students as well as adults were excluded from the analysis. Future research could integrate students from other standpoints, exploring the similarities or differences across student groups. Second, this study acknowledges the role of institutions in shaping the education and lived experiences of Black girls; future research should explore how factors such as academic tracking, discipline, and other school-wide policies shape the educational experiences of Black girls. Finally, the larger

study from which we drew our analytic sample was not designed to explore classroom level effects; future observational research is needed to examine the role of specific lessons on outcomes.

Implications. This study took place in a Southern State, where the role of confederate history is still prominent. This may partially explain why so many of the girls brought up slavery when discussing their knowledge of what it means to be Black; however, curricular standards for middle grades U.S. history classes are also at play and may be representative of national trends across middle grades (SPLC, 2018). Bishop (2009) argues that educators can de-stigmatize slave ancestry by "placing the responsibility for slavery outside the enslaved, and by focusing on the ways enslaved people actively sought to liberate themselves, if not physically, then psychologically" through the pursuit of freedom, love for their family, and the importance of learning to read. It was evident that the girls in the present study had not been exposed to a "de-stigmatized" telling of African enslavement and were left to figure out on their own how to make sense of this history in relation to their personal ERI.

While this study emphasizes individuals' phenomenological experiences and does not claim blanket generalizability, other students may be processing the same messages in their worlds. Future studies should continue to examine ERI meaning making in context. Importantly, this study also illustrates potential pathways for the production and reproduction of "damaging" and "controlling" ideologies (i.e. through school curriculum and among peers). These pathways may be important in understanding other marginalized students experiences in schools, which may have implications for youth's

sense of group pride, affirmation, and belonging, and their views on how others feel about their group (i.e., public regard; Sellers et al., 1998; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014).

The award-winning author Jacqueline Woodson asked herself "What am I going to do about a time of my life in which the brilliance of black girls had no *mirror*?" as she wrote *Another Brooklyn*, a story about Black girlhood (Patrick, 2016). This question is also relevant for the field of education: How can we actively support the identity development of Black girls as they navigate classrooms and hallways and other spaces during the school day that convey messages that Black girls are devalued? For instance, how can educators integrate liberatory narratives of Black girlhood that serve as *mirrors*, reflecting Black girls' lived experiences across history? How might teachers integrate all students' personal biographies to provide *windows* (Style, 1988; Rudine Sims Bishop, 1990) into the lived experiences of a diverse classroom in ways that promote inclusiveness and identity affirmation? In what ways can parents and schools work together to promote racial pride? How can educators promote critical consciousness – advancing knowledge that pushes students to challenge the status quo master narrative (Ladson-Billings, 1995)? Answers to these questions offers exciting avenues for future research.

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Table 1

Black Girl's Responses to "What does race mean to you" and "How do you define your racial background?'

Pseudonym	What does race mean to you?	Self-Identified Race
Aaliyah	"So one's when you're running or, like, your culture and stuff."	"Um, African American [pause] basically. That's it."
Desiree	"The first term means like if you-like in a competition, you're racing. The second term means like different people, like Black, White, Indian, and all of that."	"Um, well, I'm mixed with White, American Indian, and African American, but I'm –I really don't have nothing to do with American Indian and white."
Esther	"Um, like, your ethnicity – your eth-eh, okay. I can't say that word today." "Um, so, like, the color of your skin and stuff like that."	"Uh, I'm Black."
Ezra	"Um, someone's, like, heritage of where they come from. And, like, a mixture sometimes, like, some biracial, some African American and some Caucasians –and Hispanics."	"Um, well, I have a lot [of cultures]. I'm a mutt. So, like, I have a lot of races. I'm um, Indian, French, Puerto Rican, Black, White, I forget the rest."
Indiya	"So, race, it means to me –it means to me, like, what color you are."	"Well, I would choose mine as American Indian and, like, African American –because I'm both."

Jasmine	"What type of culture you're from and, like, mostly like your skin color."	"I'm, uh, I'm mixed. And then on my dad's side, it's – like part Indian."
Melissa	"Um, it doesn't really mean anything to me because I don't make fun of people's race, like, I don't care what they are. I'll still be their friend and stuff."	"Like, Black American. Um, yeah."
Mya	"Skin color"	"African American and, um, hum, I don't know"
Naomi	"Uh, race means [pause] I don't know. Um, basically, I guess, comparing whites versus blacks or different – maybe different races like different types of people like African-American, white, Hispanic, all that."	"Uh, like African American?"
Shara	"Different colored people"	"Um, [pause] African American."
Terry	"Um, so pretty much what color you are. Like, who, like, what race your family is. So, like, if you're, like, African American, white –be like, European, Canadian or something like that. And I guess, like the way you act. I mean, like, at our school there's two types of Black…."	Terry does not define her racial background. She describes how she avoids using racial descriptors "because I think, like, if you think of it, like, race and culture might be relate something bad and stuff like that. That's why we use, like foods [oreo, caramel, dark chocolate], to talk about it."

“Our Year to Shine:” Exploring How Social Media Affects Black Girls

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“Our Year to Shine:” Exploring How Social Media Affects Black Girls

Abstract

In the 2010s, commercially produced works coexist with social media to allow youth to consume as well as create, send, and receive media. Utilizing qualitative methods, this study employed a critical developmental perspective and a strengths-based approach to better understand how media, including #BlackGirlMagic, influenced the identity development of twenty-one Black girls enrolled in a summer program in a mid-sized Southern city. Individual and focus group interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using narrative analysis. I find that Black girls selected, interpreted and were affected by media in different, multidimensional ways. Second, Black girls constructed affirming interpretations of the images and actions of Black women and girls in the media. Third, #BlackGirlMagic provided Black girls with a framework for developing an asset-based sense of self and conceptualization of Black girlhood. Finally, Black girl’s descriptions of images of Black women and girls they wished to see more of demonstrated the capabilities of Black girls to “restory” new media. My findings underscore the need to continue to build opportunities for Black girls to critically digest, process, discuss and develop media.

"Our Year to Shine:" Exploring How Social Media Affects Black Girls

In describing the contemporary representations of Black women and girls, La La, a fourteen-year-old Black girl, said, "Black girl magic –Everything: we're in magazines, we're in movies, we're doing TVs shows –Oprah Winfrey has her own network like BET, I never seen a Black woman have her own network like that –so I think like Black girl magic is right there." La La excitedly shared that she believed "next year or this year will be, like, our year to shine."

From books that center the stories of Black girls written by Black women topping the New York Times Bestseller List (e.g. *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas) to films and TV shows directed by and/or starring Black women and girls (e.g. Storm Reid in the adaptation of *A Wrinkle in Time* as directed by Black woman filmmaker Ava DuVernay; Black Girls Rock!, a televised awards show founded by Beverly Bond that honors Black women and girls), to works of art visited or streamed by millions (e.g. Michelle Obama's portrait by Black woman artist Amy Sherald at the National Portrait Gallery), the 2010s have been coined a "golden age" or a "new Black Renaissance" for Black media representation (France, 2016; Goode, 2018; Wicker, 2018; Waithe, 2019).

In the 2010s, these commercially produced works coexist with user generated media, i.e. social media, that allows users to create, send, and receive media (Castells, 2007; Valkenburg, Peter & Walther, 2016). For youth in particular, the advent of new technology has led to media multi-tasking (Rideout, Foehr and Roberts, 2010). Media multitasking refers to youth using more than one form of media concurrently. For example, in the 2010s, a Black girl could read a magazine, watch a television show, and

talk with friends on her laptop or phone. As Black girls seek greater autonomy and begin to explore who they are as individuals based on cues from their social environment, the messages they send and receive from multiple platforms play an important role in their identity development (Erikson, 1968; Oyserman, Gant & Ager, 1995). Accordingly, the current study centers and privileges the voices of Black girls in adolescence to explore how the coexistence of commercially produced media and social media affect their identity development.

Guiding Framework

Black girls work to answer "Who am I?" and "What does it mean to be a Black youth in contemporary society?" within a sociocultural context of racism and prejudice. Developmental theorists have posited that identity development and meaning making are shaped largely by youth's development as well as their ecological context (Spencer, 1995). Development occurs as a transaction between an individual and their context, as well as between and among contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Lerner, et al., 2002). The process is bidirectional, with youth shaping and being shaped by their environment within a complicated nested level of systems. Importantly, these social interactions occur against the backdrop of "larger politicized forms of social ascription" (e.g. state categories of identity, historical myths, groups' constructions of authenticity) that also influence identity development and meaning making (Collier & Thomas, 1989; Mendoza, Halualani & Drzewiecka, 2002).

The Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST)

According to the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST), adolescents experience a self-appraisal process (e.g. how do others see me?) in

response to stereotypes and biases about their social identities (Spencer, 1995; Spencer, Dupree & Hartmann, 1997). For Black girls, messages about race, skin color, class, as well as gender and maturational differences play an important role in shaping their racial-ethnic and gender identities (Collins, 2016; Crenshaw, 1997; Spencer, Dupree & Hartmann, 1997). Velez and Spencer (2018) write that "all of these experiences and relations are in turn embedded within the social expectations and norms that are tied to interconnected systems of power."

The PVEST model predicts that in response to appraisals of their identities, youth must determine how to react and cope (Spencer, 1995). Specifically within the media, research demonstrates that Black women and girls are often stigmatized (e.g. Collins, 2016), and negative stigma can be experienced as an identity threat. Perceived social supports from family, teachers, and peers can mediate the experience and interpretation of the stressor (e.g., negative stigma), which has implications for coping behavior. An adaptive solution like self-acceptance is linked to a productive outcome like resiliency (Spencer, 1995), while a maladaptive solution like stereotype endorsement or the internalization of negative messages is associated with an unproductive outcome like disengagement or disidentification in fear of confirming a negative stereotype (Steele & Aronson, 1995.) In sum, PVEST emphasizes that the meaning-making and self-appraisal processes accompanying identity development, which are embedded in a broader sociopolitical context that includes media representations, impact how adolescents react and cope with feedback from their environment.

Valkenburg & Peter's (2013) Differential Susceptibility to Media Effects Model (DSMM)

PVEST provides a framework for understanding identity development in context; however, to further ground the present study, additional theorizing about media effects in particular is necessary. Valkenburg & Peter's (2013) Differential Susceptibility to Media Effects Model (DSMM) conceptualizes that media effects on youth varies based on four propositions. First, Valkenburg and Peter posit that media effects are conditional, not universal, and depend on dispositional, developmental and social variables. Dispositional refers to the personal dimensions of an individual such as their social identities, personalities, and moods. Developmental refers to an individual's stage of cognitive, social and emotional development, and social refers to individual's ecological system (e.g. interpersonal, institutional, and cultural). Second, individual's response states, including level of attention and investment (i.e., cognitive factors), emotional activation, and excitedness (i.e., arousal of the sympathetic nervous system), all mediate the effect of media. Third, the differential susceptibility variables can act as predictors or moderators of media impacts. Finally, these variables are reciprocal and interdependent, shaping the individual's selection of and responses to media.

In sum, Black girls who view the same images may interpret and respond to the media differently based on a host of personal, interpersonal and ecological characteristics. Additionally, whether a Black girl internalizes or rejects negative racialized and gendered symbolic images disseminated through the media is conditional. Therefore, it is important to examine how Black girls, collectively and individually, react and cope with messages as it relates to their social identities.

Background

Commercially Produced Media and Damaging and Controlling Representations

Historically, Black women have been represented in dehumanizing ways in mainstream media (hooks, 1999; Collins, 2016). Collins (2016) maintains that in order to uphold and affirm dominant ideologies, "stereotypical or controlling images" are used to dehumanize an individual or group and invalidate their lived experiences. In Black Feminist Thought, Collins (1991) argues that, "the nexus of negative stereotypical images applied to African-American women has been fundamental to Black women's oppression" (p. 7). It is important to note while Black girls have been relatively invisible in the media (see Lindsey, 2012 for a greater discussion), stereotypes ascribed to Black women are often applied to Black girls. For example, in surveying 325 adults about their perceptions of Black and white girls of the same age, Epstein, Blake and Gonzalez (2017) found that adults perceived Black girls, starting at birth through age nineteen, as more adult than white girls. Stereotypical and dehumanizing perceptions of Black girls, particularly Black girls between the ages of 5 to 14, included that they were less innocent, less needing of protection, more independent and more knowledgeable of adult topics like sex (Epstein, Blake & Gonzalez, 2017). These perceptions are reflected in mainstream media as young Black victims are presented as guilty adults (see Baker-Bell, Stanbrough, and Everett (2017) for a synthesis of six patterns of how mainstream media vilifies Black people in the wake of racial violence).

In a content analysis of the representation of both Black women and girls in the media, Noble (2018) found that a simple Google search of "black girls" yielded pornographic images as the primary representation of Black women and girls. Although Google recently modified their algorithm to shift what results are generated when users type in "Black girls," algorithms that determine what data you see always have the

potential to reproduce racism and sexism (Noble, 2018). Rose's argument extends the replication and instantiation of damaging and controlling representations in more broadly discussing mass media representations that shape which images are displayed most frequently and who gets more attention/ consumption (Rose, 2017). Rose argues that contemporary representations reinforce old stereotypes in revised ways. For instance, Black women may be called "ratchet" or "evil" instead of old stereotypical names such as "jezebel" or "sapphire."

The representation of Black women and girls in commercially produced media is important because the images influence how people perceive Black women and girls, as well as how Black women and girls perceive themselves. In reflecting on the importance of positive media representation of Black women and girls, American film director and screenwriter Gina Prince-Bythewood (2017, March) argued that "the more we see ourselves, the more people see our humanity." Collins (2017) also emphasizes the role of media in shaping perceptions, emphasizing that,

> these representations are not simply benign stereotypes, anachronisms of past practices of racism, sexism, and class exploitation. Instead, these are controlling images because they provide social scripts for how people are expected to view and treat Black women. More importantly, they are the social scripts that Black women are expected to internalize.

Black Girls' Perceptions of Representation. Qualitative research on how commercially produced media influences the self-concept of Black girls appears to align with the DSMM, highlighting the importance of context and that Black girls are affected by media in different ways (Milkie, 1999). Importantly, researchers have found that Black girls often reject, rather than endorse and internalize, stereotypic images of Black women and girls. For example, in a qualitative study of commercially produced media

and girls' self-concept, Milkie (1999) found that while most white girls read and discussed teen magazines like Seventeen or 'Teen, most Black girls did not read teen magazines because they viewed the magazines as being written for and about white girls. Black girls reported that they were critical of the representation of models in mainstream magazines and did not negatively compare themselves with models. Therefore, in lieu of teen magazines, Black girls read *Ebony* or *Essence*, publications aimed at Black women, music magazines, and hair magazines.

Adams-Bass, Bentley-Edwards and Stevenson (2014) explored how Black youth aged 14 to 21 years old responded to negative media images of Black women through focus groups with African American youth. In the focus groups, Black youth responded to *"What are the dominant messages represented by images of blacks in the media?"* then looked at a series of images of Black women (e.g. Ciara on the 2008 cover of Vibe Magazine, a publicity image of Beyoncé, a black and white photo of Harriet Tubman) and were instructed to describe what it says about Black women. Researchers categorized youths' descriptions of the media images as: the "angry Black women," "sexualized Black women," "Black women caretakers" and "strong Black women." However, while Black youth readily identified the negative stereotypical portrayals of Black women in the media, the researchers argue that Black youth recognized, questioned, and opposed, rather than endorsed, the negative nature of the images.

A study conducted by Muhammad and McArthur (2015) exploring how eight Black girls aged 12-17 viewed representations of Black girlhood and womanhood in the media found similar results. In asking, *"How are African American women and girls portrayed in media such as music, television, Internet, magazine, and radio?"* and *"Why*

do you think African American women and girls are portrayed in these ways?," Black girls reported that the representation of Black women in the media was largely negative. Researchers categorized youths' descriptions of the media images into three categories: "judged by hair," "angry, loud, and violent," and "sexualized and objectified." Then, participants wrote essays about how they wanted to be represented in the media, writing how they wanted to be portrayed and perceived in opposite ways than the current depictions.

Findings from those qualitative studies indicate that while Black teenagers are aware of the "stereotypical" and "controlling" portrayals of Black people in commercially produced media, media consumption may not be directly associated Black girls own self-perceptions. In each of the studies, Black girls questioned and rejected, rather than supported and internalized, the negative media representations.

How Black Women and Girls Use Social Media to Push Back Against Stereotypical Depictions

Through interviews with 743 teens aged 13-17, the Pew Research Center found that 95% of American teens owned a smart phone, with 45% of teens reporting being online 'constantly' or 'near constantly' and 44% endorsing 'several times a day' (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). YouTube topped the list as the most popular platform, followed by Snapchat then Instagram. The non-partisan and objective research organization NORC at the University of Chicago (2018) found that Black teenagers are more active on social media than their white peers. Among Black teenagers who used Snapchat (86%), 40% said they used it 'almost constantly.' 45% of teens in the Pew

study reported that social media was neither positive nor negative, 31% reported it was mostly positive and 24% said it was mostly negative (Anderson & Jiang, 2018).

For Black Americans, social media can be a gathering space, to mourn, celebrate, and/or organize. The online phenomenon "Black Twitter" acts as a medium to exchange ideas and highlight issues not covered in mainstream media (Clark, 2014). For example, when eleven-year-old Kheri Rogers was bullied in school because of her skin complexion, her older sister tweeted a picture of her with the caption "my sister is only ten, but already royalty #FlexInHerComplexion" (Clifford, 2018). The image was retweeted and liked over 100,000 times on twitter. Kheri and her sisters started a movement, selling over 100,000 shirts with the "flex in my complexion" message to inspire other women and girls to feel confident about their skin tones. At eleven, Marley Dias also took to social media to address a problem she saw in her classroom: no books in her school included Black girl protagonists and/or authors. In response, she decided to crowd source #1000BlackGirlBooks featuring Black girls as main characters to donate to schools in need (Dias, 2018). In response, Marley received over 10,000 book donations and over 400,000 people have used the hashtag #1000BlackGirlBooks to advocate for diverse books.

These examples illustrate how Black girls are using digital spaces to advocate, transform the culture, and push back against stereotypic images of Black women and girls. In an asset-based literature review of scholarship on young people's use of online media, researchers demonstrated how youth use social media to "write themselves into media that has excluded them" (Stornailuolo & Thomas, 2017). Youth actively build their own hubs of information, coalition build and become civically engaged. Stornailuolo and

Thomas (2017) defined "the complex ways young people narrate the word and the world, analyze their lived experiences, and then synthesize and reconceptualize a multiplicity of stories in order to form new narratives" as "restorying." [2]

#BlackGirlMagic. In addition to creating unique hashtags for specific movements, Black women and girls also use the hashtag[3] #BlackGirlMagic. #BlackGirlMagic was coined and created by CaShawn Thompson in 2013 to "uplift and praise the accomplishments, beauty and other amazing qualities of Black women" and to catalog the positive achievements of Black women and girls in society (Thompson, 2018). Thompson also created the hashtag to push back against the negative media imagery of Black women and girls in the media. In a 2018 interview (Thande, 2018), Thompson clarified that the goal of #BlackGirlMagic was to be inclusive of all women, saying

> When I say Black girls are magic, I am talking about the Black girl with disabilities. I am talking about the lesbian Black woman. I am talking about the trans Black woman. I am definitely talking about the poor Black women and girls. Nobody gets left behind. Because who are we without all of us?

In the six years since its inception, the hashtag has been used millions of times on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. In writing about the impact of #BlackGirlMagic, Hobson (2016) wrote,

> Combining rhetoric and visual treatments, #BlackGirlMagic insists on the visibility of black women and girls as beauty subjects and aspirational figures in the wider culture to contest negative discourse that frames black womanhood through the lens of dysfunction, unattractiveness, and social failures.

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[2] It is important to note that media can also "open young people to bullying, abuse, explicit racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, ableism, and surveillance" (Stornailuolo & Thomas, 2017).

[3] Hashtags are like Dewey decimals, a way to classify similar themed quotes, videos, images and text, and can serve as micro hubs of information.

While #BlackGirlMagic illustrates a critical counterspace, White (1990) argues that "the site of counter discourse itself is contested terrain" (p. 82) and therefore should be examined critically. Who and what gets tagged and uplifted as #BlackGirlMagic is political and subjective. For example, although the hashtag was developed by Thompson (2018) to celebrate all women, no matter their race, class, or sexuality, the "politics of respectability[4]," a phrase coined by Higginbotham in 1994, may linger in the decision making of individuals in deciding what is classified as "magic." In recognizing the highly political nature of what is amplified, Hobson (2016) cautions that visibility is only a means of liberation, not the goal especially if Black women and girls are still disciplined, surveilled, and subjected to beauty politics (Hobson, 2016). A truly liberatory #BlackGirlMagic affirms all bodies and actions of Black women and girls, including those who are not traditionally lifted as "respectful," but still deserve to have their dignity and full humanity recognized and celebrated.

The Current Study

This qualitative study employed a critical developmental perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Lerner, et al., 2002; Spencer, Dupree & Hartmann, 1997;

[4] In detailing the experiences of Black women in the Baptist church after the Jim Crow era, Higginbotham (1994) described how the Black women "felt that certain 'respectable' behavior in public would earn people a measure of esteem from white America." For survival and in resistance to stereotypical and controlling images, women disavowed "street" culture and adhered to "temperance, cleanliness of person and property, thrift, polite manner, and sexual purity." While this was seen as a means to distance from negative stereotypical depictions, Black women who did not adhere to the standards were critiqued and denounced. Higginbotham (1994) argues that the women blamed the actions of Black women, rather than institutional racism, for their treatment. Therefore, every woman was to adopt 'respectable' behaviors because the actions of every individual would determine the collective fate of African Americans. Any "improper behavior" was seen as a perpetuation of racist perceptions and discriminatory actions.

Valkenburg & Peter, 2013) to better understand how the coexistence of commercially produced media and social media affect the identity development of Black girls during what some consider a "golden age" of Black representation. In alignment with DSMM propositions that effects of media are conditional, not universal, and a number of factors (developmental status, cognitive and affective differences, etc.) can factor into how girls make-meaning of media (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013), this study provided space for Black girls to describe and define what images they see in the media and then to reflect on the effect of those images as it relates to their own identities as well as collective Black girlhood. While there is not a specific attempt to characterize "identity outcomes" (e.g., the content or level of racial or gender identity), from a PVEST perspective, the girls' "intersubjectivity and meaning-making processes in light of tangible experiences" (Spencer, et al., 2006, p. 641) are understood as essential components of the identity development process. Thus, emphasis of the inquiry is on what media images Black girls attend to and how they interpret those images, which can be considered as "tangible experiences" that shape identity development. Additionally, the study sought to understand what additional representation Black girls wished to see.

Method

Data collection and analysis were approached from a critical Black feminist perspective. Collins (2002) argues that Black feminist intellectuals approach research on women and girls as "situated knowers" --possessing a unique and important way of knowing the conditions of oppression. Black feminist intellectuals center the voices of Black women and girls in research, acknowledging both the marginalization and resilience among Black women and girls. Finally, Black feminist intellectuals' function

as intermediaries between the Black community and the academy. Combined, this framework advocates for the generation of new knowledge to promote social change.

Sample

Black girls in sixth, seventh and eighth grade were recruited from a summer program for Black girls, located in a mid-sized, Southern city (n=21). Any student of color was invited to participate, recruitment for the program was conducted in school as well as in the community, and there was a sliding fee scale based on income so cost would not prohibit any student from participating in the program. In the City, nearly 50% of the population is African American. During the school year, most students attended predominantly Black, racially segregated public schools. Girls' ages ranged from ten to fourteen years old (M =12). In the summer program, formed almost twenty years ago with a mission to empower girls of color, Black girls explore science, technology, engineering and math in a culturally affirming space. Data were collected within the first two weeks of student's enrollment in the program.

Procedure

Data were collected through individual and focus group interviews as well as observations of the girls during some summer program activities. Nine students were interviewed across two focus groups and twelve students were interviewed "one-on-one." All interviews were conducted by the author. Individual interviews typically lasted twenty minutes while the two focus group interviews lasted over an hour. I developed and piloted a Black girl-centered qualitative interview protocol designed to guide Black girls through a set of questions and activities to learn more about Black girlhood, which included a self-portrait activity as well as student-centered interview questions to

facilitate rich dialogue. The main questions that guided the current analysis include: "There are lots of Black women and girls in the media (on TV, in magazines, in advertisements) – can you name some of them? What do you like/dislike about them?," "How do the images of Black women and girls in the media affect you?", "What does Black girl magic mean to you?" and "Are there images of Black women and girls that you wish you could see more of in the media?"[5]

Data Analysis

Following data collection, all group and individual interviews were transcribed, cleaned, and preliminarily processed by a team of researchers using a Google form in order to promote data familiarity. The process of data analysis adopted the inductive analysis process via mapping and writing around data (Bhattacharya, 2017). Through an iterative process of reading, writing, reflection, and peer and subject matter expert debriefing, I identified a preliminary organizational pattern within the data. Individual story arcs (Saldana, 2017) as well as visual maps (Bhattacharya, 2017) were also created to ensure the capturing of multiple viewpoints and experiences, and also to make connections across cases. After repeating the process of visual mapping and writing many times and making revisions based on reflection and conversation, I created the themes that organize the data below.

Results

Black girls' Multidimensional Interpretations of Black Women and Girls in the Media.

[5] In responding to these three questions, specifically, there were no key distinctions between data produced in focus group and "one on one" interviews.

In order to identify the most salient images of Black women and girls in the media, the girls were asked "There are lots of Black women and girls in the media (on TV, in magazines, in advertisements) – can you name some of them? What do you like/dislike about them?" For a list of results, arranged by most to least mentioned see Table 1.[6] Black girls listed a range of Black women and girls in the media (e.g. American rappers or singers, models, athletes, and TV hosts). Combined, Black girls listed 30 different Black women and girls in the media (See Table 1). The most frequently mentioned Black women (or girls) were Michelle Obama (7 girls) and Beyoncé (8 girls). Oprah Winfrey, Solange and Zendaya tied for the third most frequently mentioned woman, with three girls listing each woman. Only five of the individuals listed were under the age of eighteen.

Developmental Disposition. In answering how the images of Black women and girls in the media affected each girl, answers varied based on their developmental dispositions as well as level of attention and investment. For example, Princess and Zen both discussed the importance of media representation in their social development, however, their dispositions and responses shaped what they watched and the meaning they ascribed to it. Princess (10), the youngest girl in the sample, answered "Jessie, Good Luck Charlie --well I don't watch Disney channel at all that much anymore" when asked to name some of the Black women and girls in the media. She said the images affected her because they taught her "to never be scared of bullies." Princess said her biggest challenge was riding a roller coaster and being "scared." In over to overcome it, she

[6] It is important to note that while salient images of Black women and girls are often associated in popular press as being role models, most of the girls in this sample reported that female relatives (e.g. mom, aunts, sisters and grandmothers) were their role models.

squeezed her mom's hand tightly. For Princess, the Disney channel show was important because it supported her cognitive development by providing guidance for how to cope with new, scary experiences. Zen, who is three years older than Princess at 13-years-old, openly discussed her diagnoses of depression and anxiety throughout the interview and included Naomi Campbell on her list of women and girls in the media because of "the way she confidently goes into a room and how she walks and holds head up. I like that." Zen also discussed additional challenges, such as being bullied for her appearance and skin color. She commenting that she is still "working on [holding her head up]." For Zen, who said that her goal was "to be higher in my education and to be a better person spiritually and emotionally so I can make a better person in me. So, I can actually be happy instead of putting on a façade for everybody," Naomi Campbell's presence highlighted a disposition she aspires to.

Level of Attention and Investment. The level of attention girls paid to the media varied, but most youth engaged routinely with the media. For example, Coco (13) paid no attention to the representation of Black women and girls in the media, while La La (14) spent a great deal of time considering the media representations of Black women and girls. Because she did not pay attention to the media, Coco said she could not name any Black women or girls in the media, she could not answer how images of Black women and girls affected her, and she did not know what Black Girl Magic meant to her. On the other hand, La La (14) had the longest list: Beyoncé, Michelle Obama, Tiny, Remy Ma, Kehlani, and Tommie Lee. She discussed how some women on that list may be perceived negatively, but actively resisted the dichotomous "positive" / "negative" or "good" / "bad" categorization in favor of a more holistic narrative that highlighted how everyone

has both problems and strengths, saying some of the women she listed "have problems but everybody has problems." Then, she differentiated between the positive and negative actions, highlighting the strengths of each woman. For instance, in speaking about Tommie Lee she said, "I see good stuff sometimes like a girl her name is Tommie and she is in Love and Hip Hop and she, for her birthday, took all her birthday money and she gave homeless people food. So, I thought that was pretty good, but she also does bad things. I understand that."

Black Girls' Perceptions of Media Representation. Many girls discussed how "negative" images of Black women and girls may not personally affect them, but the actions may confirm negative stereotypes held by others and/or negatively reflect on the collective image of Black women and girls. For example, Imani (14) said,

> Well, it doesn't really affect me. It doesn't affect me, but of course I have some thoughts about it. When I see the positive stuff, of course it makes me feel good because a lot of people don't see positive stuff like that because they always have this one thought about Black girls in their head. When I see the negative stuff, it's really kind of frustrating because that's just, in a way, proving those people right that have those thoughts about us.

Other girls said the "negative" images proved people who held racist thoughts "right." Sydney (14) commented that, "when I see negative stuff, it really makes me angry because it's like a simple fact, people always look down on Black people because they think that it's expected from us." In discussing a celebrity "with all the colors in her hair," North (12) commented that "there is nothing wrong with that but it is just how she carries herself. It doesn't seem like young Black women should be represented." Miya (12) said that some images, based on what a woman was wearing, convey the message that "you can be more than just your skin-more than just your body. Others show that you

are your body and I feel like you're not your body. You are yourself!" Similarly, Jayla (13) said that,

> …Doesn't really affect me. It just-in the negative way, yeah because you see people doing the opposite of what's right. Like first you see them this way, second you see them another way. You're supposed to be a role model for younger girls and older girls as well. But you could change that around. It's not too late. But the positive side, I'm really happy to see African Americans on there because I think that if I can do it, you can do it too. It's basically empowerment over Black girls. I think that Black girls really need that type of encouragement that they could do what other African American women can do."

#BlackGirlMagic and the narrative of "power." The most frequently used word in response to, "What does Black Girl Magic mean to you?" was "power." For instance, Kenya (10) said "It's our power. What we mean. How we -yeah, I would say how we are." Zoe (12) said "you're Black so be proud of it." Amanda (11) said "Black girl magic means so much to me. It's like you have your own power that shines through you and everybody can see it." North (12) acknowledged that not everybody may see the 'magic,' but, "Black girl magic means to me that I got magic and some people might say I don't, but I got Black girl magic." Zen (13) described how Black girls used Black girl magic to "speak out so we can clear [things we are not] and it can be something totally different. She provided an example scenario, saying

> So, let's see. Say one day we have all these white people saying something about Black girls -in particular, in a very harsh way. A whole line of Black girls can say something and spark somebody's mind and it can change the whole world just by a sentence and you would never really expect that.

Girls also discussed how Black girl magic was about expressing their individuality as well as collective Black girlhood. For instance, Lauren said that Black girl magic means "not being like everybody else." Cali (12) said it means "that we can make up things, like dance or something." In answering the question, Jayla (13) stopped

responding to me and instead began speaking to a girl she imagined reading or listening to her words, saying “Don’t try to fit in because that might not get you to where you want to be. Be you because if you be you, you can do anything that you put your mind to. That’s what I really think about Black girl magic.” Ayana (14) also switched back and forth between talking to me and an imagined Black girl listener or reader, saying

> Do you. It’s basically just do you. Because you’re special and you can keep going, instead of having low self-esteem and saying I can’t do this. No, yes you can. To me Black Girl Magic is having something that nobody else has. Black girls’ having something that white girls don’t have. It’s just something that we bring to the world no other race can bring to the world.

Other girls highlighted the ‘magic’ of visibility and representation. La La said, “Black girl magic –Everything: we’re in magazines, we’re in movies, we’re doing TVs shows –Oprah Winfrey has her own network like BET, I never seen a Black woman have her own network like that –so I think like Black girl magic is right there." La La also shared that based on this positive representation and media ownership, “next year or this year will be, like, our year to shine.” Finally, Sydney provided the most descript answer of what Black girl magic meant to her, speaking for over two minutes. Her comments, truncated for brevity, underscore the possibility of Black girl magic,

> Black girl magic. Let me tell you something. Black girl magic is everything. It’s everything. You can go, you can do, you can do what you feel like. You don’t have to be ashamed of what you do, what you create, how look, how you walk, how you talk. You don’t have to be –you’re not ashamed of nothing. Black girl magic is magical. That’s all I can say about it. It’s magical. You can walk in a room full of people and you know all eyes going to be on, but are you ashamed? No. Because you already know, every Black girl has Black girl magic in them.

Changing the Broader Narrative. After asking girls to reflect on the current state of media images of Black women and girls, the girls responded to the question “Are there images of Black women and girls that you wish you could see more of in the

media?" Many girls said they wished to see more images of Black women and girls -- period. Other girls clarified that they would like to see more "positive" or "happy" images of Black women and girls. For example, La La said "I don't want to see people dying or doing bad stuff. I don't like seeing Black women mug shots. Like I see that all the time and I don't like that." Imani's wish echoes La La's sentiment in not wanting to see any more bad stuff, "There's a lot of people doing positive things that nobody knows about, but we always see stuff in the news about negative things that happen or shootings in the neighborhood and stuff like that, but they don't talk much about positive things."

Some girls hoped to see Black women and girls who "spoke out more about what they are going through." Amanda said "it's good to see that more Black women are getting out there and showing what they know, and standing up for themselves. Standing up to those standard stereotypes, like saying this or that." Zen said that if Black woman and girls speak out, "they could help somebody that might go through that same thing."

Additionally, they wanted to see images that aligned with their future professions and goals, e.g. Black women and girls "reading and doing math and science," as "singers and dancers," as "Black models with their natural shapes and natural hair," or as "Black entrepreneurs." Imani clarified that she wanted more than just the increased representation of Black models, but inclusion, saying "not only having more models, but accepting Black models for who they are. Because a lot of times, if there are Black models, they have to be a certain way." She cited their body size and shape, what they wear, and how they style their hair as sites of criticism. Finally, North, hopes to be that representation in magazines as a principal dancer "in a magazine doing my dance moves!"

Discussion and Implications

This qualitative study employed a critical developmental perspective (Spencer, et al., 1997; Valkenburg & Peter, 2013; Velez & Spencer, 2018) to better understand how the coexistence of commercially produced media and social media affect the identity development of Black girls. Specifically, this study explored Black girls' multidimensional interpretations and perceptions of Black women and girls in media, definitions of #BlackGirlMagic, and the images they wish to see more of in the media. Black girls' unique "knowing" (Collins, 2002) and understanding of media messages are important components of the identity development process (Spencer et al., 2006).

First, findings were in alignment with DSMM propositions (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013) that the effects of media are conditional and based on a number of factors related to girls' personal identities (e.g. developmental disposition, level of attention and investment). Black girls selected, interpreted and were affected by media in different, multidimensional ways. The images that appeared to elicit the greatest affective arousal (e.g. excitement, deep reflection) were images that tied to the main developmental questions, "who am I" and "what does it mean to be a Black female in society?" (Collins, 2016; Spencer, Dupree & Hartmann, 1997). Black girls seemed most attentive to Black women "situated knowers," women who modeled a possible dispositional and/or developmental disposition like Naomi Campbell or Skai Jackson in "Jessie."

Second, while many Black girls were concerned about how images and actions of Black women and girls in the media "may be represented" or perceived by people who already had biases about Black women and girls, the girls did not endorse or internalize the negative messages the images may convey about their identities. Instead, Black girls

thought critically about the "negative" action and constructed affirming interpretations. For instance, La La said she recognized that "everybody has problems" then provided a concrete example of when Tommie in Love and Hip Hop donated her money from her birthday to the homeless. La La said "I understand" the "bad things," but was making a conscious decision to focus on the "good stuff."

Third, #BlackGirlMagic (Thompson, 2018) provided Black girls with a framework for developing an asset-based sense of self and conceptualization of Black girlhood. Black girls provided rich descriptions of what Black girl magic meant, using words and phrases like "our power that shines through," "how we are," to "be you" and "have something that nobody else has." Jayla, Ayana and Sydney were so invested in sharing their perspectives on the power of Black girl magic that each girl shifted their language to address a Black girl they imagined would be reading or listening to their responses, without any prompting or guidance to do so. Zen described how Black girls collectively "restory" (Stornailuolo & Thomas, 2017) what it means to be a Black female within a society that may not anticipate that action, arguing that Black girls can "change the whole world just by a sentence and you would never really expect that."

Finally, the answers provided by Black girls in response to "are there images of Black women and girls that you wish you could see more of in the media" illustrate the capabilities of Black girls to "restory." Black girls described the overrepresentation of "bad stuff" on the news in their community and the need for more "positive" news. Additionally, Black girls identified a need for more women to share their stories to affirm and inspire a Black girl navigating the same experiences. Imani's perspective that she wanted inclusion and not just more representation and visibility echoed Hobson's

argument that visibility is only a means of liberation (Hobson, 2016). North eagerly aspires to answer the call for more images of Black women and girls by dancing on the cover of a magazine as a principal dancer.

Limitations. It is important to underscore that the data must always be understood in relation to the context in which they were collected. The girls in this study were recruited from a summer program for Black girls in a City and school system with a large percentage of African Americans. Perceived support from the program may have impacted how they reacted and coped with the media messages. In turn, although findings from this study may be transferable, it is important to note that they are not generalizable to all Black girls. Future research should explore media effects, particularly the effects of Black girl magic, in different environments such as in racially diverse racial environments where Black girls may not have as much social support.

Additionally, data were not collected on individual's specific media engagement, such as how often they watched tv, read books, or engaged with others through social media. Therefore, it is not possible to identify the specific activities that shaped the girls' perceptions. Future research should explore how Black girls routinely view and engage with media, such as through a content analysis of posts made by the girls or daily diary entries that log media engagement and meaning making.

Implications

Marian Wright Edelman, an American activist for children's rights, reminds us that "we must not, in trying to think about how we can make a big difference, ignore the small daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to big differences that we often cannot foresee" (Applewhite, Evans & Frothingham, 2003). Among young

adolescents who are fully immersed in the world of media, adults must continue to build opportunities for Black girls to critically digest, process, and discuss media they attend to and interpret on a daily basis. In alignment with PVEST, social support from friends, family members and peers can mitigate stigmatizing experiences and support the identity development process for Black girls (Spencer, 1995; Spencer, Dupree & Hartmann, 1997). As researchers, educators and policy makers, we must envision and support a world where every Black girl believes she can "change the world with just a sentence" even when it is not expected because of stereotypical or controlling images that maintain structural and institutional racism (Collins, 2016).

In order to accomplish this, we must provide Black girls with the knowledge, tools and skills to craft that "sentence," "walk into a room" and believe in her 'magic.' For example, images Black girls wish to see more of could be identified, researched and added to the walls of classrooms. Within the curriculum, articles that would be catalogued under #BlackGirlMagic could be used to strengthen Black girls' critical media literacy, the ability to critique everyday social conditions (see Hobbs, 1997; McArthur, 2016 for practical ways to employ media literacy as well as reading skills). Finally, in matching Black girls with Black women, Black girls could share, learn and jointly create social action campaigns to unite and "restory" their bright futures. #BlackGirlMagic

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#	Name of Black women or girls in the media (Age)	Frequency of Mention
1	Beyoncé (37)	8
2	Michelle Obama (54)	7
3	Oprah (64)	3
4	Zendaya (22)	3
5	Solange Knowles (32)	3
6	Skai Jackson (16)	2
7	Wendy Williams (54)	2
8	Nicki Minaj (35)	2
9	Blac Chyna (30)	2
10	Tracee Ellis Ross (45)	1
11	Raven Symone (32)	1
12	Quevenzhané Wallis (15)	1
13	Tameka "Tiny" Harris (43)	1
14	Serena Williams (36)	1
15	Rihanna (30)	1
16	Ciara (32)	1
17	Amber Rose (34)	1
18	Blue Ivy Carter (6)	1
19	Rumi Carter (1)	1
20	Kehlani (23)	1
21	Janelle Monae (32)	1
22	Naomi Campbell (4)	1
23	Simone Biles (21)	1
24	Remy Ma (38)	1
25	Lauryn Hill (43)	1
26	China Anne McClain (20)	1
27	Dancers (General)	1
28	Jessie (TV Series)	1
29	Good Luck Charlie (TV Series)	1
30	Tommie Lee (34)	1

“I don’t really like, you know, love going to school, but I love learning new things:”

Examining the Role of Teachers in Shaping the Educational “Journey” of Black Girls

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"I don't really like, you know, love going to school, but I love learning new things:"

Examining the Role of Teachers in Shaping the Educational "Journey" of Black Girls

Abstract

For Black youth, teacher relationships are particularly meaningful in supporting or hindering their learning and development in schools. The current study centers the voices of Black girls to explore how ongoing practices, assumptions, and processes across multiple levels of schooling, specifically within the school environment as well as within interactions and relationships with teachers and administrators, perpetuate racial inequalities or promote racial equity. Participants were Black girls in sixth, seventh and eighth grade (n=21), who were recruited from a summer program for Black girls located in a mid-sized, Southern city. Individual and focus group interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using narrative analysis. In addition to normative, developmentally-appropriate experiences of Black girls in middle schools (e.g. academic related pressures to succeed, "drama" among peers, and bias-based bullying), I also found that Black girls perceived that teachers, administrators and peers held stereotypes about who they are and their capacity to succeed. Girls described specific ways they were "othered" based on pervasive racial stereotypes about their academic abilities, femininity, and perceived sexual knowledge and activity. Black girls also perceived how successful teachers rejected deficit thinking. Finally, my analyses identified positive and negative feedback from teachers. Negative feedback included *ignoring, providing negative verbal feedback and disciplining* and positive feedback included *acknowledging and providing academic support, providing positive verbal feedback, and buffering* students from toxic situations with a high likelihood of future discipline. Findings underscore the need to continue to understand the unique ways Black girls are marginalized in schools, particularly among teachers and administrators.

"I don't really like, you know, love going to school, but I love learning new things:" Examining the Role of Teachers in Shaping the Educational "Journey" of Black Girls

Miya (12) envisioned each new school day as a "new journey" and an "experience!" She described how "some days you might learn about this particular person and other days we might do fun activities or go on field trips." However, Miya clarified that she "[doesn't] really, like you know, love going to school," but she does "love learning new things." Some days she doesn't like school because some teachers make "jokes like 'oh you can't do this because of this…'" or "they are just quick to send you to the office." According to Miya, these actions and comments discouraged her because she felt "like well you are saying I can't do this, but I am physically able to do this."

For Miya, as well as many other Black girls, the school system (i.e. peers, curriculum, teachers, administrators, broader school culture) is a contentious space that requires them to navigate unique social challenges. Miya must cope with learning in an environment where she frequently receives negative feedback about her ability to learn. For students like Miya, it is critically important to envision how schools can be (re)imagined as a space of meaningful learning and positive development. To support this envisioning, the current study centers and privileges the voices of Black girls to explore how ongoing practices, assumptions and processes across multiple levels of schooling, specifically within the school environment as well as within interactions and relationships with teachers and administrators, perpetuate racial inequalities or promote racial equity[7].

[7] The Aspen Institute defines racial equity as "what a genuinely non-racist society would look like. In a racially equitable society, the distribution of society's benefits and burdens would not be skewed by race. In other words, racial equity would be a reality in which a person is no more or less likely to experience society's benefits or burdens just because of the color of their skin

Guiding Framework: The development of black girls and the influence of schools

During early adolescence, Black youth work to answer "who am I" and "what does it mean to be a Black youth in contemporary society" within a sociocultural context of racism and prejudice. Black adolescents' navigation of unique social challenges such as perceived racial stigmatization and discrimination informs their perceptions of self and group identities, as well as academic outcomes (Garcia Coll et al, 1996; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003; Yip, 2018). According to the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST), adolescents experience a self-appraisal process (e.g. How do others see me?) in response to stereotypes and biases about their social identities (e.g. race, gender, class, skin tone, maturation) that is "unavoidably linked" to stress (Spencer, 1995; Spencer, Dupree & Hartmann, 1997). It is important to note that contrary to theories that argue that the self-appraisal process includes a period of self-hatred (Vandiver et al., 2000; Worrell, Vandiver & Cross, 2004), Spencer (2010) argues that this self-appraisal and growing awareness is "about learning [about pervasive cultural stereotypes], not about an internalized psychic state involving self-hatred." In other words, Black youth's knowledge of pervasive negative stereotypes and biases is not inherently linked to internalized self-hatred; however, their maturing cognitive abilities enable them to understand that such stereotypes and biases exist.

For Black girls in particular, messages about race, skin color, class, gender, as well as maturational differences play a critical role in shaping their developing social identities because they are "tied to interconnected systems of power" (Collins, 2016; Crenshaw, 1997; Spencer, Dupree & Hartmann, 1997). Black girls are discriminated against in unique ways not traditionally captured in definitions of racism and/or sexism.

In her groundbreaking article, Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Anti-discrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics (1989), Crenshaw writes

> Because 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.

Edward Morris (2007) illustrates this argument through observations of Black girls in classrooms. Morris found that teachers perceived Black girls as "abrasive and aggressive" rather than "assertive and outspoken" in educational settings. The misperception was arguably not due to either race or gender in isolation, but due to the particular manner Black women and girls are subordinated at the intersection of race and gender. He wrote how this treatment differed from the ways white girls were treated:

> [Black girls'] assertive behaviors, which schools and families often subtly encouraged for White and middle-class children (Anyon, 1980; Lareau, 2002, 2003), tended to be interpreted as abrasive and aggressive. This tainted perceptions of Black femininity in this working-class environment, making these girls appear inadequately feminine—lacking control over themselves, yet trying to establish control over others in inappropriate ways. Such perceptions resulted in patterns of discipline intended to re-form the femininity of African American girls into something more "acceptable." (p. 510 - 511)

The PVEST model predicts that in response to teacher appraisals of their identities, youth must determine how to react and cope (Spencer, 1995). Perceived social supports, such as perceived positive teacher expectations or perceived popularity with peers can mediate the experience and interpretation of the stressor, which has implications for coping behavior. An adaptive solution like self-acceptance is linked to a productive outcome like resiliency, while a maladaptive solution like a negative learning attitude is associated with an unproductive outcome like school dropout (Spencer, 1995).

As an example framed using PVEST, Spencer (1995) explains that an African American student who repeatedly receives negative feedback about their identity in school may react by "shutting off" from the experience so that they can align themselves more closely with sites of more positive feedback, such as among peers or outside of the school.

The Ecological Context of Schools

Schools are a central context for both learning and socio-emotional development (Roeser, Eccles & Sameroff, 1998). Eccles and Roeser (1999) argue that hierarchically ordered and interdependent levels of the school system such as the classroom, school building, and the school within society affect the day-to-day experiences of students (See Eccles, 2004 for a full explanation of schools and stage-environment fit frameworks). There is a reciprocal relationship between students' perception of school experiences and their broader academic and socio-emotional development (Roeser, Eccles & Sameroff, 1998). Youth actively construct meaning of the organizational, instructional and interpersonal processes. In turn, the processes may collectively or individually enhance or detract from Black girls' learning and development.

School Climate

Students' connections to and successes in school are impacted by their perceptions of the school climate. As described by the U.S. Department of Education (2013), school climate is "a multi-faceted concept that describes the extent to which a school community creates and maintains a safe school campus, a supportive academic, disciplinary, and physical environment, and respectful, trusting, and caring relationships

throughout the school community." Rather than a single entity, school climate is a system with multiple interacting components (Cornell et. al, 2017).

Experiences of racism and prejudice influence Black students' perceptions of school climate, with African American students' sense of institutional trust declining throughout adolescence (Yip, 2018). Recent research suggests that Black students perceive less caring and equitable school climates than white students (e.g. Bottiani et. al., 2016; Furlong et al, 2011). For example, Voight and colleagues (2015) found that Black and Latinx students reported poorer relationships with adults, fewer opportunities for participation, greater concerns about safety, and lower connectedness with their school than their White peers. In exploring trust among white, African American and Latinx students from sixth to eighth grade, Yeager and colleagues (2017) found that trust declined for African American and Latinx students over every semester of middle school. With increasing levels of distrust, researchers found an increase in the likelihood of disciplinary infractions and lower academic attainment over time.

Student-Teacher Relationships

Teacher-child relationships can be a powerful resource for students (Pianta, 2016). Interactions with adults build an infrastructure for success in school (Hamre, 2012). Research has found that for Black youth, teacher relationships relative to other social components are particularly meaningful (Pallock & Lamborn, 2006; Bottiani et. al, 2016; Decker et. al., 2007; Meehan, Hughes & Cavell, 2003). Hamre (2012) argues that instruction occurs through teachers' interactions with students, therefore having a good relationship with a teacher is important to learning (Hamre, 2012). Effective student-teacher relationships, ones that tend to be emotionally supportive and have high quality

classroom organization and instructional support (Hamre et. al., 2007, 2013), can support students' emotional wellbeing as well as academic outcomes (e.g. Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Cornelius-White, 2007; Wentzel, 1997).

Pianta and Saft (2001) argue that student-teacher relationships are a product and a predictor of child outcomes; however, these interactions consistently vary according to the social characteristics of the student (Pianta & Saft, 2001). Recent reviews of teacher-student relationships literature have outlined student demographic characteristics that are associated with the nature and quality of student-teacher relationships (e.g. Roorda et. al., 2011; Sabol & Pianta, 2012; McGrath and Van Bergen, 2015). For example, in a review of 92 studies and 12 review articles, McGrath and Van Bergen (2015) listed a host of factors previously identified in the literature, such as age and physicality, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, behavior and temperament that placed students "at risk" of negative relationships with teachers. Moreover, McGrath and Van Bergen (2015) argued that students in more than one "at risk" category have an "enhanced relative risk," making these students even more vulnerable to experiencing negative relationships with teachers.

Recent research (e.g. Saft & Pianta, 2001; Kesner, 2000; Hughes, Gleason, & Zhang, 2005; Hughes, Wu, Kwok, Villareal, & Johnson, 2012; Jerome, Hamre, & Pianta, 2009) has found that teachers report more negative perceptions of Black students as well as more conflictual relationships with Black as compared to white students. Why is being Black consistently framed as the "risk factor" for negative student-teacher relationships? One explanation stemming from the literature above on student-teacher relationships is that students and families lack the academic and cultural resources required for positive

student-teacher relationships, citing reasons such as "less behavioral adjustment," "low socioeconomic status" and/or a "teacher-student mismatch." Importantly, this deficit thinking – referring to students in terms of what they are lacking – strengthens stereotypes, disguises lowered teacher expectations and its consequences, and, most importantly, leads to an insufficient exploration of "the institutional and individual practices, assumptions, and processes that contribute to and/or fail to weaken these patterns" (Valencia, 2010; Berman, Chambliss & Geiser, 1999; Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Smit, 2012).

Teachers' Biased Beliefs and Expectations. Garcia & Guerra (2004) argue that deficit thinking permeates society and schools, with teachers and administrators (Thompson, 2001) mirroring those beliefs. Similarly, Delpit (2012) writes that "the cultural framework of our country has, almost since its inception, dictated that Black is "bad" and in all arenas white is "good" and "superior" (xvii)." In a study by Pigott and Cower (2000) examining how children's race played a role in teachers' ratings of students' school adjustment and performance from 70 kindergarten through fifth-grade classrooms in 24 multiracial inner-city schools (N=445 youth), researchers found that the child's race was the *strongest determinant* of both African American and white teachers' judgements. Notably, they report that

> African American children were judged by both teacher groups to have more serious school adjustment problems, fewer competencies, more negatively stereotypic personality qualities, and poorer educational prognoses than White children.

Research has begun to explore how teachers' racialized expectations of Black girls, specifically teachers' low expectations, contribute to differential interactions. Monique Morris (2012), for example, argues that Black girls, in particular, "have been

granted permission to fail by the implicit biases of teachers that lower expectations for them." In qualitative studies that asked students to describe their experiences with bias and discrimination, Black girls consistently referenced teachers' racialized expectations. For example, Joseph, Viesca & Bianco (2016) examined the perspectives of eighteen Black female adolescents regarding definitions and experiences with racism, finding that half of the students reported experiencing racism in school. In the study, most instances of racism focused on prejudice, discrimination, and differential treatment. Of those incidents, the most frequently described incidents involved teachers. For example, Chanita discussed how teachers "felt less of [her]" in classes. Another student, Vantrice, told interviewers that teachers are "going to have biased thoughts on certain students," remarking how these same biased thoughts led to white kids being placed in IB courses and Black students in "traditional" coursework.

In a similar study exploring anti-Black racism in US public education among fifteen Black girls, Wun (2016) found that teachers were more likely to police and punish Black girls than their peers. For instance, Michaela, a Black girl in 12th grade described how she received up to seven referrals for "being disrespectful maybe. Making smart comments." When asked if she could "get in trouble for making smart comments," Michaela replied "Well, I don't think I should have. I just thought the comment was intelligent to say" (p. 743). In another situation, a fifteen-year-old Black girl, Stacy, described how she was put in handcuffs and thrown to the ground for 'almost' fighting her friend. In an instant, she was surrounded by trucks, police cars, and dogs "because [she] was yelling at somebody" (p. 742). Wun (2016) concluded that Black girls are

"criminalized for seemingly 'normal' behaviors (i.e. drinking Gatorade, chewing gum, or asserting their agency) and above average behaviors (i.e. honors student)" (p.743).

How Biases Lead to Disciplinary Action. In 2016, Okonofua, Walton & Eberhardt developed a schematic model of how stereotypes and threats create predicaments for teachers and students, both in single encounters and over time. Briefly, Okonofua et al. (2016a) describe a "toxic social-psychological dynamic" that occurs between students and teachers that leads to disciplinary action. According to Okonofua and colleagues (2016a), teachers enter the field with the goal of teaching and inspiring students. If a student disrupts the class, the teacher may interpret the misbehavior as a threat to that goal. In response to feeling like they are being prevented from teaching, coupled with pervasive racial stereotypes (e.g. Black students are troublemakers), teachers punish Black students more harshly to curb future "troublemaking." From the student perspective, in alignment with racial identity development theories (e.g., PVEST; Spencer, 1995), Black students may already mistrust teachers and be aware that they can be subjected to bias. In turn, they may disengage from the relationship with the teacher or be less cooperative. Therefore, once disciplined, the student's concerns are supported and the teacher-student relationship continues to deteriorate. Future incidents of discipline may increase and escalate in response and students may exhibit heightened distress, distrust and alienation (Okonofua et. al., 2016a).

In this recursive process, Okonofua and colleagues underscore that neither teacher nor student are ultimately to blame; instead the process is perpetuated by "the legacy of racism" (Carter et al, 2014). As outlined in the PVEST model (Spencer, 1995; Spencer , Dupree & Hartmann, 1997), among African American students who are frequently

disciplined, a loss of trust and disengagement is a reasonable adaptation to a pattern of institutional distrust, but it can lead to accumulating behavioral consequences over time, such as a pattern of disengagement as well as an accelerated loss of trust.

Teachers' High Beliefs and Expectations. Recent research has begun to address the practices, assumptions and processes among teachers that perpetuate racial inequalities, but what about the processes that promotes racial equity by explicitly acknowledging and rejecting deficit thinking and anti-Black racism as it manifests in the practices, assumptions and processes among teachers? The literature on successful teachers of African American students (e.g. Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Gay, 2000; Ware, 2006; Delpit, 2012) emphasizes that successful educators must possess high expectations, strong demand, care, and concern. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995) coined emotionally supportive teachers of African American students *dreamkeepers*. Dreamkeepers believe in academic and cultural excellence and practice culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994; 1995). Specifically, dreamkeepers cultivate trust among African American students who may have previously had negative experiences with teachers due to the "tone of underachievement" by emphasizing that the classroom is an inclusive community. Additionally, culturally relevant teachers "teach to and through" student strengths (Gay, 2010). Thus, culturally relevant educators reject deficit thinking that shifts the blame to individual or cultural deficits instead of systemic inequalities (Wiggan & Watson, 2016).

While more recent work has outlined gender relevant considerations for practice for Black males (e.g. Bristol, 2014; Warren, 2013; Howard, 2013; Dumas & Nelson, 2016), few studies have sought to consider the unique needs of Black girls. Booker and

Lim (2018), for instance, utilized qualitative methods to explore eight "high achieving" Black girls' relationships with their math teachers. In their study, encouraging relationships, "engaging and motivating teacher support" and authentic pedagogy, "instructional methods that complement the developmental needs of pre-adolescent and adolescent girls" appeared most supportive in cultivating a sense of belonging for Black girls in mathematics. Other studies focused on specific curricular practices such as including urban fiction, multicultural literature or hip-hop in the classroom to build connections with students (e.g. Ford, Walters, Byrd & Harris, 2018; Gibson, 2016; Kelly, 2016).

The Important of Active Anti-Racism in Research and Practice. The broader work on effective student-teacher relationships (e.g., Hamre, et al., 2007; 2013; Pianta, 2016) and the race- and gender-specific work on effective teachers of African American students differ in how they perceive the role of student demographic characteristics in contributing to learning outcomes. Both domains of research acknowledge the role of race, ethnicity and culture, but a central argument in the effective student-teacher relationships literature is that certain student demographic characteristics, such as being African American, place students "at risk" of having more negative student-teacher relationships. By hypothesizing that African American youth are "at risk," the literature on effective student-teacher relationships frames the success of African American students as exceptional and a rejection of what was hypothesized. Moreover, the research also fails to consider the role of teachers in influencing the nature of their relationships with African American students. For example, how are teachers' definitions and

interpretations of emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support influenced by stereotypes and biases teachers may hold about African American youth?

Anti-Black racism is embedded within "cultural framework" of our society (Delpit, 2012). The pernicious stereotype that Black children are "troublemakers" or "achieving at significantly lower rates than their white peers" mediates Black children's experiences in the school system (Bullock, Alexander & Gholston, 2012). In order to promote racial equity, it is critical to actively confront and address racism in education. In her book *Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race*, Beverly Tatum (1997) writes about the ongoing cycle of racism and the need to actively disrupt assumptions and processes that perpetuate racial inequalities:

> I sometimes visualize the ongoing cycle of racism as a moving walkway at the airport. Active racist behavior is equivalent to walking fast on the conveyor belt… Passive racist behavior is equivalent to standing still on the walkway. No overt effort is being made, but the conveyor belt moves the bystanders along to the same destination as those who are actively walking. Some of the bystanders may feel the motion of the conveyor belt, see the active racists ahead of them, and choose to turn around…But unless they are walking actively in the opposite direction at a speed faster than the conveyor belt- unless they are actively antiracist- they will find themselves carried along with the others (p. 12)

Thus, while the broad literature on effective student-teacher relationships identifies best practices assumed to be universal, the practices are not equally beneficial for all students (McGrath and Van Bergen, 2015), which raises questions about their generalizability. Some have argued that practices encompassed under the heading of "culturally responsive pedagogy" are nearly the same as those identified in the literature on effective student-teacher relationships (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1995), however what appears to differentiate the two is an explicit focus on active anti-racism, a rejection of deficit

thinking, and a recognition of systemic inequalities. These elements are inherent in culturally-responsive approaches but not in the broader literature on teacher-student relationships.

The Current Study

The current study centered and privileged the voices of Black girls to explore how ongoing practices, assumptions and processes across multiple levels of schooling, specifically within the school environment as well as within interactions and relationships with teachers and administrators, perpetuate racial inequalities or promote racial equity. In reviewing the literature, it's evident that the "cultural framework of our country" (Delpit, 2012) has contributed to educational inequalities for Black girls, however being a Black girl should not be categorized as a risk factor. Instead of drawing the conclusion that Black girls are lacking the academic and cultural resources required for positive student-teacher relationships because of their identities, the literature points to the need to more deeply investigate how ongoing practices, assumptions and processes reinforce processes of marginalization.

Additionally, there has been an underrepresentation of students' voices in teacher-student relationships literature (McGrath, Bergen & Sweller, 2017). As Toni Morrison writes in Beloved (1992) "definitions belong to the definers, not the defined." Therefore, it is critical to ask Black girls to define and describe the practices, assumptions and processes from their unique perspectives. As Spencer articulates in PVEST (1995), youth make meaning of stereotypes and biases about their identities within their individual ecological context. Accordingly, girls may react and cope in a variety of ways that are either adaptive or maladaptive within their unique ecological contexts. For instance, one

girl may adopt a negative learning attitude in response to negative feedback from a teacher or administrator, which is a reasonable but maladaptive coping response, while another student may resist and reject the same feedback about their academic identity and maintain a positive learning attitude. Thus, the knowledge gained from focusing on the perspectives of Black girls represents a pathway through which the effects of schooling practices, assumptions and processes may translate to girls' academic success and emotional wellbeing.

Methods

Data collection and analysis were approached from a Black feminist perspective. Collins (2002) argues that Black feminist intellectuals approach research on women and girls as "situated knowers"--possessing a unique and important way of knowing the conditions of oppression. As Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley argues, "the people closest to the pain should be closest to the power" (Weigel, 2018). As a Black feminist intellectual, I privilege and center the voices of Black women and girls in research, acknowledging both the marginalization and resilience among Black women and girls. Additionally, I write to serve as an intermediary between the Black community and the academy with the goal of advocating for the generation of new knowledge to promote social change.

Sample

Black girls in sixth, seventh and eighth grade (n=21) were recruited from a summer program for Black girls, located in a mid-sized, Southern city. In the nine-week summer program, formed almost twenty years ago with a mission to empower girls of color, Black girls explore science, technology, engineering and math in a culturally

affirming space. In the City, nearly 50% of the population is African American, and during the school year, most girls attended predominantly Black, racially segregated public schools. Girls' ages ranged from ten to fourteen years old (M=12). Data were collected within the first two weeks of student's enrollment in the program.

Procedure

Data were collected through individual and focus group interviews as well as observations. The researcher developed and piloted a Black girl-centered qualitative interview protocol designed to guide Black girls through a set of questions and activities to learn more about Black girlhood, which included a self-portrait activity as well as student-centered interview questions to facilitate rich dialogue. Sample questions include,

1. Sometimes students like going to school and sometimes they don't. How do you feel about school?
2. Tell me more about what excites you about school/ what frustrates you about school?
3. Tell me about the teachers and administrators at your school, how would you describe them?
4. Do you feel respected at school?
5. Do you feel like your teachers and administrators care about you? How do they show it?
6. Is there a teacher at school who understands you? Tell me more about what he or she does to make you feel understood?

Data Analysis

Following data collection, all group and individual interview transcriptions were transcribed, cleaned, and preliminarily processed by a team of researchers. I adopted the inductive analysis process via mapping and writing around data (Bhattacharya, 2017). Through an iterative process of reading, writing, reflecting, visualizing, and debriefing with peer and subject matter experts, I identified a preliminary organizational pattern within the data. Specifically, I utilized narrative methodologies to "provide a window into

the process of identity construction" (Riessman, 2008) by allowing individuals to "form and re-form who they have been, are presently, and hope to become" (Alpine, 2016). Key elements of the narrative analysis process included preserving individual girls' stories by including the temporality, social context, complicating events, and an evaluative conclusion both in the analysis and in the write up of data (Alpine, 2016). Individual story arcs (i.e. visualizations that depict the events and meaning making in sequence) (see Saldana, 2017) as well as visual maps (e.g. the drawing of connections among students' responses within focus group interviews) (Bhattacharya, 2017) were also created to ensure the capturing of multiple viewpoints and experiences, as well as make connections across cases.

Findings

After repeating the process of visual mapping and writing many times and making revisions based on reflection and conversation, I created the two themes that organize the data below: *Perceptions of Teachers' Beliefs* and *Expectations* and *Feedback*. Within each theme, I discuss subthemes that reflect an array of processes based on the girls' experiences. Prior to discussing the themes, I provide a summary of their experiences with normative, developmentally-appropriate middle school excitements and frustrations in order to contextualize and normalize the girls' everyday experiences in school.

Themes	Representative Quote
The Ecological Context of Schools	"I personally like going to school. I like learning. Sometimes there is a lot of drama in my school, I kind of get involved and so sometimes I don't like going to school about drama."
Perceptions of Teachers' Beliefs and Expectations	
Biases	"People don't think I'm as smart as I am because I'm Black".
High Expectations	"She is a very understanding teacher and she understands that Black kids in general they are not how everybody else thinks they are. They are smart just as other people are."
Feedback	
Ignore	"They just don't pick on you."
Negative Feedback	"He's very –he wasn't a nice person to be around and he would say mean stuff to you and then you'll try to talk to like everything is okay. That's basically it."
Discipline	"So, I be getting writ up and things, so I get upset."
Acknowledge	"They show they want you to be in their class and they want you to have a great experience."
Positive Feedback	"Encouraging words"
Academic Support	"They'll help you with any problem –even if you've been over it many times."

Table 1. Black girls' descriptions of their interactions with teachers and administrators by theme

Everyday Experiences in the Ecological Context of Schools

According to the girls, "learning" and "seeing my friends" were the most exciting aspects of middle school. For instance, Jayla said she was excited "to learn new things that I never learned before. Just keep on learning!" They also said they loved field trips and other fun educational activities. La La and Zen said that their teachers, who are

"caring and stuff" and "encourage me to learn new stuff and come to school," respectively, were the most exciting part of school. Amanda said she "loved being around friends" in school, but she was equally excited about days "when we have a test that I know I can do, and I'm excited about the grade that I will get, that's a day I'm most excited to go."

Amanda's most frustrating days were "usually when I take math tests, and I get a bad grade, and I've put so much work into it, and I show my work, and I'm very confident that's the answer and I hit the submit button and it's, like, a 69 percent or something that really frustrates me." Similarly, other girls reported the pressure to get good grades as a top middle school frustration. Zen said she frequently struggled with "stress over work and people wanting you to get As." However, most students named "drama" and "judging" as the biggest frustration, which included conflict, pressure and judgment from peers as well as teachers and administrators. For example, Zoe said that middle school was "overwhelming with drama and stuff." Kenya emphasized the importance of hanging out with the right peers who won't get you in trouble but Jayla described how it can be hard to stay away from drama, "people who pick fights," or people who "pressure you." North said she loved "learning stuff about science because it makes me think about the world around me," but often the middle school "drama distracts from learning." In describing how drama impedes her ability to learn, she explained

> I personally like going to school. I like learning. Sometimes there is a lot of drama in my school, I kind of get involved and so sometimes I don't like going to school about drama. It just distracts me from I'm learning. Like let's say somebody say I said something and I said I didn't and then they say I lied and then the teachers get involved and then my reputation goes bad and it's just a distraction…though I try to pick the right friends in school.

In a focus group interview, Abby, Jade, and Kenya talked about how "everything" frustrated them about middle school:

> Lauren: What frustrates you about school?
> Abby: Everything.
> Jade: Yes.
> Lauren: Okay, tell me about that. What do you mean when you say everything?
> Abby: Everything. The teachers, the kids, the playground –well, yeah. Gym class, walking the hallways, the lockers, the bathroom –just everything in general.
> Kenya: I would say the people. Sometimes certain people get on my nerves. Sometimes, when you don't understand something and you can't get it, that frustrates me.
> Jade: My school has a lot of trucks and rednecks, so they're racist to Black people.

Similarly, other girls discussed bias-based bullying, i.e. bullying related to some aspect of their social identity like race, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability or sexual orientation (Hope, Mulvey & Shipman, 2018; Mulvey et. al., 2018). Jayla, for example, described how she was "dragged" every day from fifth through seventh grade because she was "the only African American in that class." She commented that,

> …Because for me, through my seventh-grade year, it was so hard. I literally had tears out of my eye like every single day. Like I cannot go to school without being made fun of. That's the thing that I don't understand. Just about being Black. But for me, it's mostly judgmental purposes.

As she recounted the challenges she faced, she paused to clarify that "it's not just the Caucasian [students] who were picking [on] me. It was teachers too. I'm like, you're supposed to be teaching me instead of doing this <u>just</u> because I'm African American. It don't make no sense."

Perceptions of Teachers' Beliefs and Expectations

The first two sub-themes in this section describe Black girls' perceptions of how teachers' beliefs influence their interpersonal interactions. In the first theme, Black girls

describe how stereotypes about their identities negatively contributed to teacher perceptions and interactions. In the second theme, Black girls describe how high expectations and the rejection of stereotypical narratives of Blackness and achievement positively contributed to teacher perceptions and interactions.

Biases. When asked to describe their teachers and administrators, most girls reported differential treatment from teachers, often describing a repeated pattern of perceptions and behaviors due to a lack of understanding or biases because of their social identities. Similar to judgement from peers, judgement from teachers caused frustration as well as anxiety or insecurity about their academic abilities. For example, Brooklyn's educational experience is negatively affected by the constant uncertainty of how teachers and students will respond. She loves "learning and stuff" but she was "iffy" about "education and my teachers and stuff" because she felt like her teachers and friends have low expectations about her abilities because she is "Black." According to Brooklyn, her teachers and friends "think I'm not going to make as good as grades because they think I am playing a lot or something…that I am not focused." She attributes this bias to being Black, stating,

> People don't think I'm as smart as I am because I'm Black…. And I have good grades and they don't think that I would make good grades because I'm Black and stuff. I don't get as much as opportunities as other races do.

Zen also described experiences of discrimination based on negative stereotypes of Black people stating that people think "I am less educated than a white person, that I am louder than the average white person, if that makes any sense from what people tell me, and that I am too Black." Further, because she is a Black girl, people hold stereotypes about "what I will be when I get to high school. That I will be fast in getting pregnant at a

young age, that I will never finish school, and that I will never get to do the job I really want." She asserted that, "in reality, I will never let nothing block my blessing from what I want to be in life." Miya described the same stereotype in her interview, stating "most people think that Black girls are supposed to be loud and they are not supposed to be successful and they are supposed to have children at an early age." She continued, describing how these biases affected her in school

> Most of the time we don't get treated equally. Even though segregation is no longer here, I still feel like a partial of people want to have that continue because when I was in elementary school, there wasn't really a whole bunch of other people of my race, but I felt like everyone was staring at me differently because of my skin and I had to show them I wasn't like "the others" and that I was going to be something.

Throughout the interview, Miya described how she will never let those stereotypes define her path because she is determined to make her "way to the top" of her education and career.

High Expectations. Supportive student teacher interactions were characterized by high expectations for Black girls that rejected negative stereotypes of Black students. Miya, for example, described how some teachers "actually show their support and they show they want you to be in their class and they want you to have a great experience." She described how teachers in sixth grade displayed compassion by providing students with extra time because "maybe the circumstance of the night before was not like it was supposed to have been." Then, Miya described how she received extra time on her work whenever she needed it, clarifying that "it is not just for me…it is for everybody." She highlighted a specific teacher, Mrs. G, who had high expectations for Black students:

> She is a very understanding teacher and she understands that Black kids in general they are not how everybody else thinks they are. They are smart just as other people are. So, that's what she wants to get across to everybody else and she

> wants them to understand. I think with me she knows the type of person I am and she knows that I have potential and that I can put my mind to anything that I want to do.

Feedback

The second section focuses on how teachers responded (or did not respond) to Black girls, separated by whether the feedback was negative or positive. Negative feedback included three distinct interactions: ignoring, providing negative verbal feedback, and disciplining. Positive feedback also included three distinct interactions: acknowledging and providing academic support, providing positive verbal feedback, and buffering students from toxic situations with a high likelihood of future discipline.

Negative Feedback.

Ignore. Many girls described how teachers did not call on them when they raised their hand (e.g. "they just don't pick on you") or told them to "sit down" when they approached the teacher's desk to ask a question during class. For example, in a focus group interview, Abby said there were teachers who **"**Don't even like interact with us that much. They just give us work and be like, 'Here, do this,' for the whole class period. Some people try to go to her desk to ask her a question and she be like, 'No. Sit back down. Or, they just ignore you when you raise your hand." In the focus group interview, Zoe agreed with Abby, commenting, "when the teacher looks at you and she ignores you. You have your hand raised and she calls on someone else. That really annoys me. I'm just like, 'Are you serious?'" Some girls attributed this behavior to teachers having "favorites."

Negative Verbal Feedback. In addition to the experience where peers lied about her involvement in middle school drama, North also described how she was frequently

called out and disciplined just for walking down the hallway. She described how she always tried to walk quickly to her next class after visiting her principal or assistant principal, who offered emotional support during the school day, but some teachers would shout things like "why are you walking so slow? Walk faster!" as she walked down the hallway. This loud singling out caused her to feel "kind of sad" and, instead of letting her continue on to class, the teachers would discipline her and send a letter home about her tardiness and defiance, making North feel even sadder. Importantly, North believed she was stopped in the first place "because I'm Black and I guess she thought I had an attitude but I didn't." She elaborated, describing how the issue is specific to being a Black girl,

> Hair…clothing…how you carry yourself…Some people walk like swishing -they can't really help that! I think that is challenging because people think that you are just trying to show off and you are not. I just hope that people can understand how we walk and how we talk. I just hope people understand that.

For North, the problem began before middle school. Her mom recently reminded her that she was only given a "satisfactory" grade in kindergarten because the teacher felt she was "carrying herself a certain way." Years later, she was assigned to volunteer in the same kindergarten classroom and the teacher scoffed at her, saying, "You don't want to even say hi or give me a hug." She said that as a "really, really shy and really sensitive" person who cries frequently, these experiences really affected her.

Other students also described being affected by the words of teachers and administrators. For example, at Abby's school, an administrator once came into a classroom and yelled "stop doing that," causing a student to cry. In response to the student bursting into teachers, the entire class laughed and Abby said it was "bad." La La also discussed how one administrator "he's very –he wasn't a nice person to be around

and he would say mean stuff to you and then you'll try to talk to like everything is okay. That's basically it."

Because Sydney is in the foster care system and she frequently relocates to new schools, her experience differ from other students. Sydney reported that she "loves school," even though she has to enroll in a new school every time she lives with a new foster family and it is hard to get "adapted" to the new environment. She said that there is always one teacher who will "start off on the wrong foot" with her, causing the beginning of the school year to start tumultuously. For example, she described how a teacher at her current school demanded that she introduce herself to the class. When Sydney said she didn't want to introduce herself, the situation escalated,

> She thought just because I didn't want to introduce myself, that I needed to introduce myself. She said, "I'm not asking you. I'm telling you." You're not going to tell me to introduce my name to you. My name is on my birth certificate. That's stuck with me forever. You're not going to know. That's what you're not going to do. No. So it got so bad that I had to get moved out of her class. But it doesn't matter because I still got an A. I don't know what was going on with her, in her life, in her situation…

Discipline. While these everyday occurrences often led to confusion, frustration or annoyance, other classroom incidents led to disciplinary action. Girls also described how they were disciplined for "no reason" or the wrong reason. For example, Daviana described how teachers "all stick together" in disciplinary situations. As an example, she described how she was quickly disciplined for doing something she did not do,

> Daviana: Like once you say something and all the teachers go with it.
> Lauren: Can you give me an example?
> Daviana: Like if the teacher said that I yelled something out then all the other teachers would say that I did it.
> Lauren: Does that change how they see you?
> Daviana: Yes, it makes me sound like I don't listen.

While Daviana was not suspended in that instance, she was immediately suspended in a future incident without being provided the opportunity to share her side of the story. These experiences caused Daviana to feel like she is not respected at school. In instances where the discipline was frequent and students no longer trusted the teacher, some students skipped the class period to avoid the situation. Coco, for example, described how she was "never a troubled student," but that she frequently gets "writ up and things" in third period because she and her teacher "don't get along." Coco described a toxic cycle where a peer will say Coco "cussed at her," Coco will tell the teacher she did not even talk to the student, the teacher will not believe Coco, and Coco is removed from the classroom. Sometimes, when she is suspended, her mom will have to try to get her work so she can stay on track. Coco described how the pattern of discipline is a challenge, compounding the feeling that she different from other students "because I have got abused before, more than once, by a man. Am I'm just not like everybody else. I don't feel the same way about myself others feel about their self."

Loss of Trust and Disengagement. In the focus group interview, while Imani and Jayla reflected on the level of teachers' care and understanding Sydney argued that understanding was not part of a teacher's job:

> Imani: I don't think none of the teachers really understand. A lot of times, they just really don't –they care –I can tell they care about us, but they don't really take their time to sit down with individual students. So I don't really think they will understand because they don't take the time out to really get to understand, start to understand anything.
>
> Jayla: For me, they don't, they barely understand. But they don't understand, but they just assume a lot of times. That's the thing that I think teachers and administrators really need
> to take the time to understand where students are coming from, how they feel. Just take the time to actually understand them instead of assuming things.

> Sydney: But then again, it's not really their job to do that, so I understand why they wouldn't understand and take the time to understand. It's not their job to be in anybody's personal business. They here to teach and that's basically it. It's not their job to make sure–I mean, I understand they want to make sure if somebody's going through something. But that's not really their job, that's the counselor's job.

Positive Feedback.

Acknowledge and Provide Academic Support. Students described how some teachers provided additional opportunities to "get your grade up" or participate in extracurricular activities, and while some student-teacher interactions were characterized by quick decisions based on biases, other interactions were based on pauses and clarifications. Amanda, for example, described how some teacher are "nice, and they really do want us to learn from our mistakes, and be smart and intelligent and understand what they're teaching us. So, when we get in higher grades, we don't struggle with anything because we know, and we've been taught that stuff." She commented that even when teachers "get mad," they will "they are still there to help you. If you have a question, they don't just walk away. They'll help you with any problem –even if you've been over it many times." Similarly, Cali described how teacher will "stop what they are doing and say 'do you need help on this?'" Cali described how teachers will also stop what they are doing if someone is being bullied.

Positive Verbal Feedback. In addition to offering academic support, many teachers fostered a sense of emotional security. For instance, Daviana described a teacher who doesn't "just listen and be like 'oh okay.'" The teacher listens with the goal of providing advice and support. Jamilah described a teacher who recognizes when she is upset, offering "encouraging words" when she is "down" and pulling her aside when she notices that she is frustrated or upset to "calm [her] down." Lauren described a teacher

who “asks how I am doing every day” and “cares about how I feel and stuff like that.” For Lauren, who often felt like her “attitude can get in the way of showing who I really am,” her teacher’s actions to better understand her are particularly meaningful. Likewise, Zen, who described having “trust issues” because she does not have many people who understand “me and my emotions and how I feel about certain subjects and also my personal life” identified a teacher who understood her and made her feel “at peace:”

> She is a very generous and genuine person. She clearly understands me and she is open for me to talk to her about anything that I'd be going on which makes me feel really at peace with the teacher.

Buffering. Many girls described how teachers offered them a safe space outside of the toxic classroom where students were disciplined or ignored. Sometimes, the girls would visit a teacher for just a brief moment (e.g. in between class periods or quickly after school), while others visited a teacher for an entire class period. Coco, whose toxic relationship with a teacher is described earlier in the paper, visited Ms. R as a means to disrupt the pattern of disciplinary action. In speaking about Ms. R, she said

> She was a math seventh grade teacher. I never was really her student, but I come in there during third period because I and my third period teacher didn’t really get along. She makes me feel like I can come to her whenever I need to talk, and she comforts me. She’s like a grandma to me at school.

In a focus group conversation, Abby, Zoe, Jade and Kenya discussed how school leadership, specifically principals and assistant principals, enacted an open-door policy to support students whenever they needed:

> Zoe: My chorus teacher says true facts about life. My assistant principal cares about me a lot. If I'm having a bad day, she'll just call me down to her office and we'll sit there and talk
> Riley: Yeah.
> Abby: Yeah, if I ever need [my assistant principal], he said, "You can always just come to my office. Just ask your teacher." So, that's what I usually do. I go to his

office and we just sit there mostly. One day, we just sat there for the whole day just talking. I just like being with him the whole day. I like him. He's a nice person.
Yolanda: I have a math teacher that's like that with all his students.
Jade: [Teachers] keep annoying me, so I will get my work and they'll be like, "I'll call the principal." And I'll be like, "Okay, call him because that's where I'm going, too." I go there and I just sit and do my work. He's like, "Jade, work on a task."
Lauren: So, going to the principal for you, Jade, is not a bad thing.
Jade: [nods]
Yolanda: You go to the principal? I never go.
Jade: I love my principal.
Kenya: So, when I'm frustrated and struggling, [my assistant principal] will call me down and spend time going over stuff. She does a lot for me. Sometimes, she'll call me out of class and we'll just do nothing.

Discussion

The current study centered and privileged the voices of Black girls to explore how ongoing practices, assumptions and processes across multiple levels of schooling, specifically within the school environment as well as within interactions and relationships with teachers and administrators, perpetuated racial inequalities or promoted racial equity. In defining and describing the practices, assumptions and processes, the girls also discussed their reactions and coping strategies. In alignment with PVEST (1995) many girls reported similar experiences of bias, but their reactions and coping strategies differed greatly, particularly if they could describe teachers who provided positive feedback during the school day.

Findings from the present study contribute to both the literature on school climate and teacher-student interactions and relationships. In addition to normative, developmentally-appropriate experiences of Black girls in middle schools (e.g. academic related pressures to succeed, “drama” among peers, and bias-based bullying), I also found that Black girls perceived that teachers, administrators and peers held stereotypes about

who they are and their capacity to succeed. In describing frustrating experiences, some students also discussed how they coped. For example, some students, sought out friends who did not pressure them, pick fights or get them in trouble. Many students, however, did not volunteer strategies for addressing bias and discrimination they experienced.

Teacher-student interactions and relationships findings deepen our understanding of Black girls' self-appraisal processes in response to "How do teachers and administrators see me?" Findings suggest that they perceived the mirroring of deficit thinking about who they are and their capacity to succeed among peers, teachers, and administrators. Black girls' descriptions of their interactions and relationships with teachers and administrators confirm that relationships can be powerful resources for students (Pianta, 2016), however that power can either positively or negatively contribute to their academic success and wellbeing. In alignment with recent research on teachers' racialized expectations of Black girls (Morris, 2012; Joseph, Viesca & Bianco, 2016; Wun, 2016), girls described specific ways they were "othered" based on pervasive racial stereotypes about their academic abilities, femininity, and perceived sexual knowledge and activity.

Miya and Brooklyn, for instance, discussed how stereotypes negatively affected the opportunities they received. However, while this perceived inequality caused Brooklyn to feel ambivalent about "education" and "teachers," Zen and Miya described how the negative messages could never stop them from succeeding. In support of the key core components of successful teachers of African American students: high expectations, strong demand, care and concern (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Gay, 2010; Ware, 2006; Delpit, 2012), Black girls also perceived how successful teachers rejected deficit

thinking. Within their descriptions of teachers and administrators, they discussed how teachers taught "to and through" (Gay, 2010) rather than "despite" their identities. Notably, teachers and administrators cared about negative circumstances that influenced Black students' abilities to succeed, but never lowered their expectations or demands.

In addition to describing teachers' and administrators' beliefs and expectations based on stereotypes, my analyses identified positive and negative feedback from teachers. Negative feedback included *ignoring, providing negative verbal feedback and disciplining* and positive feedback included *acknowledging and providing academic support, providing positive verbal feedback, and buffering* students from toxic situations with a high likelihood of future discipline. An important finding was that positive feedback from teachers appeared to mediate the experience and interpretation of instances of negative teacher feedback. Additionally, many teachers actively removed students from classrooms where teachers consistently provided negative feedback.

In alignment with PVEST (Spencer, 1995; Spencer, Dupree & Hartmann, 1997), girls' reactions and coping responses to negative incidents varied across individuals. While most girls seemed to be mildly annoyed by *ignoring*, when a teacher did not call on them, many students were greatly affected by *negative verbal feedback,* a verbal interaction or series of interactions between a teacher and a student. In alignment with Wun's (2016) work on anti-Black racism, evidence showed how Black girls can be criminalized for seemingly 'normal' behaviors. North, for example, discussed multiple incidents of criminalization for "having an attitude" with different teachers for the 'normal' way she walked and talked. Her comments also illustrate teacher's inappropriate attempts to re-form" the way Black girls walk and talk into something more "acceptable."

Sydney's description of how she was removed from a teacher's class because she did not want to share her name and Coco's pattern of disciplinary action with a specific teacher align with Okonofua and colleagues (2016) "toxic social-psychological dynamic" that creates negative predicaments for students and teachers. In accordance with the model, Sydney's teacher's interpretation of Sydney's "misbehavior," not introducing herself, coupled with a pervasive racial stereotype (e.g. Black students are "troublemakers") may have contributed to the teacher's harsh reaction, Sydney's removal from the class. However, Sydney's actions to protect her identity represented a reasonable, but maladaptive coping strategy in response to a pattern of institutional mistrust and lack of social support due to repeated moves (Spencer, 1995). In repeatedly receiving negative feedback about her identity, Sydney developed a high level of mistrust that significantly impacted the way she viewed teachers and administrators, with her ultimately arguing that it is not a teacher's "job" to care and understand.

Even though negative feedback seemed to commonly occur within schools, most girls could identify positive feedback from teachers and administrators–such as providing help on a difficult problem, listening and providing advice, and, arguably most importantly, providing a safe space outside of classrooms with patterns of negative feedback. Notably, the most poignant example of the importance of having a "dreamkeeper" (Ladson-Billings, 1995) is reflected in how Coco reacted to a "toxic social-psychological dynamic" with a teacher. In having social support, particularly a "grandma at school," Coco found a solution where she can receive comfort and care.

Limitations

Although the study provided insight into a group that is historically underrepresented in the literature, it has limitations. Girls in this study attended different schools with different teachers within the City. Although the schools were close in proximity, they may have different policies and practices as well as teacher characteristics (e.g. level of experience in the classroom) and/or a high level of teacher turnover that may affected responses. Although findings from this study are not meant to be generalizable among all Black girls, some knowledge garnered may be transferrable. Future research should include observations as well as daily diary activities to better understand the context in addition to students' perceptions of the practices, assumptions and policies in real-time. Such a study would also provide opportunities to explore how Black girls are treated in relationship to their peers.

Conclusion

This work provides a counternarrative to literature that consistently frames being Black as a "risk factor." By providing Black girls with the opportunity to define and describe practices, assumptions and processes that support or hinder their learning and development, the current study highlights the role teacher expectations and beliefs and positive or negative feedback can play in shaping the educational experiences and outcomes of Black girls. The Black girls in this study shine as they describe their love of and dedication to learning, even though they routinely confront and must cope with bias and discrimination in school. They described both adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies and through their reflections, demonstrate resilience.

To promote racial equity in every space, not just within the classrooms or offices of a subset of dreamkeepers, we must address institutional racism. We must continue to

provide marginalized youth with opportunities to define and describe the policies, practices, cultural representations and other norms that perpetuate inequalities in schools. It is critical for institutions to acknowledge and address the ways their practices, assumptions and processes impact the educational experiences and outcomes of Black girls. As the late American poet, singer, memoirist, and civil rights activist Maya Angelou once said, "you are the sum total of everything you've ever seen, heard, eaten, smelled, been told, forgot — it's all there. Everything influences each of us." Therefore, it is our duty to ensure the sum total of everything Black girls see, hear, and are told during the school day conveys that our expectations are high, our demands are strong, our care is deep, and our concern is genuine.

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APPENDIX A.
Centering the Voices, Experiences and Strengths of Black Women and Girls: A Positionality Statement

As a culmination to our study of Colonial America in social studies each year, we participated in "Colonial Day." During Colonial Day in Virginia, we dressed in traditional garb, played games from the period, and visited plantations and/or Civil War battlefronts. Each year, I pinned my hair under a bonnet, put on a fancy dress sewn by my mom, and stood outside to watch the Civil War reenactment with my classmates. Each year, I secretly worried someone would make an insensitive joke or scream that I would have been enslaved. Instead, the teachers either essentialized the colonial experience, lecturing using the words "we" and "us," or, worse, othered my identity by asking me to discuss how the Civil War made me feel as "an African American."

To address a time in my life where my teachers excluded the narratives of my people, I spent every Saturday morning selecting biographies and texts authored by Black women at the library with my mom. When we returned home with our hands full, my dad would turn on the smooth jazz station and we would all read our books. I may have learned about the Founding Fathers in social studies class, but I learned about my herstory in my living room. Then, I brought Black women into the classroom, through my book reports, presentations, reflection papers, and speech and debate competition materials, to share the brilliance of Black women and girls. Today, I continue this process each week, centering the voices, experiences and strengths of Black women and girls within my research, teaching, service and mentoring.

Girls Rising Above Circumstances to Excel

Over the past decade, my work has focused on the educational experiences of Black girls in public schools. For example, as my Master's thesis, I piloted an evidence-based intervention, Girls Rising Above Circumstances to Excel, an eight-week strengths-based intervention for Black girls during the school day. On the first day as the girls waited for the bell to ring I heard them whisper nervously amongst themselves about how and why they had been selected to participate. One student mumbled that this class was for poor kids. Another student laughed and said it was probably because everyone had bad grades. When the bell rang, I walked to the chalkboard and wrote out the name of the program, *Girls Rising Above Circumstances to Excel,* and the questions: *Why are we here?* and *What's the point?* As I wrote out the responses from the girls, my heart sank. The girls shouted out: "Because I disrupt the class, "because I get detention," "because I am not smart*."* After the students finished shouting their thoughts, I crossed out and replaced each deficit framed statement with an asset-based statement detailing their strengths. After this exercise, one student raised her hand and said, "So it's kinda like those special programs other kids get to go to?" I nodded and watched as every student in the room leaned forward in their seats. I then asked them again *what's the point?* The girls joyfully responded "to get better grades," "make plans to apply to college," "make my relationships better," and to "be happy."

As the weeks progressed, more and more girls wanted to join the program. Seeing the faces of Black girls looking in the windows, often as they walked the halls to avoid a class where they felt both invisible (e.g. misunderstood or excluded) and hyper visible (e.g. policed and surveilled), underscored the need to think bigger: How can institutions meet the needs of every Black girl? My dissertation strives to address this, by meeting Black girls on the moon!

Singing a Black Girl's Song in Research:

somebody/anybody
sing a black girl's song
bring her out
to know herself
to know you
but sing her rhythms
carin/struggle/hard times
sing her song of life
Ntozake Shange (1975)

Ntozake Shange's opening choreopoem in for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf evokes the question that guides my work: How do you sing a Black girl's song, preserving the complexity of what it means to be a Black girl, in research? In education research, Black women and girls are often "super invisible:" either invisible or misrepresented in the literature (see Chavous & Cogburn, 2007 for a greater discussion). In a 2014 speech at the Congressional Black Caucus Awards Dinner, President Barack Obama remarked that "Black women struggle every day with biases that perpetuate oppressive standards for how they're supposed to look and how they're supposed to act. Too often, they're either left under the hard light of scrutiny, or cloaked in a kind of invisibility." Without fully "singing" a Black girl's song, we cannot adequately respond to the needs of Black girls in schools. As Black woman who works with Black girls in research and practice, I see how Black girls are cast as problems, rather than problem solvers, in educational settings. Therefore, my work has been dedicated to meeting Black girls where they are and providing them with space to tell their stories and brainstorm solutions to pervasive inequities. In centering the voices of Black girls in research, I believe we will change the world.

Accordingly, I offer the following question for individuals interested in singing a Black girl's song in research: **How can you integrate narratives (e.g., interviews, life histories, journals, photography, and artifacts) in your research?** In my research, for example, I begin each interview with an untimed and unrecorded self-portrait activity (see picture 1) to provide Black girls with the space to creatively describe who they are and how others see them. During semi-structured group and individual interviews, I ask Black girls about the challenges and the triumphs they experience in school. Together, we work towards documenting the "rhythms" of their experiences. In analyzing and writing up my research, I utilize narrative methodologies that allow individuals to "form and re-

form who they have been, are presently, and hope to become" (Alpine, 2016) and sustain the "richness" of a story (Kim, 2015). In the process, I strive to "sing her song of life."

Picture 1. Self Portrait Activity Example

APPENDIX B.
Paper 1 Protocol

Peer Group Interview

As students enter, ask them to fill out a nametag (first name is fine)
Introduction: *Hi, my name is ["interviewer"] and this is ["note-taker"]. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this group discussion. The purpose is to learn about the experiences of middle school students in diverse schools and we're especially interested in learning more about students' friendship groups. I will be asking you some questions that I encourage you to answer to the best of your ability- there are no wrong answers and you can skip any questions that you do not want to answer. We expect to get a wide range of answers and not everyone in the group has to agree with each other. I will be [videotaping and] recording this session and it will later be typed up. [We are using the videotape and/or "Note-taker" will be taking notes] to make sure we know who's talking when we type it up; however, your names will not be revealed to anyone and only the researchers will have access to this recording. Because this is a group interview, we cannot guarantee that other kids in the group will not repeat what you said to people outside the group, but we will ask everyone in the interview to stick to the rule that "what is said in the group stays in the group". If there is anything that you want to say that you don't feel comfortable saying in the group, you may talk to me in private at the end. The paper you have in front of you has this information on it as well. Before we start, you'll need to sign the form to let us know you agree to participate. Do you have any questions before you sign the form?* **[Give students time to sign the assent form]**

Okay, I'm going to turn on the recorder now. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Identifying Information

- Please say your first name and what grade you're in

NOTE: *For all items, probe for details as needed, e.g., "Tell me more." "Can you give me an example of what you mean?" Also ask students to explain abbreviations or other terms that may be school- (or generation-) specific*

Background Questions: Friend Group

- How long have you been friends?
- How did you meet each other?
- What do you like about being friends with each other?
- How would you describe your group of friends?
- How is your group similar to other groups in your school?
- How is it different or unique?
- Are there any other 6th graders from your school that are part of your group but aren't here now? **[*Note: Write down names of anyone identified as "missing"]***

Cafeteria Mapping Exercise

Here is a map of all the lunch tables in the cafeteria. I'd like you to work together to add labels to the map to help me understand where different groups of kids sit. You can use any terms you'd like for the labels, although I may ask you to explain if I don't

understand a label you choose. Also, please indicate if the table is mostly girls by writing a "G", mostly boys by writing a "B", or a mix of girls and boys by writing "G&B". Once you're done with the map, I'll ask you some questions about the groups.

Follow-up questions:

- Tell me more about your map- Is your group on this map?
    - Do you always sit in the same place? Why?
- Does the cafeteria always look like this- do certain groups usually sit in certain places?
- In your opinion, what are the reasons certain groups sit in specific areas?
- Which other groups do you hang out with in the cafeteria?

Probe for details about 2-3 groups listed on the map:

- Tell me a little more about [X] group on this map?
    - How would you describe them?
        - *Continue with probes to get clarification on the description. "Why would you describe them that way?" "Tell me more about what that means"*
    - Do you ever interact with them?
- Now tell me a little more about [Y] group on this map?
    - How would you describe them?
        - *Continue with probes to get clarification on the description. "Why would you describe them that way?" "Tell me more about what that means"*
    - Do you ever interact with them?
- Now tell me a little more about [Z] group on this map?
    - How would you describe them?
        - *Continue with probes to get clarification on the description. "Why would you describe them that way?" "Tell me more about what that means"*
    - Do you ever interact with them?

Before moving on, be sure to ask for clarification of any group labels that you don't understand (i.e., hard-to-read, unfamiliar term used to label a group, etc.)

- Sometimes groups of kids really get along, and sometimes they don't. Which of these groups really get along with other groups?
    - Why do you think that is?
    - Give me an example of how they get along with other groups
- Which groups don't get along with each other?
    - Why do you think that is?
    - Give me an example of how they don't get along with other groups
- Which groups would be excited about having new kids sit with them at lunch?
    - Why do you think so?
- Which groups seem like they're not as open to including new kids?
    - How do you know?
- Tell me about kids who are able to sit with different groups in the cafeteria rather than staying in the same group- who are they?
    - Why do you think they can move between groups?

- Let's talk about recess/break
    - What does your group do during recess?
    - What activities would you expect kids in some of these groups to do during recess?
    - Is it always like this? Why or why not?

Closing

- *Given everything we've talked about, is there anything else you would like to tell me or talk for a few minutes more about?*

Individual Interview

Introduction: *Hi, my name is ["interviewer"]. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Just like last time, the purpose is to learn about the experiences of middle school students in diverse schools. Once again I will be asking you some questions that I encourage you to answer to the best of your ability- there are no wrong answers and you can skip any questions that you do not want to answer. I will be recording this session and it will later be typed up; however, your name will not be revealed to anyone and only the researchers will have access to this recording. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

[Turn on recorder]

To get started, please say your first and last name and your grade.

Connecting back to group interview [will vary based on group responses]

- When we spoke with your group of friends back in [Month], you spent time working on this cafeteria map [show the map]
    - Can you give me a quick summary of the map just so I can remember what you talked about?
    - Sometimes friends have different opinions, so you may not agree with everything on the map.
        - What labels would you change? Add?
    - What else do you want to say about [this topic]?

Since we're interested in different aspects of school diversity, I now have some questions about your own experiences with topics related to cultural diversity.

Concepts and Talk about Race

- First, tell me what the following term means to you:
    - "Race,"
    - How about the term, "Culture,", what comes to mind when you hear that term?
    - And the last one is, "Ethnicity," what does this term mean to you?
- Which one of these words do you use most often when you think about your own background- race, ethnicity, or culture? [Note- for the next questions, use the term that the participant uses most often. If they are not familiar with any of them, use the terms "race/culture" or "racial/cultural" with the following explanation: *In this*

country there are many different words to describe the different backgrounds that people come from. Some examples of the names of racial/cultural groups are Hispanic or Latino, Black or African American, Asian American, American Indian, White or Caucasian, Italian American, Chinese, Mexican, Jamaican, Biracial, and many others.]

- How do you define your own racial [ethnic/cultural] background?
    - Probe: What do(es) the label(s) you chose mean to you?
    - How did you learn about the term(s)?
- Stereotypes are beliefs people hold about how people from a certain group are- like "all people from group X are like this". What are some of the stereotypes other people hold about your racial [ethnic/cultural] group?
    - How do those stereotypes affect you? [Probe for details]
- When do you talk about race [ethnicity/culture]?
    - Probe: Tell me about the most recent time- who were you talking to and what did you talk about?
- How comfortable are you talking about race [ethnicity/culture]?
    - What makes you more [less] comfortable talking about race [ethnicity/culture]?
- Do you ever think about issues related to race [ethnicity/culture] without talking about them?
    - Tell me about the last time this happened

I recognize that this topic can be difficult for some students to talk about and I thank you for sharing your experiences. Is there anything else you'd like to say before we move on?

Okay, now I have a few questions about diversity, current events, and your school environment.

School Diversity and Sociopolitical Climate

- When you hear the word "diversity", what do you think about? What does it mean to you? [Note: if student is not familiar with the term, define it in this way: "Diversity" means there is a variety with lots of different types represented. For this project we're interested in lots of ways students are different or similar].
- What do the kids in this school think about diversity?
    - How do you know? [Probe for a specific example]
- People can be diverse in many ways, including how they feel about politics. One of the big news stories from last November was the election of a new President of the United States, Donald Trump; there was a diverse range of opinions about the election.
    - How did kids in your school talk about the election? What kinds of things did they say?
    - How did teachers in your school talk about the election? What kinds of things did they say?
    - What was your school environment like right after the election?
        - How does that compare to what your school was like before the election?

    - What is your school environment like now, a few months after the election?
    - How has the election of a new president affected students' friendships in your school?
    - What about your own friendship group?
    - How did the election of a new president affect you?
- So it sounds like you said [briefly summarize student's responses]
    - Does that sound about right?
    - How similar is your opinion about this to your friends' opinions?
    - What else do you want to say about this topic?

Closing

Those are all the questions I have for today. Given everything we've talked about, is there anything else you would like to tell me or talk for a few minutes more about?

Thank you so much for talking with me today! ***[Be sure to give participant monetary incentive and have them sign a receipt]***

APPENDIX C.
Paper 2 and Paper 3
Interview Protocol

Introduction

Hi, my name is Lauren. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this group discussion. The purpose of the study is to learn more about the experiences of African American girls in schools and the She Can Lead[8] summer program.

I will be asking you some questions that I encourage you to answer to the best of your ability- there are no wrong answers and you can skip any questions that you do not want to answer. I will be recording this session and it will later be typed up. Your names will not be revealed to anyone and only the researchers will have access to this recording. Because this is a group interview, we cannot guarantee that other kids in the group will not repeat what you said to people outside the group, but we will ask everyone in the interview to stick to the rule that "what is said in the group stays in the group." If there is anything that you want to say that you don't feel comfortable saying in the group, you may talk to me in private at the end. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Identifying Information

Please say your name and how old you are.

Activity

Here is a blank piece of paper and some colored pencils. I would like you to draw a picture of yourself! You can draw the picture however you like. You will not be judged on what your picture looks like. The picture should tell me a little bit more about you.

Now that you have finished your picture, tell me about what you drew.

- In this corner, write words you would use to describe yourself.
- In this corner, write words your friends would use to describe you.
- In this corner, write words your teachers would use to describe you.
- In this last corner, write words your family would use to describe you.

Thanks for participating in that activity with me! Is there anything else you would like to share before we move on?

Thanks again!

School

[8] Program name is a pseudonym

I want to begin by talking a bit about school.

1. Sometimes students like going to school and sometimes they don't. How do you feel about school?
2. Tell me more about what excites you about school/ what frustrates you about school?
3. Tell me about the teachers and administrators at your school, how would you describe them?
4. Do you feel respected at school?
5. Do you feel like your teachers and administrators care about you? How do they show it?
6. Is there a teacher at school who understands you? Tell me more about what he or she does to make you feel understood?
7. Who encourages you to do your best in school? What does [ ] do that encourage you?
8. Anything else you want to add before I move on to talk about something else?

Friends & Family

Now let's talk about your friends and family.

9. Tell me about your friends. How would you describe them to someone who has never met them?
10. How would they describe you?
11. Do you ever feel pressure from your peers to act a certain way to fit in?
12. There are lots of ways for parents to be involved in your education, what are some ways your parents support you?

Media

Let's talk about the media.

13. Who are your role models?
14. There are lots of Black women and girls in the media (on TV, in magazines, in advertisements) – can you name some of them? What do you like/dislike about them?
15. How do the images of Black women and girls in the media affect you?
16. Are there images of Black women and girls that you wish you could see more of in the media?
17. Anything else you want to add before I move on to talk about something else?

Black Girlhood

Let's talk a little bit about what it is like to be a Black girl.

18. What is the best thing about being a Black girl?
19. What does Black girl magic mean to you?
20. What are some of your goals?

21. What do you hope to be in the future?
22. Tell me about a time you've faced an important challenge in your life. How did you overcome the challenge?
23. Do you think your experiences differ from other kids? Other Black girls?
24. Are there challenges you think you've faced in life because of your gender? What about because of your race? Any challenges specific to being a Black girl?
25. Anything else you want to add before I move on to talk about something else?

Program Questions

26. What does leadership mean to you?
27. Name some Black women leaders.
28. What made you decide to come to She Can Lead?
29. If you were not enrolled in She Can Lead, what would you be doing this summer?
30. What was your **favorite** part of she can lead?
31. What was your **least favorite** part of she can lead?
32. Tell me about your final **social action project**
33. Do you have any ideas to make the summer program **better**?

Closing

34. Given everything we've talked about, is there anything else you would like to tell me or talk for a few minutes more about? Thank you so much for talking with me today!