(IN)VISIBLE MAGIC: NARRATIVES OF BLACK GIRLS' EXPERIENCE DEVELOPING
AND NEGOTIATING THEIR ACADEMIC IDENTITY

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In

Educational Leadership

by

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San Francisco, California

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read *(In)Visible Magic: Narratives of Black Girls' Experience Developing and Negotiating their Academic Identity* by Lee Porscha Mechelle Moore, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a doctorate submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership at San Francisco State University.

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Imagine the Black girl who was suspended from preschool, the athletic Black girl who outperformed her peers, the sassy Black girl sitting in the principal's office for challenging authority, or the small groups of Black girls who sat for the SAT and later the GRE. Black girls are underrepresented in research, policy, and praxis designed to improve their academic success and eliminate the achievement gap. This dissertation describes and examines the social, cultural, and academic strengths, talents, and strategies of Black girls in middle and high school. This qualitative study used the combined approach of Black feminist thought and narrative inquiry to understand the role of schools and teachers in accepting and/or rejecting Black femininity and supporting the academic identity development of Black girls. This project specifically identified and explored the strengths of Black femininity as a strategic tool for academic success, and examines how Black girls positively communicate and represent themselves. Ten Black girls' narratives are presented and reveal that the stereotypes exist and impact academic identity development and social inclusion in schools and students' overall feelings of self-worth as Black girls. The data yielded four themes—with attitude, expectations, navigating and negotiating stereotypes, and HOPE. The project implications focus on needed changes to classroom instruction, interactional patterns, and discipline policies to avoid Black girls' identities in schools as continuously diminished by racist and sexist stereotypes. The dissertation also features a link to a video letter to Black girls intended to celebrate their talents and achievements, and this video is accompanied by a set of discussion prompts for use by teachers and leaders in schools and other educational contexts.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this dissertation.

Chair, Dissertation Committee

Date

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Chapter 1: Introduction

There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you. -Maya Angelou

Letter/Positionality

This letter is on behalf of the untold stories of the women and girls before me, to the Black females, to the Black women, to the Black girls of today, yesterday, and tomorrow,

I walk through this world with you in mind.

For I am you and you are me

We shape one another

Dear System,

I position myself in the many streams of all that makes me, me

I am Black I am a Woman to name a few, but I am so much more than the eye can see

I am tired of merely being defined and characterized physically by basic traits that separate me from you or another scholar

Don't take this as a lack of pride because

I will always walk with my head held high

Take this as a challenge to the system of oppression maintained by worker bees who don't know

What it means to live in this body

Take this as a reminder that I'm still here

Despite all the pain and hurt and hate you give

Take this as a promise

That I may be everything you wish you were

I may be a magical melanin goddess balancing more on my shoulders than any other dare bare while still being questioned of my status as a woman

Ain't I a woman

Take this as a warning before the storm

Take this as a message from the lips of Black queens
Young and old
Black queens far and wide, alive and gone
Black Queens, Black Queens, Black queens
Give me the strength to do you justice
To show the world that despite the hate they give
Despite the hate they gave
Despite unconsciously conscious covert overt
Blatant messages that they send that they maintain
Black queens will continue to exist
With stronger and greater levels of
Dual consciousness
Constantly in a duel with a system
That seeks to commodify our “dangerous” bodies
While silently silencing us in invisible rays as
Our incarceration rates go up and our graduation rates go down
Silencing us as a means to what end
Feeling like a target for a shape I/we didn’t create
Living like a target for words and labels to be carved into and looked down upon
The Black female’s strength
Black queens’ stories, experiences, and reality that are told from dinner tables to hair salons,
embedded in bedtime prayers and patty cake
That unfold in the way we comb our hair and carry ourselves everyday
I am hoping to tell your stories as you deem fit, but I will not lie and say I have no bias
I am bias inside and out, so let me be honest and lay it out
I met my first hater in preschool. She was my teacher and she was the first person to tell me I
was nothing. She was the 1st person to use her power against me for I was quickly labeled and
eventually removed from preschool. But I thank my mother for her tenacious fight because she

told me everything is going to be alright as she fought for my right to be an innocent child. She fought for my constantly deprived right to be a little Black girl. She fought for my right to an education.

I am a Black girl who went to predominantly white schools and was teased and questioned for being Black, having richly melanated complexion

I am the Black girl who was told she “talked white”

I am the Black girl who received the backhanded compliments like “your pretty for a dark-skinned girl”

I am the young Black scholar who is questioned and told statements like “well if that’s the only way you can understand”

I am the Black student who can count every Black person who took the AP test, SAT, GRE and various others academic exams with me on one hand

I am a granddaughter, daughter, sister, and so much more

I am the Black girl raised in a 2 parent household, but really you could call it a 4 parent household because Granny & Cae did more for me than words can explain

I am the Black woman who knows her history as it was written through Eurocentric patriarch eyes and is always learning new things about her history from non/less Eurocentric perspectives

I am the Black girl who was raised like a tomboy

I am the Black granddaughter to a Black Panther

I am the Black girl like many Black girls who experienced adultification

If we’re being honest, I got layers

As I enter these narratives and this research I want to say

Thank You

Thank you to Cae my old white lady nana who helped shaped me even though we butted heads. She’d tell me that if I had to strip my way through college, I betta not let anything or anyone get in my way of an education

Thank you to my mama who taught me that behaving didn’t mean being anybody’s doormat and for her sweet reminders that one day as she would say “yo mouth is gonna get yo ass in trouble”

As I write this letter and I think about this research I’m hopeful that my mouth will get me in trouble if that means I continue to fight for my voice and help someone else’s voice be heard

Thank you to every fictional Black female comic book character and super hero as well as every real-life Black woman/girl from Storm to Ruby Bridges

You help make me, me

Thank you to my granny, this is for you; for the stories, for the memories for the love you give, for the love you gave

For the reminder that no one can take my shine away

I position myself openly & honestly for you

Black queens of all ages in all spaces

I position myself in understanding with Black scholars, Black Female Scholars, and Black identity

That acknowledges the struggle, the intersectionality, & the reality of Black females

I remind myself in closing that one's experience is not another's

My journey as a young Black woman may have similarities and differences

From your journey

Let us connect in story,

Simply,

Porscha

Purpose of this Study

We, as educators, as leaders, as people, must provide a voice for voiceless Black girls before they are all pushed out of the educational system and into patterns of juvenile justice involvement and human trafficking. Their voices are missing from most of the research on the educational achievement and identities of Black girls. Consequently, their needs are often overlooked by educational leadership in schools and other educational contexts like community centers or mental health programs, which contributes to inequities and injustices in educational programming and policies. My dissertation, then, describes and examines the social, cultural, and academic strengths, talents, and strategies that Black girls during the middle and high school

years employ to navigate the educational system, and shape their academic identity in spite of and because of institutional oppression and instructional stereotypes. In doing so, this dissertation develops a foundation for leaders and educators in education, policy, and communities to better understand the experience of Black girls and support their social, cultural, linguistic, and educational needs and aspirations.

Language used in this dissertation is purposeful, therefore it is essential to understand the following terms — educator(s), Black girls, Black femininity. The term “educator(s)” synonymously refer to P-12 teachers and administrators because the teacher/administrator population varies in the research that I discuss in relation to my findings. Additionally, the term “Black girls” is used to represent the population of Black scholars who self-identify as Black/African American and female. To this end, Black femininity is a response to the historical and still prevalent construct of femininity as “conceptualized from a Eurocentric perspective as traditional femininity ideology” (Davis, Levant, & Pryor, 2018, p. 820). Black femininity is femininity with acknowledgement of the unique history and experiences of Black females in California and the U.S. and how their history and experiences shape their identity. The following questions guide my research and provide voice for Black girls:

1. How is Black femininity perceived in schools by educators?
2. How do Black girls develop a strong sense of academic identity?
3. How do Black girls negotiate academic identity formation with teachers, mentors, peers, and family members?

More specifically, research question one seeks to understand the role of schools and teachers in accepting and/or rejecting Black femininity and supporting the academic identity development of Black girls. Research question two seeks to identify and explore strengths of Black femininity as

a strategic tool for academic success and a protective shield and support when dealing with gender and race-based stereotypes and oppression. Last, research question three examines how Black girls communicate and represent themselves socially, culturally, and academically on their own and with peers and families and other caring adults.

This study documents Black girls' experiences and creates a series of portraits of the challenges and strengths of specific Black girls as they navigate our educational system. This study is designed for Black girls, with Black females of all ages and educational levels in mind in an effort to avoid perpetuating Black girls as "Other" and to create an overall portrait of the strength of their voices, stories, and dreams. This project, through a privileging of the power of intersectionality and decentralizing pervasive and oppressive Eurocentric notions of femininity, also challenges scholars and educators to take proactive steps to ensure that the fortitude, perseverance, and resilience of Black femininity is featured in curriculum, research, policy, and praxis in formal and informal educational contexts. My work seeks to avoid the all too common pattern of educational leaders who "push Black girls away from school, increase the likelihood that they will experience harm" (Morris, 2016, p. 53). Despite the deficits presented and frequently bolstered by academia, society and media, Black girls still rise academically and socially, which remind us of our moral and research responsibility to capture youth voice in narrative to create visibility around Black girls' academic experiences. I challenge educational leaders to speak with action and make Black girls visible; the benefits will be beyond belief.

Problem of Practice

The experience of Black women over history and their growth from girls to women is rarely told in headlines or transcribed into history. The "strong Black woman" reverts to stereotype in our society, placing idiosyncratic pressures on Black women beginning in girlhood

(Davis, 2015). From early in their school careers, teachers' and administrators' perceptions of Black girls often involve racial and gender stereotypes, which lead to inequitable, differential treatment (Smith-Evans & George, 2014). The teachers and administrators discussed include, but are not limited to, White educators primarily in all public-school settings, and Black educators are also contributors to student success (Cherng, 2017; Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2016; Howard, 2003). Black girls are also underrepresented in research, policy, and practice to improve their academic success and eliminate the achievement gap. Perhaps this is due to the fact that researchers frequently ignore the Black female experience because they are not the prototypical Black person nor prototypical woman; their intersectionality of race and gender is not recognized (Cooley, Winslow, Vojt, Shein, & Ho, 2018). Blake, Butler, Lewis, and Darensbourg (2010) propose that the lack of research on the negative educational experiences of Black girls in schools may be due partially to the perception that all girls pose less risk for poor academic outcomes given their greater academic achievement than boys.

This fuels the false assumption that all girls are doing well in school and ignores the fact that Black girls represent 15% of the total female population in U.S. schools, yet are 35% of the total female delinquency caseload nationwide (Ehrmann, Hyland, & Puzzanchera, 2019). Data from 2002-2017, revealed that 34% of 8th grade Black girls score below basic in reading, which is almost 3 times as many Black girls reading at a below basic level compared to White girls (Nation's Report Card, 2019). Black girls continue to experience a distinct prejudice, known as intersectional invisibility, because they are seen as neither the prototype of their gender or race, and are consequently excluded from research, policy, and praxis (Cooley, Winslow, Vojt, Shein, & Ho, 2018). Misguided perceptions and differential treatment of Black girls in the P-12 educational system hinder them from attaining their educational goals and impact positive

academic identity formation. Specifically, teachers' perspectives of Black girls as less feminine and more adult-like help to perpetuate an oppressive system that masks racism in all forms and relies too heavily on Black girls' own resilience for social empowerment/inclusion and improved student outcomes.

Thus, this population is a candidate for continued victimization, invisible push out, criminalization, and over policing of their bodies that lead to poor student outcomes and a negatively impacted academic identity (Annamma, Anyon, Joseph, Farrar, Greer, Downing, & Simmons, 2016). To counter the typical definition of student outcomes that primarily focuses on learning objectives/standards, I adopt the Great Schools Partnership (2013) definition of student outcomes as the educational, societal, and life effects that result from students being educated and I couple it with social acceptance, inclusion, visibility, and acceptance. This definition of student outcomes supports my research endeavor to unpack the perceptions and differential treatment of Black girls and the impact it has on their academic identity development. This definition also provides a framework for educational leaders to work on student outcomes as it applies to Black girls by improving policy like California Education Code § 35183 (school dress code) or establishing stronger guidance for improving the disproportionality in school discipline, that is better than the 2014 Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) co-created/issued by the Department of Education and Department of Justice.

Racial Stereotypes

Striving toward improving policy (e.g. dress code and subjective discipline policies) and student outcomes for Black girls requires educators (teachers and administrators) to assess and address implicit bias. Implicit bias first appears in the conscious activity of one's values and beliefs, which can become tainted by the subconscious activity of stereotypes. Scholars have

identified that stereotypes are a form of control that impacts one's identity development (Fiske, 1993; Spencer, Logel, & Davies, 2016). Steele (2010) suggests that stereotypes can affect our perception of objects or people as well as our behavioral response toward said object or person. Regarding Black girls, female stereotypes such as the jezebel, mammy, and sapphire, portray Black females as ranging from angry to hypersexual, and continue to influence how Black female students are perceived throughout their education (Blake, Butler, Lewis, & Darensbourg, 2010; Davis, 2015; Epstein, Blake, & Gonzalez, 2017). Research suggests that historically, stereotypes have negatively impacted the self-esteem, self-perception, and the academic achievement of Black children, as recognized in the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision (Smith-Evans & George, 2014). More specifically, what is commonly known today as "the doll tests" was a study conducted before the court decision to assess the psychological effects of segregation on African-American children. Clark and Clark (1947) found that children have some awareness of the relation of physical characteristics and racial concepts, and this awareness influenced the degree to which Black children preferred the white doll and rejected the colored doll; concrete qualitative data captured Black children saying "Black is not ugly" and "white is pretty." Dr. Kenneth Clark provided expert testimony in *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Supreme Court cited Clark's research in its Brown decision in the following passage: "To separate [African-American children] from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone." (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954 p. 494; Legal Defense and Educational Fund, 2019). Despite, *Brown v. Board of Education* initiating the legal process for desegregation, feelings of inferiority and superiority were already engrained into the hearts and minds of all students as well as all educators.

Everyone has bias, therefore, teachers should be made aware of unconscious associations that they harbor toward their students, if their hope is to ensure the best for children as they mold tomorrow's leaders. Regardless of its conscious or unconscious nature, the disproportionate decision, treatment and discipline that Black girls receive suggests that they remain vulnerable to racist and sexist practices (Wun, 2014).

Epitome of Dangerous

Research has described girls of color as possessing a dangerous body and “perceived as inherently violent; as non-wealthy youth, they are viewed as in need of discipline and control; and as girls of color, they are believed to be lacking morals and values. Thus, the body...is seen as simultaneously an inherent threat” and teachers and administrators believe girls of color to be a danger to themselves and others, specifically boys, men, and other teachers (Evans-Winters, 2017, p. 418). Esposito and Edwards (2018) and Morris (2015) reveal that the dangerous scripts of femininity in classrooms marginalize Black girls into polarized categories of good girl or ghetto girl, as measured against a white middle-class female standard that devalues Black femininity. My research defines and describes Black femininity as the co-creation of attributes, behaviors, and roles that are partially constructed socially and distinct from the definition of the biological female sex, as both males and females can exhibit feminine traits. Black femininity acknowledges intersectionality, power, and privilege, and is “rooted in the historical conditions and discourses that link Black femininity with sexuality” as well as identifies stereotypes as controlling images that restrict Black womanhood (Sztainbok, 2013 p. 596). Moreover, strength, assertiveness, and community leadership are traits of Black femininity that are positively reinforced in Black communities (Gilkes, 2001). Black femininity is expressiveness, instrumentality, and resilience, which is instilled in each generation of Black females by the

matriarchs young and old that support Black girls' ability to thrive in society (Cole & Zucker, 2007). Hill's (2002) study exploring gender socialization of children in Black families captures the essence of Black femininity and how it is taught to girls. For example, a parent stated that she is teaching their 11-year-old daughter to be both a "warrior" for racial justice, and to "act like a lady by carrying herself well" (Hill, 2002 p. 498). Black femininity embraces and challenges hegemonic white femininity that has been described as docile, so when behavior deviates from the norm, White girls are disrupting gendered order; whereas, when Black girls break the norm, their actions and language are labeled as forms of aggression (Morris, 2007). Prior to the Nation's Report Card (2019), Morris (2007) also identifies that despite performing well academically, Black girls are commonly questioned by their teachers (gender unspecified) for their manners and behaviors that are deemed unladylike.

For example, traits such as being assertive, resilient, and independent are viewed as unfavorable in Black girls, but these same traits are considered normative for boys of all groups and are recognized as central to academic success (Esposito & Edwards, 2018; Morris, 2007). Gender stereotype studies suggest that individuals who disaffirm stereotypical expectations are devalued because society is trained to maintain rather than dismantle stereotypical expectations of gender (Ellemers, 2018). When applied to perceptions of Black girls, it is plausible to assume that Black girls are devalued because they do not conform to the predominant gender norm in schools. Perceptions of what is considered feminine in school systems often result in labeling Black girls as social deviants rather than as critical respondents to oppression, a process that impedes Black girls' academic success and identity because devaluation often leads to dehumanization (i.e. demonizing Black girls and depriving them of positive human qualities) (Morris, 2016).

Bodies as Sites of Trauma

Historically, Black female bodies are sites of trauma, holding the weight of the past as well as present stereotypes that dehumanize and sexualize them before they hit puberty (Epstein, Blake, & Gonzalez, 2017). Black girls as young as 5 are perceived by adults as more mature, more knowledgeable about adult topics, and more likely to take on adult roles and responsibilities compared to their peers. As Black girls develop into their minds and bodies, some school officials may perceive them as an inherent threat, requiring over-policing and constant surveillance (Epstein, Blake, & Gonzalez, 2017; Evans-Winters, 2017). Over-policing is a characteristic of a hostile school environment, and research suggests that such policies alienate Black girls from the learning process and result in low achievement, system involvement (e.g. juvenile justice center), as well as benign neglect (e.g. an attitude or policy of ignoring an often delicate or undesirable situation that one is held to be responsible for dealing with) (Crenshaw, Ocen, & Nanda, 2015; Murphy, Acosta, & Kennedy-Lewis, 2013). The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, which was accompanied by Zero Tolerance policies for behavior (ZT), are examples of systemic policies that have negatively impacted Black girls. NCLB brought the nation more punitive discipline processes in schools and is correlated alongside ZT with a dramatic decrease in graduation rates for students of color (Advancement Project, 2010). Other such examples of school policies can be observed in the disproportionate discipline practices that reprimand Black girls. For example, Black girls account for 16% of the California school population, contributing to 18.8% of high school dropouts, and “data released by the Department of Education for the 2011–2012 school year reveal that while Black males were suspended more than three times as often as their white counterparts, Black girls were suspended six times as often” (Crenshaw, Ocen, & Nanda, 2015 p.16). More recently, in the San Diego Unified School

District (SDUSD) the suspension rate for black girls is 5.1%, which is 46% higher than the district average (Wood, Abdi, Essien, Harris III, & DeJohnette, 2019). In California, male and female Black students are three times as likely to be suspended compared to their peers (Education Trust, 2015).

Experiencing Oppression

Epstein, Blake, and Gonzalez's (2017) quantitative research found that adults view Black girls as less in need of nurturing, protection, and support; this dominant discourse surrounding the educational experiences of Black girls is likely to influence student outcomes, identity formation, and discipline. This also suggests what Ladson-Billings (1994) has described as assimilationist teachers who believe their role is to place students in the slots that they will fill in society. Studies show that Black girls disproportionately experience race and gender-based oppression including sexual victimization, violence, poor student teacher relationships, and biases that impact how policies are enforced (Crenshaw, Ocen, & Nanda, 2015; Morris, 2016; Murphy, Acosta, & Kennedy-Lewis, 2013; Wun, 2015). Differential treatment of Black girls are daily realities for these young scholars not only in education, but in society; adult perceptions of Black girls, the implicit bias of educators, as well as lack of access and exclusion result in poorer outcomes for Black girls (Murphy, Acosta, & Kennedy-Lewis, 2013; Wun, 2015). For example, Francis (2012) found that English, math, and science teachers perceived 8th grade, Black female students as less attentive and more disruptive than their counterparts of other races (Asian, Latinx and White), and as a consequence of their perceived lack of attentiveness, Black girls were less likely to be recommended for honors courses. Black girls' responses to an oppressive educational system and institutional racism vary, but what is consistently witnessed is how educators and society dismiss Black girls' responses to those oppressions as combative, angry

behavior, rather than as symptoms of trauma or strength in the face of adversity (Morris, 2016). Trauma from stereotypes, and treated as the epitome of dangerous, contribute to the over-policing of Black girls' bodies and shapes their experiences of oppression inside and out of the academic setting.

These aforementioned factors recognize that misguided perceptions and differential treatment of Black girls in the P-12 system hinder them from attaining their educational goals and impact academic identity formation. Black girls are silenced by educators, researchers, and policymakers' conscious decision to dismiss Black girls' responses to systemic oppressor patterns as combative, angry behavior, rather than as symptoms of trauma or strengths in the face of adversity. Additionally, the lack of equity can be observed in the lack of research, policy, and praxis. This is problematic because differential treatment of Black girls results in constant reprimands for their dual identity as Black and female, while socializing them to walk the fine line between disproving negative characterizations or validating them. Some outcomes of this tightrope experience for Black girls are lower academic expectations, harsher punishments, and juvenile justice involvement (Aston, Graves, McGoey, Lovelace, & Townsend, 2017).

Chapter 2—Relevant Literature

But what of Black women? I most sincerely doubt if any other race of women brought its fineness up through so a devilish a fire. - W.E.B. Du Bois

This discussion of the relevant literature examines the complex and competing narratives of Black femininity by focusing on misguided perceptions and differential treatment of Black girls in the P-12 system, and its impact on Black girls' academic identity development and academic achievement. I seek to understand the strengths of Black girls to counter the persistent deficits presented in the literature, examine the intersection of racism and sexism, and understand the unique position in which Black girls live and learn (Ricks, 2014). It is noted that the literature presented focuses on the gender binary, which raises questions about how Black femininity is perceived and its strengths for Black students with varying views on their gender identification. The discussion has three main sections: 1) a brief historical foundation 2) academic identity, perceptions, teacher student relationships, and discipline and 3) strengths of Black femininity. The three main sections are used to build a connection to leadership, specifically exploring current trends of educational leadership in response to Black girls' needs.

Historical Foundation

Montgomery (2016) reminds scholars that sometimes we as change makers and as a society must go back to move forward. I begin by reviewing the legacy of the struggle of Black females as they first entered the U.S. as objects, and the stereotypes that were created to justify mistreatment and punishment.

Colonial photographs are a form of historical data that capture the fetishization of Black women and girls' bodies as objects of the colonizer (Engmann, 2012). During America's slavery era, stretching over 400 years, society was introduced to the hypersexual, insatiable Jezebel who

seeks and consents to sexual relations. The Jezebel stereotype helped to rationalize the behavior of colonizers/slave owners, who believed slaves were “gratified by the criminal advances of Saxon,” contrary to Frederick Douglass’ assertion that the “slave woman is at the mercy of the fathers, sons, or brothers of her master” (Douglass, 1845, p. 60; Redpath, 1859, p. 141). Another dominant Black female stereotype arose during slavery though the Jim Crow era: the opposite of the Jezebel, Mammie, is portrayed as an obese maternal Black figure who is desexualized and deliberately constructed to suggest ugliness (Pilgrim, 2012). Books and movies portray Mammie as loyal to her white family and not wanting freedom; Mammie posed no threat to White women because Mammie was not deemed desirable to White men (Pilgrim, 2012). Post-slavery society was then introduced to the Sapphire, a social control mechanism that portrays Black women as loud, rude, bitchy, malicious, stubborn, and overbearing, as a counter to Black women who violate social norms of femininity that women are regarded as passive, non-threatening, and unseen (Yarbrough & Bennett, 2000). Last, the Welfare Queen is a stereotype made infamous by former President Ronald Reagan. The Welfare Queen is described as a deceitful criminal who violates the family ethic (Gilliam, 1999). Unfortunately, these stereotypes live on today as a basis for justification for how society treats Black girls in society and in our educational system (DeGruy, 2005). Such stereotypes shape how Black females are perceived in society even today; hence, the bodies and overall existence of Black girls and women have been viewed as a threat to individuals and to society. Contemporary media outlets continue to portray warped images of Black femininity, like the Mammy, Jezebel, and Sapphire, which create challenges for Black adolescent girls' ability to negotiate ideals of self when confronted with false and incomplete representations of Black girlhood (Muhammad & McArthur, 2015). Qualitative interview data found that Black girls believe that Black girlhood in relation to distorted portrayals of Black

femininity means “being judged by their hair; is seen as angry, loud, and violent; and is sexualized” (Muhammad & McArthur, 2015 p.133). Specifically, Muhammad and McArthur’s (2015) excerpts below speak to adolescent Black girls’ thoughts about stereotypes and how they impact their identity.

Researcher: How do you think Black women and/or girls are portrayed in society? Violet: I think we are portrayed as like not being educated, like people look down on us. Sometimes we’re portrayed as being confrontational and they always say Black women have attitudes and stuff like that. And you look at Basketball Wives and all these other reality TV shows that just portray us as being really violent. Violet mentions violence from the reality television show Basketball Wives, which follows the wives, girlfriends, and friends of NBA basketball players. (p. 134)

Camille: As time went on I was constantly being teased about my skin color, the way my body was shaped and my hair. They began to wonder why I never wore my hair down and always had ‘twists’ and barrettes in my hair. They were astounded by the fact that I didn’t wash my hair everyday like them, and because of that they thought I was dirty. This resulted in endless harassment. I dreaded going to school and going outside to play... (p. 137)

Dahlia: Who can tell our stories best but us? We determine how we think of ourselves, not by what other people think of us. But our actions affect others’ perceptions. If you think that we are not portrayed in media badly, you obviously don’t spend enough time watching television, reading magazines, or listening to music. Other people who are not black think we are always out to commit violent actions. That’s just media. We can take control by starting our own representations of who we are as young black girls leaving an impact on other young girls’ lives (p. 137)

Muhammad and McArthur’s (2015) qualitative data captures the raw reality of Black girls, and although the research does not explicitly identify Black girls’ views of the history of stereotypes, it does reveal that Black girls are aware of how they are portrayed and are negatively impacted by it.

Stereotype Threat

Schools have substantial influence on the trajectory and success of Black Girls, yet they maintain historical norms that reject Black females’ intersectionality (Lei, 2003; Morris, 2015). King (2011) asserts that stereotypes negatively influence self-perceptions, which impact positive

identity formation. When educators perceive Black girls through the lens of stereotypes, Black girls enter an immediate situation where they are judged according to a negative cultural stereotype that they are forced to confirm or deny. This situation is an example of stereotype threat, which refers to being at risk of conforming, as a self-characteristic/personality trait, to a negative stereotype about one's social group (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Scholars have noted that students' awareness of stereotypes impacts whether their performance is affected (King, 2011). Research also indicates that stereotype threat decreases students' performance in academic and non-academic domains, increases students' use of self-defeating behaviors, disengagement, and alters professional aspirations of students (Aronson & Aronson, 2007; Steele & Aronson, 1995). McKown and Weinstein (2003) found that children's (ages 6-10) "awareness of broadly held stereotypes also increases with age, and children from academically stigmatized ethnic groups (African Americans and Latinos) of all ages are more likely to be aware of broadly held stereotypes than children from academically non-stigmatized ethnic groups (Whites and Asians)" (p. 498).

Academic Identity

Spencer, Noll, Stoltzfus, and Harpalani (2001) remind scholars that research focused on academic identity development is limited in the analysis of African American/Black youth development because it is framed in terms of pathology and deviance. School is one of the many systems that youth negotiate and acquire a sense of self and identity related to academics. For many students of color, school is not the proverbial equalizer as it is traditionally viewed, but rather a site of resistance, alienation, silence, and failure (Howard, 2003). As youth negotiate educational systems, they begin to internalize messages in this environment, which impact youths' conceptions of themselves and their achievements (Pearson, 2008). Understanding the

academic identity development of Black girls and how they negotiate an appropriate academic identity for their discourse communities is particularly prominent for Black girls because compared to Black boys in the school setting, they do better. However, compared to boys and girls of all racial groups they are experiencing an alarmingly high, yet silent, pushout from school settings. For example, nationwide, 28.9% of schools in the U.S. have police in the school (e.g. school resource officer [SRO]), and although California's SROs are only in 17.8% of public schools, California has the highest number of school arrests during the 2013-14 school year (Education Week Research Center original analysis of Civil Rights Data Collection, 2017). "Black boys are at the highest risk, three times as likely to be arrested at school as their white male peers... African-American girls fare little better: they are more than 1.5 times as likely as white boys to be arrested" (Blad & Harwin, 2017, p. 11). These concerns and issue also extended to Black girls who classified as disabled; 18.6% of Black girls with disabilities, received one or more out-of-school suspensions, compared to 2.8 percent of girls without disabilities (National Women's Law Center, 2017).

In a sociological multi case-study conducted by Fries-Britt and Griffin (2007) the experiences of high-achieving Black students were examined to understand how the college students were impacted by stereotypes and how the students' perceptions of being judged shaped their academic experience and identity. Interview data revealed that Black students experienced stereotype threat because the students "felt they had to dispel stereotypes and myths...to behave in ways that are considered "non-Black," involve themselves in events so that they could serve as a positive example of Blacks, and prove that they were smart, so that people would not think they were accepted...because of affirmative action" (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007, p. 514). Additionally, while having constantly to negotiate the appropriate academic identity to adopt

within their school setting, all nine (6 females and 3 males) participants reported that they had to deal with stereotypes on a regular basis with faculty and fellow students, and some felt pressure to be constantly aware of their actions and avoid exhibiting stereotypical behavior(s). One participant, Ann, reported that code switching was a primary tool to help her decrease the impact of stereotype threat. Black students can use code switching to navigate oppressive educational setting and school climates while protecting their psychological development and build upon an academic identity that is culturally aware of systemic oppression (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007). Code switching is a conditioned response to the dominant culture's attitude toward Blackness—Black people, Black culture; it is an example of double consciousness that is triggered as a survival technique, that many, but not all Black people have adopted since the slavery era. Although Fries-Britt and Griffin's (2007) study is on Black college students, it does illustrate a level of awareness that Black students have about race and racial stereotypes as they continue in their academic careers. Their work is also congruent with McKown and Weinstein (2003) who assert that children of color have a greater awareness of cultural stereotypes and that their awareness increases with age. Whereas Howard (2003) focuses on Black high school students' perceptions of their academic identity, and rather than explore coping strategies that help the students maintain a high achieving academic identity such as found in the work of Fries-Britt and Griffin (2007), Howard (2003) focuses on what influences academic identity. The role of parents, the perceptions of teachers and counselors, and the role of college were three key themes identified in the study that influenced academic identity development of Black students. Howard (2003) notes that students discussed the role of parents with similar significance as the role of teachers and counselors; it can be noted that both parents and educators impact the students' perspective of their academic identity. For example, the following three interview excerpts from

Black students shed light on the positive and negative factors that contribute to the academic identity of Black students (Howard, 2003):

- (1) My uncle told me that I needed to go talk to my counselor ... to tell her all these [college prep] classes that I wanted to take. She [the counselor] was like, "you can't take those classes, they are for college-prep students." ... When you hear somebody say straight out that you are not college material, it makes you think, "What's the point";
- (2) I had this one teacher, and he would just smirk and shake his head whenever I got an answer wrong. It was like he was thinking to himself, "Dumb Black kids... And you can try to ignore that, but when it's your teacher, you can't tell me that it doesn't affect what you think about yourself, and how smart you think you are;
- (3) ... I have Mrs. Lord, who is White. She just tells us all the time how smart we are, and she really makes us feel special ... she will continue to push us to think harder, analyze the properties, and talk out loud about how we are trying to process. I think it's because she believes in all of her students, we start believing in ourselves... (pp.11-12).

The first quote is an excellent example of cultural capital in family and how familial cultural capital can come up against systemic barriers in schools, illustrating strengths in the face of adversity (Yosso, 2005). The second quote illustrates how students can internalize how people treat them and how they think their teacher perceives them, and the third quote captures the student-teacher relationship with a teacher who empowers students to disaffirm stereotypes or misguided perceptions and to excel.

Perceptions of Black Girls

The social and academic needs of Black girls in school are also neglected by educators and the educational system as a result of misguided perceptions embedded in negative stereotypes. Cross-sectional survey data reveals that white adults who work (occupations vary) and/or volunteer with children have higher levels of endorsement of negative stereotypes and perceptions of young Black (Preist et al., 2018). Although, Preist et al. (2018) did not disaggregate for gender, they found that White adults' (n= 1022) perceptions of Black children,

youth and their same race caregivers were predominately negative. Specifically, 50% of white adults perceived Black teens to be violence prone, 41% perceive Black teens to be lazy, and 52% perceived Black teens neither intelligent or unintelligent. The simple endorsement of negative stereotypes in society and fields that serve Black children such as schools, after-school programs, or extracurricular activities (e.g. sports), speaks to the need to address unchecked racism and maladaptive perceptions because Black teens and children are less likely to be considered innocent and in-need of protection (Priest et al., 2018). Similarly, Epstein, Blake, and Gonzalez's (2017) data focuses on Black girls and reveals that compared to white girls of the same age (ages 0-19), survey participants (n=325) who consisted 74% White/European Americans, 11% Black/African Americans, 7% Hispanic/Latino/a, 4% Asian Americans, & 4% Native Americans or Other. (64% female, 36% male), and 39% were between the age of 25-34 perceived that Black girls need less nurturing, less protection, less need for comfort and support, and are instead viewed as more independent, know more about adult topics, and know more about sex. These perceptions are more predominantly held for Black girls ages 5-14 but is also held for all Black girls from ages 0-19. Although Epstein, Blake, and Gonzalez (2017) surveyed adults across the U.S., the study did not gather the occupational information of participants, so it is unknown how many educators were included in the sample.

Similar to Epstein, Blake and Gonzalez (2017), Francis (2011) specifically investigated English, math, and science teachers' (race and gender not specified) perceptions of 8th grade Black girls in the classroom and revealed that Black girls are viewed significantly less favorably than other female groups. Although, teacher demographics were not revealed, Francis (2011) controlled for academic performance and socioeconomic status of students, while examining teacher perceptions of student behavior (attentiveness and disruptiveness). Congruent with

Epstein, Blake, and Gonzalez (2017), Francis (2011) confirms that Black girls are viewed less favorably. Collectively, this data illustrates that Black girls enter society and school with the baggage of historical stereotypes, which encourage many adults to treat Black girls like Black women. Furthermore, this “adultification” of Black girls may explain the “disproportionality in school discipline outcomes, harsher treatment by law enforcement, and the differentiated exercise of discretion by officials” (Epstein, Blake, & Gonzalez, 2017, p. 9).

The adultification of Black girls begins as early as age 5, yet in the school system, Black girls are not provided the opportunity to critique stereotypes of Black femininity in visual and written representations in media and print or how it impacts their lives, which would help them in deconstructing identities and lead them to a greater sense of self both socially and academically (Esposito & Edwards, 2018). Lei (2003) acknowledges that stereotypes help to construct racialized and gendered identities and asserts that students and educators must examine the discourses of knowledge in schools as students make sense of who they are, who they are not, and whom they wish to become. Stereotypes and the adultification of Black girls can be viewed as significant factors shaping a Black girls' sense of self. Lei (2003) expands on stereotypes and the adultification of Black girls to discuss how educator and peer (racial identity varied, and was not always explicitly identified in Lei's research) perceptions of Black girls are the foundation of a performative and constructed identity, which enables Black girls to believe and act according to the negative perceptions held by educators. Loudness and visibility are the most prominent stereotypes held by students and teachers toward Black girls in Lei's (2003) study.

Being loud (i.e. outspoken, ill-mannered, voiceful) is a trait associated with the stereotypical Sapphire, and in regard to visibility, all Black female stereotypes are visible with

the exception of Mammie, who conforms to most norms of femininity. Qualitative data reveals that teachers' perception of Black girls as loud is due to the students' behavior in the hallways, and teachers feeling threatened by Black girls because of their outspoken nature (Lei, 2003). The teachers' feelings of being threatened was not clarified as a physical and/or emotion threat, but it aligns with Evans-Winters' (2017) assertion around black girls possessing dangerous bodies and their existence being considered as the threat. In practice, this suggests that not only do teachers hold negative perceptions of Black girls, but teachers also respond to perceived threats from those negative perceptions with punishment. Policies such as dress code allowed educators and administrators to regulate Black girls' bodies such as sending them home from school because Black natural hair is deemed inappropriate (Evan-Winters, 2017: KUSA Staff, 2016). Additionally, zero tolerance policies in California have led to attitude policing that allowed teachers to punish students for "disruption or willful defiance," a subjective category used to describe non-violent misbehavior.

These subjective policies have contributed to Black girls as more likely to be disciplined for disruption, profanity, and defiance (Wun, 2014). The vague guidelines for a student to qualify as a disruption or willful defiance has led to a surplus of minor infractions for Black females that the US Department of Education acknowledged may occur as a result of racial discrimination in school discipline (Girls for Gender Equity, 2015). Yet, it was not until 2013 that the Los Angeles Unified School District became the first school district in the state to ban suspensions for willful defiance, followed by San Francisco Unified in 2014-15 and Oakland Unified in 2015-16; this policy has been in existence since the early 1990s and several similar policies continue to support subjective punishment enforced by teachers (Adams, 2015; Losen, Keith, Hodson, Martinez, & Belway, 2015). Skiba et al. (2002) also assert that when teachers feel

threatened, they assert dominance via punishment, which can be noted in the disproportionate referrals for Black students for reasons of threat. Some Black students' experiences with school punishment has resulted in making themselves invisible, quiet, and unseen, which can be viewed as a desirable behavior outcome, but it can also be viewed as a detrimental effect of social control (Wun, 2014).

Lei's (2003) study further suggests a conflict in the students' experience with stereotypes as they try to construct their own identity. Black girls may perceive their Black female peers as stereotypes, like some of the teachers may perceive Black girls through a stereotypical lens, and both (teachers and Black girls) acknowledge that some Black girls are loud and personify all the negatives of the stereotype. However, teachers and principals (race and gender not disaggregated) have not acknowledged how they reinforce the negative stereotypes and co-create identities of Black girls as negative nor have schools created space for Black girls to positively construct and deconstruct their identity in a safe place (Lei, 2003). Additionally, educational leaders must engage in purposeful critical pedagogy to adopt transformational practices that position teaching and learning as a space to support and enable students to question social and political hierarchies as well as hegemonic constructs of identity (Donnelly & Hogan, 2013). Lei's (2003) research provides a new negative perception, loudness, and focuses on this single trait as a dominant stereotype, shaping how Black girls are perceived by peers and teachers. Furthermore, the research participants (teachers, principals, school staff, Black girls and Southeast Asian American boys) rarely acknowledge or identify the strength or experience of Black girls themselves. Additionally, few participants came to the defense of Black girls in their understanding of what contributed to their loudness or behavior, which I connect with Epstein, Blake, and Gonzalez's (2017) data that revealed that adults perceive Black girls as needing less

protection. Needing less and being deserving of less assistance and/or intervention is a consequence of negative stereotypes (Priest et al., 2018). As previously noted, Black girls are perceived to need less protection, which may be because they are strong and independent, which is a strength, but that does not mean that their needs should be neglected and highlights the importance of supporting Black girls to control their own social and academic worlds.

Despite Black girls perceived as more independent, Lei (2003) suggests that Black female identity in school is not independently constructed by Black girls alone. The literature presented thus far illustrates that Black girls enter the educational system burdened with historical stereotypes that the educational system reinforces and perpetuates, resulting in Black girls having to pick an identity that does not honor intersectionality. Intersectionality is a term coined by Crenshaw (1989) to describe how antidiscrimination laws failed to protect Black women since laws treated race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis. Intersectionality challenges single axis frameworks. Although Crenshaw's (1989) original work focused on Black women's experience with racism and sexism in the judicial system, it has been adopted and utilized by groups outside of its original focus (Perlman, 2018). Proctor, Williams, Scherr, and Li (2017) remind educators and professionals that to focus on only one aspect of marginalization and ignore the broader and deeper intersection of identities is detrimental to the long-term success of Black girls. Educational leaders should acknowledge and apply intersectionality to practice and praxis to address the significant role that gender and race play in the educational experience of Black girls as well as supporting the process of knowing themselves through their various identities (Proctor, Williams, Scherr, & Li, 2017). Providing Black girls with a space to discuss and explore their identity and intersectionality can help Black female students make meaning of their experiences as well as support leaders in understanding

the complex contexts in which identity construction occurs for young Black girls (Harrison, 2017). Black femininity has the potential to be a strength and protective factor. For example, Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth were labeled as defiant, and their defiance against inequalities changed history. Educators need to change how they view the potential of Black girls by acknowledging and addressing implicit bias.

Student-Teacher Relationships and Perceptions

Browne (2012) reminds educators and scholars that individuals' self-identity is connected to how they are perceived and treated by both significant and non-significant others. More specifically, through relationships between teachers and students, students learn how people think about and treat others as well as learn how they are treated via communication or discipline that differs from others. Browne (2012) notes that this is a part of the hidden curriculum, which perpetuates stereotypes and differential treatment of Black girls. Anyon (1980) and Esposito (2011) identify and confirm that a hidden curriculum exists where students receive differential educational experiences based on where the community and the school are located, which can be connected to developmentalist and culturalist perspectives about education and academic achievement. A student's failure to assimilate to the school culture and to Western style education is viewed as cultural relativism that must ultimately be annihilated. For example, Porterfield (2017) argued that the hidden curriculum is influenced by multiple factors such as education policies and societal expectations, which often require Black women/girls to alter their "dress, speech, and physical demeanor in order to find belonging in a larger school culture" (p. 301). Nonetheless, the role of teachers in the academic identity development of Black girls can be plausibly rated as highly significant due to how they perceive Black girls and the effects of their negative schooling experiences as captured in the hidden curriculum.

Teachers have the power to dictate and define what is appropriate feminine behavior in the school context (Smith-Evans & George, 2014). The implicit bias some teachers hold matters because their attitudes and acceptance of Black female stereotypes affect their understanding, actions, and behavior unconsciously and subconsciously. Evan-Winters (2017) used youth participatory action research (YPAR) to reveal that Black girls are perceived by their teachers and school administrators as less ladylike and require conformity as well as over-policing, and that girls of color are an inherent threat for their style, attitude, and dress (Evans-Winters, 2017). Although, Evans-Winters' (2017) study does not provide the YPAR data that the youth collected, which offered insight into teacher/administrator perceptions on objective fairness and effectiveness of school discipline policies. The youth in this study collectively interpret the data in group discussion, art, and journaling, which shows that they can critically examine their experiences, and identify that educators hold implicit bias against them. Despite its limitations of generalizability due to the perspectives of one group of students and unclear methods for controlling for bias, the student voice echoes what previous research has documented: Black girls are not seen as conforming to white standards of femininity.

In a qualitative ethnography study conducted at a predominantly minority student middle school, teacher and administrator interviews suggest that educators try to curb Black female student behaviors perceived as loud or assertive (Morris, 2007). Morris (2007) found that both male and female teachers encourage Black girls to act like ladies, which is frequently associated with being docile, because they perceive Black femininity as “coarse and overly assertive” (p. 2). Morris (2007) argues that race shapes adult perceptions of Black femininity, and school systems try to mold Black girls into a model of womanhood that does not acknowledge, validate, or accept the unique experiences of being Black and female in society. These teachers’ attitudes

about Black femininity impact how they treat students, particularly the perceptions about Black girls challenging or subverting teacher authority through outspoken or assertive behaviors such as asking questions and actively seeking the teacher's attention.

Qualitative data and field notes (Morris, 2007) shed light on the implicit bias and negative perceptions of Black girls held by teachers. Specifically, when communicating with Black girls', teachers have made the following comments: (1) "Yeah, a lot of the females, especially Black females here, try to have some authority over me in class. [. . .] I say to them 'uh-uh—I'm the only adult in here'"; (2) "You need to grow up," she tells them. She calls one Black girl "unladylike"; and (3) "I don't call them the Proper Ladies, I call them The Proper Loudies (laughs). Because they're so loud—they are really the most abrasive group of girls (laughs)!" (as cited in Morris, 2007, pp. 13-14, 17, 21). These quotes illustrate that teachers may feel threatened by Black girls and believe their behavior to be unfeminine and therefore disruptive. Morris (2007) did not provide specific demographic information about faculty but reported that the faculty population consisted of 60 educators, "roughly two-thirds African American and one-third White, with just a handful of Latino and Asian American teachers" (p. 494). Although, only 2 Black teachers are mentioned in the findings compared to the 3 white teachers mentioned, Morris (2007) asserts that class, race, and gender coupled with poverty and family shortcomings influenced all of the teachers' perceptions of Black girls. However, Black women teachers varied in their perceptions of Black girls as some acknowledged traits they shared with the Black female students they served, and others created separation between their Black identity and their community as well as the Black female students to show that they were different. This "indicates the complex intersections of race, class, and gender, and how each factor can influence the others in sometimes unexpected ways" (Morris, 2007 p. 505). Morris'

(2007) research findings are congruent with Lei's (2003) study which perceives Black girls as loud: the behavior of Black girls was "viewed as a defect that compromised their very femininity" toward being ladylike (Morris, 2007, p. 17). Scholars have recommended that educators do more to critique their implicit bias toward Black girls prior to making decisions, punishments, or policy. The relationships between Black students and teachers of all races and ethnicities needs further research to understand incidences when bias negatively affects Black girls' educational outcomes and academic identity development.

Gregory and Weinstein (2008) add perspective to disproportionate discipline practices and behavior of Black students by examining the role of trust between the student and teacher. Specifically, it was found that behavior infractions were situational, so a secondary study was conducted using repeated measures and multilevel modeling with a sub-sample of 30 African American students. Findings revealed that Black students behaved more defiantly and less cooperatively with teachers who they perceived as having untrustworthy authority; whereas, defiant behavior was less likely to occur when Black students trusted a teacher's authority because the teacher was caring and held high expectations.

One could argue that there is social-emotional strength in Black girls' ability to assess which relationships are worth investing in for their own growth and development. Jones and Kahn (2017) assert that positive teacher-student relationships lead to better social emotional development to buffer exposure to adverse experiences, and that focusing on coping skills for youth to navigate systemic inequities is not a sustainable pathway toward addressing an inequitable system of oppression. Nonetheless, this suggests that the teacher-student relationship is important and Black students, like all students, want a teacher who is caring and holds them to high expectations without being subjected to stereotype threat. Furthermore, Gregory and

Weinstein (2008) offer suggestions to begin lowering the discipline gap by simply having educators who care about their students and hold them to high expectations. Unfortunately, when stereotypes are involved in how students are perceived, it impacts their academic identity and achievement. Teachers who rely on stereotypes rather than seeing students for who they are and have the potential to be, run the risk of letting cultural and individual biases disadvantage students' educational success (Cook-Sather & Reisinger, 2001).

Discipline

As a result of historical stereotypes and negative perceptions which inform implicit bias held against Black girls, a disproportionate number of these students are funneled into the school to prison pipeline. Despite these negative perceptions of Black girls, research shows that they feel empowered through supportive teachers and family to achieve their goals. Black female students across all grade levels also experience lower rates of exclusionary consequences when their teacher is also Black, although the effect of 15-25% is only statistically significant when Black girls are taught by Black female teachers (Lindsay & Hart, 2017). Black teachers are less likely to report behavior problems of Black female students compared to white teachers and teachers of other races (Martin & Smith, 2017). Longitudinal data comparing 10th grade Black girls with white girls confirms that Black girls are at a significantly higher risk of grade retention and informal discipline reports from teachers, even after controlling for family factors, school quality, and teacher quality (Martin & Smith, 2017).

In an extensive quantitative data analysis of 436 elementary and middle schools across the USA that focused on school discipline rates, Skiba et al. (2011) assert that the behavior of Black students is over-policed, resulting in disproportionately high rates of school discipline. Specifically, Black students are 2.19 (elementary) to 3.78 (middle) times more likely to be

referred to the office for behavior problems compared to their White peers. Compared to White and Latinx students, Black students held significantly higher rates ($p < .01$) for disruptive, noncompliant (defined as defiance/disrespect/insubordination/noncompliance), and tardy/truancy (defined as tardy, skip class/truancy, dress code violation) behavior referrals. Except for tardy/truancy, the behavior infractions are subjective, meaning teachers have more power in defining the level of disruptive or noncompliant behavior that requires a referral to the office. Skiba et al. (2011) provide aggregated data that does not offer specific statistics based on gender, which makes it hard to apply this data directly to girls. However, these findings can be connected to Evans-Winters (2017) YPAR research participants who propose that Black girls' bodies are over-policed via dress codes.

Additionally, over-policing and criminalization of Black girls were observed in a school discipline study of 22 middle schools with an overall population of 24% Black students. Middle and high school Black girls were disproportionately penalized for more subjective offenses that violated traditional norms of femininity like disruptive behavior or minor offenses such as dress code (Morris & Perry, 2017). Although suspension rates are high for Black girls, Morris and Perry (2017) identify that Black girls receive more minor types of reprimands, that when accumulated over time, can lead to the student having ambivalence towards school or deficit-based perceptions about their ability. Although Morris and Perry's (2017) data does not affirm suspension rate data, it does suggest that Black girls lack access to educational opportunities and exclusion as a result of ambivalence and deficit-based perceptions. Unlike Skiba et al. (2011), Wun's (2016) qualitative study involving student interviews examines the formal and informal school discipline practices of Black girls in a California high school. Wun's (2016) findings

indicate that Black girls are disciplined for disruption, profanity, defiance, and fighting, similar to the discipline behaviors reported by Skiba et al. (2011).

Qualitative interview data from a 12th grade Black girl revealed that the student received a referral for challenging authority by making “smart comments” described as talking back, questioning authority figures, and their instructions (Wun, 2016). Not only is this consistent with Morris’ (2007) findings, but provides an example of subjective punishments that Black girls experience. Wun (2016) found that the behavior of Black girls is criminalized for normative behaviors such as in drinking Gatorade, signifying Black girls as constantly subject to punishment. Comparatively, Wun’s (2015) 12-month case study of Black girls’ relationship with school discipline policies argues that the effects of discipline and punishment of Black girls are prison-like, resulting in constant surveillance of Black girls without recognition. Student voice used in Wun’s (2015) research reveals the experience of a Black female student who was threatened by school administrators and campus security because the student had a noncompliant attitude when randomly questioned about a stolen cell phone. This student’s unwillingness to self-incriminate resulted in the student being sent to juvenile hall.

In the 2013-2014 academic year the national arrest rate of Black girls in the P-12 system was 37.3%, and 28.2% of Black girls were referred to law enforcement (Onyeka-Crawford, Patrick, & Chaudhry, 2017). Compared to other races (White-30.2%, Latina-24.2%, Asian-1.7%), Black girls have the highest school-based arrest rate. These statistics validate Wun’s (2015) research and assert that the discipline and punishment for Black girls frequently includes involvement with the criminal justice center. The disproportionate rates of juvenile justice system involvement contribute to the school pushout of Black girls as well as increases their risk

of criminal justice system involvement in adulthood (Onyeka-Crawford, Patrick, & Chaudhry, 2017).

Other examples of over-policing can be observed in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) where over-policing is successfully pushing Black students away from schools (Cornelius, 2013). Collectively this limits Black girls from attaining their educational goals because research shows that schools that over-police students create an unwelcoming environment that is not conducive to learning, which is correlated with disproportionate arrests of students of color (Cornelius, 2013). Shields (2010) suggests that for educational leaders to address the differential treatment of Black girls, a transformative leadership approach is needed to promote individual as well as organizational transformation that will deconstruct and reconstruct inequity based social cultural knowledge frameworks in schools. Reynolds and Hicks (2016) assert that to move toward praxis that supports Black girls, leadership must deconstruct systems of oppression maintained in school and local policies that criminalize Black girls disproportionately. Leadership must be held accountable, and this starts with critical self-reflection.

Strengths of Black Femininity and Black Girls

Given the gender-racial disparities among Black girls, it is important to identify ways that Black girls continue to strive and persevere in schools despite adversity. Stereotypes are one of the many factors that Black girls must combat. In a qualitative study that focused on 17 high school-aged Black girls, French (2012) explores how Black girls resist the Jezebel stereotype (which portrays Black females as sexually promiscuous) within their social life and academic settings. Self-respect was frequently highlighted in the study as well as captured in the study's two core themes of personal responsibility and finding sexual agency/desire. For example,

participants tried to navigate sexual scripts/stereotypes by taking a strong moral or personal stance against sexual activity, which meant that Black girls acted with intention, considered themselves first, and navigated through peer pressure. French (2012) argued that “by identifying themselves as having certain values, morals, and character strength, they believed they were able to prevent sexual risks from happening, such as sexual victimization and negative reputations. By doing so, the girls believed that they could set a standard and framework for sexual behavior amongst their peers that challenged expectations of sexual promiscuity” (p. 42). The participants in the study held themselves and their friend groups to a high?? standard so that peer pressure would not break. The study does not discuss how the standard in which the participants carried themselves and behaved was interpreted by their peers or teachers, but it does highlight that Black girls are subjected to stereotypes and behave in a manner that may disaffirm the stereotypes.

Lewis, Mendenhall, Harwood, and Browne Huntt (2013) examined how sexism and racism can negatively impact one’s mental health. However, Black females have been experiencing racist and sexist based oppression since their arrival to the US as slaves, and over the course of time have developed coping strategies. Lewis, Mendenhall, Harwood, and Browne Huntt (2013) explore the strengths of Black femininity through coping strategies. The study’s analysis of 17 college undergraduate, graduate, and professionals revealed five coping strategies: two resistance coping strategies (i.e., using one’s voice as power, resisting Eurocentric standards of beauty), one collective coping strategy (i.e., leaning on one’s support network), and two self-protective coping strategies (i.e., becoming a Black superwoman, becoming desensitized and escaping). The coping strategies varied by the context and setting of a problem and went through levels of appraisal before a coping strategy was identified. For example, the resistance coping

strategy, using one's voice as power, is used when Black females assess a situation and evaluate the stereotype threat(s). The following excerpt from a doctoral student from the study provides insight into the resistance coping strategy:

I recognize that I should not have to manage my feelings and somebody else's. It's not fair to me... what that [speaking up] has done though is it's definitely typecast me as the angry Black woman because I am gonna say something. You're not gonna disrespect me, you're not going to make me feel like less than, and I think that has changed the way in which people perceive me.

Although this excerpt is from doctoral student and the study focuses on college level students, this coping strategy can still be seen in Black girls in the P-12 system. For example, Lei's (2003) study illustrated a conflict in students' experience with stereotypes as they try to construct their own identity; students in this study were described as loud from a deficit lens. However, when applying Lewis, Mendenhall, Harwood, and Browne Hunt's (2013) coping strategies or strengths in the face of adversity, one could argue that the students captured in Lei's (2003) study wanted to be heard and seen so they took on a resistance-based coping strategy to help them manage their school climate. As mentioned earlier, Black girls possess strength-based traits such as being assertive, resilient, and independent, but when assessed from a deficit-based mindset by educators and schools, these strengths are viewed as unfavorable in Black girls. However, these same traits are considered normative for boys of all groups; among boys, these characteristics are recognized as central to academic success (Esposito & Edwards, 2018; Morris, 2007). Nunn (2018) conducted a longitudinal qualitative study with 18 school-aged Black girls (ages 8–13) and used narrative to deconstruct, intervene, and present the common educational and social experiences of Black girls from the perspective of Black girls. Narratives revealed that racism and teacher-student relationships as well as reports of having policed bodies and sexual

objectification were common themes of sadness. These themes are consistent with all of literature presented thus far. Nunn (2018) suggests that Black girls have a strong sense of self-esteem and can identify their strengths, but Black girls' strengths are aligned with a sadness that society does not see and will not acknowledge. Black girls thrive academically when they are given tools and space to engage in community to deconstruct/re-construct their reality, relationships that empower them to succeed, and curriculum that supports and liberates their identities (Nun, 2018). The strengths of Black girls are not simply their ability to cope, but more so their ability to balance both strength and sadness caused by regular social battles, decision-making, and on-going self-reflection (Nun, 2019). However, as Jones and Kahn (2017) reveal, educators cannot rely on a student's ability to cope with oppression as a means to address systemic inequities. By understanding that misguided perceptions and differential treatment impact Black girls' academic achievement and identity development, further research is needed to investigate Black girls' academic experience and factors that attribute to their positive identity development, social inclusion, and academic excellence.

Leadership

Some of the literature discussed thus far provides suggestions and recommendations for supporting Black girls, but only limited direct research on what educational leaders are doing to support Black girls' needs. Additionally, research discussing the pros and cons of educational leaders engaging in critical self-reflection regarding their perceptions about Black girls has not been conducted. However, scholars have identified traits and pedagogies that educational leaders should adopt in service to Black girls. Specifically, Joseph, Hailu, and Matthews (2019) use longitudinal mixed-methods data in exploring what Black girls' need and want in a good math teacher. The ten Black girls, primarily 9th graders, in the study spoke to the value of teachers

aligned with an approach to inclusive pedagogy. The following excerpts provide insight into the Black girls' thoughts about what made their math teacher a good teacher.

Because, like I said before, you know he doesn't yell at you for the wrong answer. He yells, you know, if you don't be quiet and he's trying to, like, help people or anything. Like, he's just a really cool teacher. Like, laid back. He tries to help you and sometimes he makes jokes, which kind of, like, makes you feel better and more relaxed. Because you're like, "Oh, you know he's cool and maybe, like, I can even talk to him if I have a problem.

By him explaining to us. By him being there to even teach us math . . . Knowing that we have a math teacher that really knows his math so we know he'll help us get it. He'll break it down to us and everything . . . He'll teach us everything we need to know.

I think it's because of Mr. Q. Because he kind of, like, takes his time to go to, like, each student who has a problem. And when you say a wrong answer, he doesn't say like, "Oh my god you're not like paying attention or whatever." He just, like, really explains himself and goes back to what you don't understand and stuff. So I think that's what helps me. (Joseph, Hailu, & Matthews, 2019, pp. 144-146)

The students suggest that a good teacher is patient yet humorous as well as supportive and not shaming. Additionally, the excerpts shed light on potential negative experiences that Black girls have had with educators such as not feeling comfortable going to the teacher with problems, not having a teacher who can break information down in an understandable manner, and/or being shamed for wrong answers or not understanding. These students' needs and wants did not mention race and/or gender matches with their teachers. Joseph, Hailu, and Matthews (2019) assert that Black girls' needs may vary from student to student, but a transformative pedagogical classroom model of social interaction, sharing power, dialogical student-teacher interactions, and utilization of personal narratives is essential in empowering the students, particularly in a discipline like math that is particularly "susceptible to inequities in the classroom" (p.135).

Graves (2014) argues that four steps need to be taken to help Black female students: (1) create a positive climate for learning, (2) reduce unfair and excessive discipline, (3) reduce gender-based bullying, harassment, and violence, (3) support leadership development among

African American girls, and (4) collect and report certain key data segmented by race and sex. Currently, US Congresswoman, Ayanna Pressley, alongside Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) and Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-N.J.) are sponsoring the “Ending Punitive, Unfair, School-based Harm that is Overt and Unresponsive to Trauma (P.U.S.H.O.U.T) Act, which connects directly with Graves’ (2014) steps two and three. If this bill is passed it will establish \$2.5 billion in new federal grants to support states and schools that revamp their discriminatory school discipline practices, provide educational development and hire mental health professionals, counselors and social workers. It will also require the Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights to collect and share civil rights data and enforce civil rights law as well as establish a federal taskforce to examine school discipline policies and their disproportionate impact on girls of color. The PUSHOUT Act could be a positive change to Black girls in the future.

Additionally, educational leaders in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) have maintained an initiative the African American Female Excellence Initiative (AAFEI), for Black girls that follows the legacy of OUSD’s Black Male Achievement program (BMAP). Although, this program has not been reviewed or researched, in contrast to BMAP, AAFEI has been received with mixed reactions by educational leaders. Educational leaders like UCLA education professor Pedro Noguera view AAFEI as a silo approach, whereas others like community leader Nzingha Dugas believe that if AAFEI succeeds it will bring about district transformation to improve the school climate for all students and decrease the need to focus on individual student groups (Romeny, 2018). Chatmon and Watson (2018) praise OUSD’s Office of Equity, which oversees BMAP and AAFEI, as an example of educational equity that actively takes steps to decolonize school practices and curriculum.

Despite some of the positive programing occurring in OUSD, over-policing has been observed and noted to successfully push Black students away from schools (Cornelius, 2013). Collectively this limits Black girls from attaining their educational goals because research shows that schools who over-police students create an unwelcoming environment that is not conducive to learning, which is correlated with disproportionate arrests of students of color (Cornelius, 2013). Shields (2010) suggests that for educational leaders to address the differential treatment of Black girls, a transformative leadership approach is needed to promote individual as well as organizational transformation to deconstruct and reconstruct inequity-based social and cultural knowledge frameworks in schools. Reynolds and Hicks (2016) assert that to move toward praxis that supports Black girls, leadership must deconstruct systems of oppression maintained in school and local policies that criminalize Black girls disproportionately. Leadership must be held accountable, and this starts with critical self-reflection.

Social Constructivist Theory of Learning

Oakland Freedom School (OFS), the site of my research, is based on the social constructivism theory of learning as a collaborative process of learning that does not separate learning from its social context, as well as its stress on language and culture in cognitive development. Vygotsky and Cole (1978) argue for two levels of learning (zone of proximal development and zone of actual development) in regards to a student's actual development and potential development, which suggests that in terms of potential development, a learner is capable of solving problems and understanding material with the guidance of teachers or in collaboration with peers. Oakland Freedom School's design acknowledges that cognitive structures are still in the process of maturing, and maturation is better supported under the guidance of or in collaboration with others (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). More specifically, OFS

designs scaffold information to help students improve frustration tolerance around difficult tasks as well as provide students with tasks that are applicable to their environmental contexts. This process supports Willingham's (2009) perspective on successful thinking because it demonstrates that intelligence is malleable. Furthermore, using Esmonde's (2009) perspective, it can be noted that within OFS educators teach students to develop as well utilize their identity and cultural wealth in understanding concepts. For example, social constructivism in the classroom is observed in reciprocal teaching when collaborative groups take turns leading dialogues about a topic that enables them to apply the four cognitive strategies of questioning, summarizing, clarifying, and predicting. This creates a zone of proximal development (ZPD) because students progressively assume more responsibility of the content, and through collaboration, develop high-level thinking rooted group expectations, and acquire lifelong learning skills (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). For example, the Oakland Freedom School students have a lesson associated with each book that they read as a class. In these lessons, students are broken into small groups as well as working together in one large group to discuss topics that arise in the reading while engaging in the four cognitive strategies. Students are given opportunities to act as experts and lead the lessons that allow them to continue to connect the book to their reality. This process enables students to maintain and increase their engagement as well as interest in the reading because these students can see themselves and their lives in the classroom literature (Colby & Lyon, 2004).

Additionally, social constructivism theory of learning acknowledges the relationship between learning and development. This theoretical orientation asserts that learning is more than the acquisition of the ability to think; it is the acquisition of many specialized abilities for thinking about a variety of things. Improvement of one function can affect the development of

another only to the extent that there are elements common to both functions/activities. Learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes in students' environment and in cooperation with his peers. Developmental processes do not coincide with learning; rather, the developmental processes lag behind learning which results in the zone of proximal development.

Lee (2017) asserts that schools need to examine “whether the presumed normative demands for participation are actually necessary for developing competence, and examine the resources that such navigations make available, with the likelihood that such resources likely entail both affordances and constraints” (p. 100). Lee's (2017) assertion reminds scholars and theorists that solutions and progress to address learning inequities involve addressing the system of learning (i.e. schools). The Oakland Freedom School program seeks to create a system of learning, from the Harambe opening to the closing circle, that challenges the norms of the schools that the girls attend during the school years. Moreover, in alignment with social constructivism, Oakland Freedom School teaches knowledge and learning as a shared experience through social interaction and language use. The school acknowledges that when students are not able to find themselves or their lives reflected in classroom literature, they are less engaged and interested in the reading, so OFS curriculum and literature selections are designed with children of color in mind to ensure that students have more opportunities to see themselves and their lives in the literature, which contributes to their motivation to engage in the shared learning process (Colby & Lyon, 2004). Oakland Freedom School's theoretical orientation, social constructivism theory of learning, provides a foundational lens to understand the strengths and weakness of my research site.

Chapter 3: Methods

If I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive. – Audre Lorde

The relevant literature discussed in chapter 2 suggests that Black femininity is negatively perceived in school, academic development is hampered by historical stereotypes of Jezebel and Sapphire, and Black girls' ability to navigate discourse communities are dependent on the context and setting. However, the literature fails to capture counter narratives from Black girls that deconstruct, intervene, and present the common educational and social experiences of Black girls by targeting and transforming negative academic experiences. Therefore, this study applies a qualitative research approach to combining Black feminist thought (BFT) as a methodology alongside narrative inquiry to capture the stories and experiences of Black girls. Qualitative research is suitable for this study because this researcher seeks to address the research questions by understanding how people interpret and attribute meaning to their experiences as well as construct their worlds (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As mentioned previously, this research is guided by the following research questions based on the perceptions of Black girls in middle and high school students:

1. How is Black femininity perceived in schools by educators?
2. How do Black girls develop a strong sense of academic identity?
3. How do Black girls negotiate academic identity formation with teachers, mentors, peers, and family members?

I combined the frameworks of BFT and narrative inquiry to describe and explore the experiences of Black female students via narrative and to underscore their evolving identities within a

strength-based perspective that values the identities, knowledges, and lives of Black females without flattening their experience into one monolithic experience (Patterson, Kinloch, Burkhard, Randall, & Howard, 2016). This research method is suitable for this research because I want to capture stories that deepen our understanding as well as honor students' voices as individuals rather than a rigid unbendable representation of Black girls' experiences. Since this study sought to understand positive identity formation, social inclusion, and academic achievement of Black girls and develop a set of policy and instructional recommendations to decrease the over policing and silent pushout of Black girls from the P-12 system, I collected data from class observations, interviews, focus groups, and art-based activities with self-identified Black female students who participated in a summer enrichment program, called Oakland Freedom School (OFS).

Description of Participants

Convenience and snowball sampling were used to obtain participants for this study. All of the study participants ranged in age from 10 to 16 and were entering middle school as 6th graders or continuing on to the 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, or 11th grade. All students attended a summer enrichment program called Oakland Freedom School (OFS), a 6-week summer academic literacy and cultural enrichment program serving 180 students (60 at each of the three sites) ages 5-13 throughout Oakland, California, since 2012. OFS is part of a national program created in 1995 by the Children's Defense Fund (CDF). CDF developed and coordinated The Freedom School Program and has since operated it as a national model in addition to providing books and the evidence-based integrated reading curriculum. The CDF Freedom School program is rooted in the values and mission of the Mississippi Freedom Summer project of 1964, a voter

reregistration drive sponsored by civil rights organizations with the goal of increasing Black voter registration in Mississippi.

More than 15,000 college students, young adults, and working professionals have been trained to deliver the empowering CDF Freedom School model which has served more than 150,000 K-12 scholars. The CDF national model is used as the basis of Freedom School programs nationwide. This past summer CDF Freedom Schools existed in 87 cities across 28 states including Washington, D.C., providing 183 program sites serving over 11,000 children. CDF Freedom schools serve diverse populations of students; specifically, in the past year, CDF Freedom School programs have consisted of 70% African American students, 14% White students, 8% Latinx students, 3% Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 2% Native American students. Furthermore, in the summer of 2017, 84% of scholars avoided summer learning loss, 70% of parents/guardians saw increased reading in their students, and 56.2% of students improved their reading skills. In 2017 California was amongst only 3 states with CDF Freedom School programs that served over 1500 students (Freedom School, 2018).

OFS primarily serves academically underserved students who have been exposed to community violence; however, children throughout the Bay Area participate in OFS, and enrollment is not restricted to Oakland residents. OFS operates at sites where there is the greatest need, and it works in partnership with the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center and Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) public schools in East Oakland, West Oakland, and North Oakland. This year OFS opened a new site catered towards high school students. This site was selected because of its connection to the community and its commitment to improving the academic success of students of color. Additionally, OFS is a program hosted by my place of

work (Bay Area Non-Profit), but I am not associated with the program and work in a separate department from OFS.

Relationship to site

Before I present this background of OFS, it is important to identify my relationship to the site. I have worked as a mental health consultant, as needed, for OFS in the past to support staff in behavioral interventions and understanding the mental health challenges of the students they serve. I have also volunteered to read for the program's Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) day in previous summers as well. Additionally, as a therapist, I have had children I serve participate in OFS and I have provided them with therapy services at an OFS site. However, children and youth whom I have served as a clinician were not a part of this study and many of the students I encountered while conducting my research and observations were new to me, as I have not engaged in a support mental health consultant role for OFS in over a year. Therefore, I was not familiar with any of the students who participated in this research study nor did I have any past encounters with the students. My overall relationship with the OFS program has been professional, and I nor OFS receive any direct benefit, monetary or otherwise, for me conducting my research at their program sites, although I do get the benefit of learning from their student scholars via my research process.

Research Site Background

Due to its connection with the national Freedom School model, OFS is targeted toward African American/Black students; OFS is an equal opportunity employer and welcomes student participants of all backgrounds. OFS' intent is to inspire a love of reading while strengthening children's self-esteem and sense of community through rich cultural engagement, with exciting

programs and activities using an integrated reading curriculum that supports academic learning outcomes that meet California educational literacy standards and Common Core Standards. Additionally, OFS provides enrichment activities in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), dance, music, art, sports and fitness activities. Furthermore, weekly educational field trips, parent education workshops, and annual community outreach events are included in the OFS enrichment model. Oakland Freedom School summer staff consist of college-aged young professionals (college students and recent college graduates) called servant leaders who have received 80 hours of training prior to leading an OFS class. Despite only being a summer program, more than half of OFS teachers return every summer. Like many summer enrichment programs, Oakland Freedom School is not free; however, the program offers multiple scholarships every summer. OFS is rooted in the Oakland community and makes efforts to ensure that students are not turned away for financial reasons.

In alignment with the national model, OFS' multicultural integrated reading curriculum supports students and their family through five essential components: (1) high quality academic enrichment, (2) parent and family development, (3) civic engagement and social action, (4) intergenerational servant leadership development, and (5) nutrition, health and mental health (Oakland Freedom School, 2018). The three core intended goals of Oakland Freedom School are to decrease the summer achievement gap, improve student self-esteem, and address the lack of culturally relevant support in the community. More specifically, Oakland Freedom School reports that the academic achievement gap has been documented to widen during idle summer months in reading proficiency, disproportionately leaving students of color at a disadvantage. This is addressed in OFS through the culturally relevant literacy enrichment component. Furthermore, in regard to self-esteem, African-American children's negative cultural and racial

self-image is well documented. The persistence of this negative self-image impacts their health and educational outcomes (Browne, 2012; Smith-Evans & George, 2014). Most academic programs fail to address these deeper cultural issues that negatively impact successful navigation through the educational system. OFS addresses this through its culturally responsive curriculum and mental health support. Lastly, African American children underutilize needed mental health services, mainly due to lack of access and cultural responsiveness from the provider and the delivery of services (Lincoln, 2016). OFS addresses this through culturally responsive curriculum and staffing, mental health support, parent and family community outreach, and retention through engagement toward addressing the lack of culturally relevant resources.

Students

OFS scholars are taught, as well as supported, to challenge and engage with the literature; abiding by Common Core standards, OFS literature booklist varies weekly and by level, but it includes literature about people of color, such as *The Man Who Built a Library* by Carole Boston Weatherford, *My Name is Bilal* by Asma Mobin-Uddin, *Under the Same Sun* by Sharon Robinson, and *The Boy who Harnessed the Wind* by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer. Students are able to utilize prior knowledge and cultural experiences to connect to learning, which is essential according to Willingham (2007) and Esmonde (2009). Students contribute to their equitable success by engaging in multiple-ability treatment, which allows them to learn from their preferred learning styles as well as play to their strengths and assigning competence/student roles in groups; this process is co-facilitated by the servant leader, but students in level 2 and 3 classes are given greater autonomy to take authority over their knowledge. For example, levels 1, 2, and 3 have cross classes which allow for mixed and blended classes which feature a different grade levels in each classroom. Blended/cross classes

of students engage in group non-reading focused academic activities such as STEM projects, which require students to acknowledge that many different skills are required for success on the task and that no one student has all these skills, but each student has at least one. This is an example of multiple ability treatment (Esmonde, 2009; Willingham, 2007). There is a significant strength of OFS scholars' ability involves to promoting their own, as well as their peers', equitable outcomes. This strength is even more prevalent in students who have participated in OFS in previous summers because they enter the program with previous knowledge as well as an ability to engage and support multiple ability treatment with little to no prompting by the servant leader. Godwin and Potvin (2017) discuss academic identity formation and identify how students can develop identities that they are not school people or science people or reading people; whatever the case may be, and this student weakness is ingrained by faulty educators and/or a failing system. This negative academic identity is a weakness that may require more work to readdress and reshape within the limited time frame that students are in OFS. However, similar to Godwin and Potvin's (2017) case study, these students are given opportunities to learn from passionate educators and experiential lessons/activities that promote success at all levels. Overall, students are provided with environments that support them in their learning process and enable them to tap into their intrinsic as well as extrinsic motivation to succeed. However, despite the strengths of teachers and students, they both must function under a larger system because ultimately OFS is acting within the parameters of a school system not designed to serve all children.

A quasi-experimental pretest-posttest program evaluation study collected data from 79 OFS students (35 girls and 44 boys) who all self-identified as African American or Black and were between the ages 5 to 14 years (Bethea, 2012). Beathe's (2012) study results indicated that

participation in OFS influenced racial identity and students' views toward African/African American culture and precepts as well as an increase in social skills strategies and future commitment to social action. Youth who participated in OFS did not show an increase in reading attitudes scores on the ERAS. Despite not having a statically significant result for reading attitudes, Bethea (2012) notes that observation data and testimony from teachers and staff, suggests that students "seem to enjoy reading the materials presented to them by OFS, evidenced by their willingness and desire to read OFS books. Children were also able to explain what they read, write poetry, raps, stories, and plays" (Bethea, 2012, p. 450). Bethea's (2012) program evaluation of OFS focused on whether OFS was achieving the goals that are outlined in their logic model which does not answer the question of how OFS students are doing during the regular academic school year. However, the agency that hosts OFS reports that students who participated in Oakland Freedom Schools during the summer and are participants of the agency's culturally responsive academic intervention and wellness program improved their reading by two levels on average (Lincoln, 2016). Unfortunately, this data does not provide statistics for students who are only involved in OFS.

Participant Profiles

There were a total of 10 Black female scholars who returned signed parental consent form as well as a minor consent form. These 10 scholars participated in this study via individual interviews and focus groups. All students self-identified, in the first individual interview, as Black or African American and female. To humanize the participants as people and not numbers or test subjects an individual participant profile is provided later in this section. To keep all scholars' identities as anonymous as possible, a comic book character alias has been ascribed to each person. The young Black scholars were made aware that their "secret identity" would be a

comic book character and they voiced buy-in into the alias, although not everyone had time to select their alias. I intended on having participants identify their own comic superhero name to allow them ownership over their identity. This was not possible for all participants, so I carefully researched and identified Black female superheroes who possessed similar characteristics, skills, traits, and/or origin stories as the student who would adopt the name in this research. This was done because many inferences can be drawn from someone's name, or in this case alias, and I want readers to hear these scholars' stories and infer that these scholars possess heroic qualities. Also, in recognition of how significant names are in the history of Black people entering the USA as objects, I strive to present these 10 Black female scholars as authentically as possible. Nonetheless, I have selected comic book characters, specifically Black female superheroes from DC and Marvel comics, because like superheroes these Black girls possess great power and double consciousness. For example, Superman is really Clark Kent, but he hides his identity from society and frequently battles with the conflict of his unified identity. These scholars' identities as superheroes have several parts that are not always unified. These scholars encompassed many of the traits of their superhero alias, yet unlike their alias they are real people who do not have the privilege of being lost in a fantasy world. But they deserve a chance to escape into fantasy and be someone whom the world loves and society needs; until society welcomes Black femininity then a fantasy world/universe will continue to be better than reality. Moreover, as a comic book enthusiast, I can recall that the first time I found positive representation of a Black female character was from a comic book that was turned into a cartoon. A comic book character became an early role model and a positive spin on the strong Black woman motif. For many of the scholars, it was not their first time in Oakland Freedom School, and despite their returning as participants to OFS I have never interacted or met them prior to

conducting this research. During the regular academic year, the scholars attend public (n=7), private (n=1), and charter (n=2) schools. The information presented in the participant profiles is based on information that the young scholars shared in interviews and in an about me activity that some scholars completed in a focus group.

Thunder

Anissa “Thunder” Pierce is a 15 ½ year old Black female scholar who is best friends with Jennifer “Lightning” Pierce. Anissa is a savvy teen who balances work and school while also trying to plan her dream sweet 16 that she is working hard to fund. Thunder is in high school and loves the fact that she no longer must catch multiple buses and walk a long distance to get to school. Thunder engaged in individual interviews with her bestie Lightning. Thunder turned 16 during this study.

Lightning

Jennifer “Lightning” Pierce is a 15 ½ year old high school student who is best friends with Lightning. Lightning and Thunder have been besties since middle school, and are supportive of one another's goals as well as challenge each other to do better. Lightning is 10 days younger than Thunder. Lightning specializes in navigating systems to access educational resources that can help her succeed. Lightning spent most of the summer attending the OFS enrichment program as well as in a job training program. Lightning turned 16 during this study.

Captain Marvel

Monica “Captain Marvel” Rambeau is an 11-year-old 6th grader who runs track and enjoys dancing. Captain Marvel’s dad passed away when she was young and although he is not in her life anymore, she and her mother visit his burial site frequently. Captain Marvel’s role

models include her mother and 3-time Olympic world champion, Allyson Felix. Captain Marvel is an only child and sees herself as the funny one and comic relief in her family.

Ironheart

Riri “Ironheart” Williams is a 15-year-old sophomore in high school who is in kinship care, lives with relatives that are not her biological parents, and who adapts to systems whether moving between out-of-home placements or different teacher expectations. Ironheart is biracial but identifies as Black. Ironheart used to love school, but over time her active participation in school has transformed to her sitting in the back of class completing her work and leaving. Ironheart is an introvert, but if she knows you and is comfortable with you she is an extrovert.

Moon Girl

Lunella “Moon Girl” Lafayette is a 10-year-old 6th grader who describes herself as shy in school because people there will judge, whereas at home and in her community she’s not shy because people around her may judge her in a playful manner, but never to hurt her. Moon Girl is the oldest child in her family. Moon Girl also enjoys cooking. Moon Girl’s favorite subject in school is writing.

Vixen

Mari “Vixen” McCabe is a 12-year-old 8th grader who describes herself as a nice person who can get mad. Vixen primarily lives with her dad, but is split between households (mom’s house and dad’s house). Vixen has a younger brother and they are 3 years apart. Vixen is a helpful person who is needed a lot in her household. Vixen feels safer in her current community compared to her former city due to frequent shootings.

Misty

Mercedes “Misty” Knight is a 12-year-old 8th grader who enjoys all genres of dancing. Misty attends a charter school and lives in a 2-parent household with her 3 younger siblings. Misty helps with a lot of the cooking at home and enjoys making seafood meals. Misty describes her neighborhood as quiet. Misty is soft spoken and is navigating beauty standards as well as her role in relationships. Misty’s favorite subject in school is math and she likes that she is good at a subject that is typically hard for other people.

Crimson Avenger

Jill “Crimson Avenger” Carlyle is an 11-year-old 7th grader who describes herself as a strong, loyal, and caring person. Crimson Avenger is the baby of the family and aspires to become a lawyer. Crimson Avenger’s mom is a lawyer and she would like to become a lawyer too. Crimson Avenger feels that the justice system disproportionately sentences people of color and too many people are dying without justice. Crimson Avenger hopes to study constitutional law at Stanford. As the youngest child of four she dislikes having to always listen to her siblings. Crimson Avenger loves and respects her parents. Crimson Avenger enjoys doing group work and presentations at school.

Shuri

Shuri is a 15-year-old 10th grader with a big family. Shuri is the youngest of 7 children and attends a faith-based private school. Shuri loves science and swimming. Shuri hopes to join her school’s swim club or swim team during the upcoming academic year. Shuri hopes to become a nurse. Shuri views her mother as a role model because of her strength. Shuri is close to her eldest brother and sister.

Storm

Oruro “Storm” Munroe is a 14-year-old 9th grader who gained a newfound courage starting in mid-7th grade which has continued to be a character trait that enables her to do new things. Storm is a skillful code switcher, and presents herself differently depending on the environment she is in. Storm looks up to her big brother and mom because they push her to do better in life and school. Storm’s favorite subject in school is leadership.

Design and Procedure

Recruitment was conducted at two of the three OFS sites and one site was used solely for observations. I will refer to the three sites as WOMS, MACK, and MES. Recruitment at site one (WOMS) consisted of classroom visits and announcing the opportunity to every scholar class who was a level two (ages 11-13 and/or grades 6-8) or three students (ages 14-18 and/or grades 9-12), then consents were passed out to interested students to return with their parent/guardian's signature. WOMS staff also identified student scholars to potentially participate, and provided them with consent forms. This process yielded 12 participants who were interested, but only 7 who returned signed consents. For recruitment at site two (MACK), I was invited to join morning Harambe and announce the research opportunity there. This site only consisted of level four students and a total of 3 girls returned signed parental consent forms. MACK student scholars invited me to participate in their girls’ group as guest substitute facilitator twice, and consents were obtained from their parent/guardians. OFS site three (MES) was primarily used as an observation site due scheduling conflict. Approximately, three times a week, observations were conducted during morning Harambe and in one level three classroom. All collected consents were collected by myself directly or by the site coordinator at each site respectively.

Although site coordinators did have temporary access to the consent forms, they had no access to the research and data collection process, nor were they involved in any of the research process.

Focus groups, with 4-7 scholars, were held every other week at WOMS and MACK, and individual interviews were held concurrently with all 10 student scholars three times over the 6-week summer session. Focus group size varied due to scholars' attendance on meeting days. Also, due to student attendance fluctuations, ending program early, and/or vacations throughout the summer some students (3 out of 10) did not complete all three rounds of interviews. Each focus group occurred during the students' lunch break and lasted roughly 55 minutes. Each individual interview ranged from 10-30 minutes (see Appendix A for interview questions).

The first focus group at each site was designed to establish group norms, build community, and introduce topics. The students quickly and openly established agreements, and the students at both sites requested that they have lunch together during each focus groups to connect and build community. I provided lunch for group participants during each focus group; this was not an incentive, but a cultural practice to build and join in community. A list of conversation starter questions (see Appendix B) was provided at the start of subsequent focus groups and were used to initiate dialogue amongst the group.

Individual interviews were held at a place of the student scholars' choosing within the OFS site; many students opted to have their interview at the benches near the cafeteria, at the playground, or on the track field. Students were given a laminated copy of the interview questions during their interview. Activities (drawing, poetry, etc. see appendix for more) were also offered to student scholars during their individual interview and/or focus group and the activities were designed as a means for students to communicate their thoughts and feelings in alternative methods.

There was consistent data collection over the course of the six-week OFS program. The data collected for the study included audio recording of the interviews, interview transcripts, audio recordings of the focus groups, my own reflection notes taken during and after the interviews and focus groups, observational notes from classroom observations and written/art-based activities. During observations, I was looking for relationships and dynamics between Black girls and their servant leader as well as their peers. I was also looking for communication styles similarities and differences between black girls talking together with adults and with other peers who were not the same gender-race as them. Art activities varied amongst students based on the students' interests (see Appendix C). Activities were used to help students communicate their narratives in other ways. Students were given open-ended prompts to draw things like their family or Black femininity. I wanted the students to engage in self-expression as well as autonomy and ownership over their work, so I asked for consent to take pictures of their art with my cellphone. Questions were selected with approval from my committee. To collect this interview/focus group data, ZOOM was used to record the audio and gotranscripts.com was used to transcribe the data. Gotranscripts.com was used a tool to confirm that the data I transcribed by hand was accurate; it did not catch and transcribe nuances of participants' language. Additionally, one-on-one interviews provided me an opportunity to gain more insight into the students' perspective about their educational experience as a Black female. The self-reflection notes helped me to process post interviews/groups and identify my feelings in regards for what came up for me when holding each student's unique educational experience.

Data Analysis

Coding was used to analyze the collected narratives from the young scholars (Charmaz, 2014; Saldana, 2014). Additional data taken from classroom observation notes, my own research

notes, and student art/activities was also used to further emphasize the current experience of Black girls in middle and high school. I analyzed the data for emergent themes from the verbatim interview and focus group transcriptions, field notes, data memos, and reflective journals. To maximize the validity and the credibility of the instrument, I presented it to the members of my dissertation committee for feedback. Additionally, this qualitative study analyzed the data through multiple cycles of coding using a Black feminist thought (BFT) approach. BFT “supports the interdependence of what are called “theories of the flesh” and “specialized knowledge” (Madison, 2009, p. 213). Theories of the flesh reflect the distinctive interpretations of the world carved out of the material realities of a group's life experiences. Specialized knowledge infuses elements and themes of black women's culture and traditions with critical interventionist thinking to provide black women with new tools of resistance” (Madison, 2009, p. 213). Extensive data was gathered to generate a comprehensive list of codes; then, a more focused coding list was used to extract categories to form four major themes (Charmaz, 2014).

Specifically, I compared data and moved quickly through the data as I constructed short codes. The data was transcribed as a back and forth conversation, so my coding process went line by line through what was said. However, instead of labeling descriptive or concept codes based on my own interpretation, I manually highlighted word(s) that stood out or captured the overall meaning of the line. Peer debriefing (which I describe in the next section) was used to help me unpack what I coded and why. I frequently highlighted words with high connotative value and emotional undertone. I also did not correct, modify, or change word choice when the young scholars spoke slang or African American Vernacular English (AAVE). Spelling of slang or AAVE words was based on my own experience writing slang, phonetic transcription, and written

pop culture references. To manage bias, I recognize that this qualitative study does not reflect objective, opinion-free neutrality. I engaged in pedagogical reflective journaling focused on my positionality to acknowledge the uniqueness of qualitatively derived knowledge “that measures impact through an evidence-based decision-making lens” (Galdas, 2017, p. 2). To assess credibility, I remained immersed in the data, and gained outside perspectives about the data. Equally important, participants and their parents/guardians were clearly informed of the purpose of the interviews. Charmaz (2014) states that building rapport with research participants helps researchers enter the participants’ world. I believe that the 10 Black female scholars and I built rapport over lunch (focus groups) and by giving them some autonomy over the interview process (selection of where to meet at the school) as well as being an authentic Black female who wanted to hear what they had to say; this helped create a conversational interview as described by Truesdell (2013).

Validity and Generalizability

The qualitative design of this study presents a strength-based perspective on the experience of Black girls in P-12 education, and specifically, the experience of Black girls entering 9th through 11th grade. This qualitative research centers Black girls’ voices to allow the participants to give insightful information about their experiences. Furthermore, peer debriefing was utilized to enhance validity. Peer debriefing also called analytic triangulation, or “the process whereby a researcher calls upon a disinterested peer—a peer who is not involved in the research project—to aid in probing the researcher's thinking around all or parts of the research process” (Given, 2008, p. 604). Creswell and Creswell (2018) assert that peer debriefing is a validity strategy that involves an “interpretation beyond the researcher and invested in another person” (p. 201). Peer debriefing was conducted with 3 Black female doctoral candidates who

are members of my doctoral program and cohort. These individuals were selected for their race and gender as well as for their varying perspectives and lived experiences that range from their background and upbringing to system involvement to occupation. I viewed these peers as “disinterested parties” because they have no significant buy-in into my research process. In addition to choosing the most effective design, I made sure that the study conditions were consistent throughout the data collection process. This strategy was used to mitigate the threat of internal validity and ensure that the findings remained consistent with the research purpose. Also, I have consulted with the dissertation committee and other experts before using the instruments or drawing any conclusions, which will help minimize researcher biases (Frankel et al., 2015).

Reliability

Reliability, as defined by Fraenkel et al. (2015), refers to the consistency of the data collection and interpretation by the researcher over time, situation, and settings. To ensure the reliability of responses obtained, I have reviewed transcripts and determined that there is not a drift in the meaning of codes during the process of coding. Intercoder agreement was established with peer briefers (Denicia Carlay, Lauren Ford, and Ashley Williams) who cross checked codes. Intercoder agreement involved the three peer-debrief individuals to code three rounds of all data and explained their code as well as reviewed my codes and identified what they agreed and disagreed with. These individuals (Denicia Carlay, Lauren Ford, and Ashley Williams) also provided constructive feedback and challenged my codes/themes to deepen my analysis process. Their role was to promote a reflective dialogue that challenged my thoughts and research process to clarify as well as challenge me to unpack my views and uncover the ways in which my beliefs and values play out in the research. I obtained follow-up interview data in a written format from

some interviewees for clarification. In addition, I shared my research report with the committee members to check for the accuracy of my interpretations.

Limitations

Student participation was dependent upon caregiver consent, and some students may have been volunteered by their caregiver to participate, but they may have lacked buy-in into the study or a willingness to engage. To decrease the possibility of dual relationships, students at OFS for whom I have provided individual therapy did not participate. Observations of students were not in a regular school context, meaning that OFS is a summer enrichment program and has similarities and differences from participants' regular school classrooms. Additionally, this study consisted of 10 students enrolled in variety of public, charter, faith-based, and private from various middle and high schools in California.

Ethics

Before starting the data collection process, my IRB protocol was approved by the Human and Animal Subjects Committee of SFSU. I assured all the participants about the confidentiality of the whole process. The researcher and individual(s) used for peer debriefing and intercoder agreement were only people with access to the research data, which was be stored in a safe location and in a password protected record. All recordings of interview data will be destroyed after one year. Throughout the interviews and the focus groups, I made sure that all the participants were treated with respect and dignity. This study involved minors, and it did involve sensitive subjects such as racism and sexism that were explored in a critical self-reflective manner, in hopes of decreasing the likelihood of any physical or psychological harm. Clinical resources were made available to all participants. Participants always had the option to opt out at

any point in time during the study for any reason. Participants were offered opportunities to read what I wrote to ensure that I captured accurately their sentiments and experiences.

Chapter 4: Findings

Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign. But stories can also be used to empower, and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people. But stories can also repair that broken dignity. - Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Before reading this section, it is important to note that these quotes are alive — the lips that uttered each word had a name and she had a story worth listening to. These girls, these young ladies, these innocent Black young scholars spoke volumes that they were excited to share with someone who was willing to truly listen and not police their rhetoric. As a researcher I have been blessed with a story that I pray my subjective lens will do justice. These findings will be presented like a story to tell the collective tale of the system of education from voices not yet heard. This chapter outlines the primary findings from the research conducted at OFS 6-week summer enrichment program to address the guiding research questions:

1. How is Black femininity perceived in schools by educators?
2. How do Black girls develop a strong sense of academic identity?
3. How do Black girls negotiate academic identity formation with teachers, mentors, peers, and family members?

I tell the story of 10 Black girls' lived experiences in their words that may resonate with the experience of many other Black girls as well as provide a new, unique and individualized outlook on a Black girls' educational experience. These findings link to each research question by unpacking femininity, intersectionality, and identity. I identified four themes after rigorous peer debriefing cycles — attitude, expectations, navigating and negotiating stereotypes, and helping others process and endure (H.O.P.E.). The young scholars are integrated into each theme based on codes that were the most prevalent in their interview data. The number of scholars

presented per theme varies to ensure that each voice is equitably presented. Some themes portray specific scholars whereas other themes mix them all in.

The first theme of attitude encompasses the lived experiences of Black girls as having attitude from the way they walk to the way they talk; this attitude can be interpreted differently, but as a theme it speaks to the tensions between self and others' perceptions of Black girls' verbal and non-verbal communication skills. The second theme, expectations, unpacks the baggage associated with the behavioral and academic achievement expectations of Black girls based on the young scholars' perspectives of their educators, family, and individual perspectives. This theme also highlights the positive energy Black girls utilize to counter negative expectations. The third theme, navigating and negotiating stereotypes, focuses on identity and academic identity. Last, helping others process and endure, which I refer to as H.O.P.E, speaks to the unspoken reality of Black girls' experience in school and how they find supports to nourish their academic identity formation and build connections to help themselves and others process their intersectionality and endure.

One to three scholars are presented in each theme based on their coding alignment with the themes. The objective of creating portraits of each scholar is in accordance with the approaches of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) and is intended to ensure that each scholar's voice is heard and to provide a public forum for their insights on educators' biases and stereotypes, as well as the young scholars' assets, talents, and hopes. I cannot say that I am a portraitist, however I want to show the goodness (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997) of these young Black girls because I want scholars, educational leaders, policymakers, and community members to move beyond pinpointing the shortcoming

and failures of Black girls, and find those moments of resistance and negotiation that lead to social inclusion and academic success.

With Attitude — Learning to Confront Racial and Gender Stereotypes on Their Own Terms

“You not supposed to have an attitude, you supposed to be ready to learn”- Misty

The first theme, with attitude, is heavily rooted in the perception of how others (peers, educators, and administrators) perceive the tone, pitch, dialect, kinesics (body language), and overall intonation of the speaker. The theme is called with attitude because the young scholars felt and perceived that educators view Black girls as talking with an attitude, walking with an attitude and sometimes simply doing nothing with an attitude. In focus groups the scholars discussed how their attitude is policed in classrooms and noted that teachers and others frequently make comments such as “fix yo face” and “check the tone of your voice.” Troutman (2010) points out that for the Black community “attitude holds another layer of meaning, including to the extent that attitude becomes manifested overtly, through language and kinesics (body language), by a speaker’s ability to talk with an attitude, walk with an attitude, act with an attitude, be with an attitude” (p. 107). To concur and expand upon this explanation, regarding Black females, the strength of doing anything with attitude is to exhibit confidence and resistance in oppressive situations (Koonce, 2012). Although all the young Black scholars frequently voiced concern about how their attitude quickly gets them into trouble or results in negative labeling within the school, each scholar was at different stage of critical self-reflection as they decide whether to normalize their attitude to be a part of their evolving identity. Though many of the scholars spoke of this theme, Vixen and Ironheart’s narratives capture the theme most deeply.

Vixen—learning that code switching is for survival

While discussing experiences with educators, Vixen shared about her teachers. Vixen described her 6th grade physical education (PE) teacher as her worst teacher. Vixen said the teacher “doesn’t listen, gets me in trouble, [and] ignores me.” Vixen who is an avid volleyball player voiced frustration about how PE in 6th grade was a nightmare that changed her attitude.

My 6th grade PE teacher was my least favorite teacher I had while in school. One day we all go to the gym, and I supposedly was talking back and had an attitude, mind you I hadn’t seen the him [teacher] all day, when he [teacher] literally blocked me from entering the gym and pushed me with his hand then told me to go to the detention room.

Vixen’s PE experience is an example of “doing nothing with attitude” that resulted in a campus detention. In reflecting about what she learned from her encounters with her PE teacher, as well as the rest of her teachers, Vixen learned to code switch although not labeling her actions specifically as code switching. Code-switching was not something that Vixen described as happening immediately, but a continuous learned process that required Vixen to self-reflect and evaluate her communication.

I know how I talk and I don’t think it’s bad, but it may be a big problem to somebody else, so they may feel like I’m disrespecting em’, so like I try to tone down my voice and always talk proper to them so they don’t think I have an attitude and I get in trouble for something.

When asked about how she talks with different people in school and in her daily life, Vixen revealed that she code switches constantly with different groups and settings. Vixen primarily code switches with all adults regardless of race or gender, unless they have established a strong interpersonal relationship. Additionally, Vixen learns how to communicate differently by mirroring the communication style of adults in her life who speak more formally such as her father and some of her teachers.

So like when I'm at my dad's house, I'm pretty cool...I can catch an attitude with him like get mad but when he wants to talk he'll sit on my bed and start using slang, it be funny, so I start talking hella professional like him, we end laughing a lot...with my friends I talk how I'm talking now, but like if a teacher or staff comes I be quiet or not as loud, and go back to talking to my friends normal when they gone.

For Vixen, having an attitude is also an emotion and feeling that connects with the pitch and tone of her language in varied settings with different people. It is unknown whether Vixen's dad always responds with humor when she has attitude, but it does occur and is accepted to some extent by him. In a subtle and subliminal manner, Vixen's dad teaches Vixen how to code switch, or talk "professional" as she put it. Vixen's attitude is a part of the fire that shapes her, though hot it's not bad, yet she douses her fire to appease others.

Ironheart—learning that her attitude has limits

Like Vixen, Ironheart also learned to douse her inner fire. Ironheart used to love school, "if I was sick on a school day I'd beg my mama to let me go and swear I wasn't sick." Then something happened and Ironheart's feelings about school changed. Ironheart did not share what happened that changed her perspective of school, though she shared glimpses of her home and school life prior to high school. Perhaps it was Ironheart's move between family homes due to her involvement with social services or the teacher who, as Ironheart says, "try to lie on me in front of my mama because I called her out" or maybe she simply got tired of codeswitching, which I intuited based on her question to me, "Don't you get tired of, you know, think bout' other peoples' feeling about you?" Regardless of what changed, Ironheart expressed that she doesn't have a favorite teacher, but she recalled that her worst teacher was in 9th grade, whom she described in one word, "disrespectful." When asked about a typical school day, Ironheart revealed that as a high schooler she keeps to herself, stays quiet. However, her school experience reveals that sometimes there is no safety in silence.

Sometimes it feels like even when you jus' sit there they [teachers] will purposely pick on you. So sometimes I may not try to catch an attitude but it comes off as an attitude because of the things I say. So like the teacher brings her attitude into the situation and now we are on a whole other level. I was just being you know respectful or just giving my opinion. But, I mean, luckily, it's only like that with 1 or 2 teachers.

Ironheart is an example of the constant policing of Black girls' attitude even when they submit to silence until they are provoked to respond, which raises questions about Black girls' rights as students and human beings to be perceived as feminine even when they display socially appropriate behavior in classrooms. Ironheart provided insight into her perception of herself, I'm not mean, but at the same time you not finna attack me." She laughed and then said, "But at the same time I'm not gonna care cause I think that I know that I'm not the bad things they think about me just cause I have an attitude. There's nothing about my attitude until they make something about it." Ironheart speaks to her internal levels of self-care, as suggested by her statement, "I'm not gonna care cause I think that, I know that I'm not the bad things they think about me...". Ironheart is forced to make the strategic choice to save her energy and disconnect from the negative perceptions that teachers and others may have of her. At the same time Ironheart also has to monitor and normalize her attitude so that it is deemed acceptable. Ironheart's insight into her attitude in classrooms, and the underlying processes that she must go through and navigate, suggest that she does not have a problem with her attitude, but she is aware that her attitude can be viewed as a problem to others and so she has learned to not blame herself for her attitude, and not carry the burden of others' negative perceptions of her.

Vixen and Ironheart's attitude has negatively impacted their educational experience; Vixen receives punishment for her attitude while Ironheart is provoked into behaving with attitude. The difference between Vixen and Ironheart, however, is how they define "attitude" and how "attitude" defines them. Ironheart has adopted a sense of apathy in regards to school and

uses her attitude as a body armor; Ironheart demonstrated that she needs “to be left alone” to be successful in school, and indicated that her school can provide her with “nothing” to be successful in school because “they are broke”. In comparison Vixen, a middle schooler, describes herself as a good student, who could do better. Vixen identified her needs and shared that her school can help her by giving her “extra work” and “time to work with a tutor.”

Although she has to douse her flame of her personality when talking to adults, she can talk with her best friends “a little more louder, [with] attitude, differently...because they listen.” Vixen has the privilege of having someone such as her friends in school who welcome her loudness and attitude. These young scholars' stories embody one of their superpowers, attitude vision, the ability to choose to see attitude policing before it happens and to try to change the person's perception of themselves by code switching. Vixen and Ironheart's experience with attitude policing provides perspective into how their attitude is a trait of their femininity, that is not welcomed by some educators. Black girls like Vixen and Ironheart have learned to work constantly to negotiate the covert and overt expectations and demands made of them, but the expectations are constantly moving and changing and are not on their own terms.

The second theme of expectations expands upon how Black girls' femininity is perceived, and how academic identity is developed in relation to these perceptions of Black femininity.

Expectations— DUAL CONSCIOUSNESS & DOUBLE STANDARDS ROLE

“It means to be powerful and present yourself as strong and talented” -Storm

“We envision a Black girl that wants to learn and be free” -Misty

In the focus groups I asked the scholars, “What does it mean to you to be a Black girl in your community, school, and/or family?” Vixen replied first, “We have more expectations.” In this second theme, expectations, the scholars’ narratives offer a collective counter-narrative to illustrate that to be a Black girl across all settings of school, home, and community means “to be powerful and present yourself as strong and talented,” and never have low expectations of oneself. The theme of expectations is composed of three tenets — sense of self, caregivers’ expectations, and educators’ expectations.

Sense of Self — asking questions about yourself

The roles, attributes, behaviors, and associations that one considers most important about themselves shape one's sense of self (Ylvisaker, 2006). Sense of self was a common tenet under the theme expectations, which highlights Black girls’ developmental age and developmental stage. Specifically, Black girls’ in this study are adolescents and still growing and developing their academic identity. Consequently, these Black girls learned that they had to maintain a strong perception of self and learn/re-learn awareness around oneself to combat negative stereotypes and negative educators and administrators.

During our second focus group, the scholars entered into a conversation about double standards after I informed them that some research suggests that boys are disciplined more than girls. The group unanimously and quickly “no, no, no!”, and as a story unfolded, Ironheart explained,

Like say two girls get into a fight automatically without a doubt they getting suspended, but like two boys get into a fight they can go talk about in the dean’s office and talk it with their parents. They [boys] just need to calm down, they’re just being boys. Let that be me, no talk, no chance to calm down, I’m punished immediately.

Most of the girls nodded and laughed in agreement as well as added teasing yet playful comments like "boys will be boys" and "now ladies you know better." I too believed Ironheart's example because as a society people respond differently to boys and girls. In my journal I wrote, "What would happen if the boys started crying after a verbal conflict with a peer, would their emotions be punished?" The young scholars have learned that their behavior as girls is not appropriate despite its appropriateness for boys. The girls have learned that boys get into physical altercations at school because it's expected of them, whereas girls are expected to already know how to talk it out since girls are not the type of person who should be fighting. This double standard teaches Black girls to expect differential and negative treatment as Shuri noted.

So my school, the boys don't know a lot of things and like our teachers will cater to them. This one boy, a freshman, he did a lot of stuff, like rate R stuff and the school just forgave him when he shared nudes of this girl [other school peer] all around at school. She was ashamed. She got suspended, got service hours, and he got nothing.

As these scholars grow as students, so does the added challenge of their double consciousness. As students of life they've learned that their expectations for themselves and other Black girls are not consistently identical to other girls and boys of different races. The focus group cycled through stories that taught them what to expect in school or life, and ended their discussion by reflecting and refocusing the narrative on their current experiences. Misty, for instance, talked eloquently about role, gender, and race differences in expectations.

Boys like they're allowed to mad, well there is always something that they can be mad about, but us being girls, Black girls especially, like we can't be mad. We get mad, we envision a Black girl that wants to learn and be free

In my reflective journaling I jotted lists to help me understand what it means for a Black girl "to learn and be free." Misty's response made me think of Maya Angelou's (1969) autobiography, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, and the closing of the prologue, "If growing up is painful for

the Southern Black girl, being aware of her displacement is the rust on the razor that threatens the throat. It is an unnecessary insult.” I thought of Misty while reading this passage because she only wants two essential things from school, “to learn and be free,” but she is displaced by the educational institution that was not designed for her, and there is an unknown rusty razor against her throat reminding her of the role society really wants her to play.

Moon Girl quietly interjected to say, “Black girls always have bigger issues at least I think we do...but don’t try to label us as we always having attitude”. Moon alludes to the self-realization that discipline is not the only problem these scholars have to combat in school; in their fight to learn and be free, Black girls must combat mixed expectations and stereotypes rooted in historical, societal, and institutional racism and sexism. Moon Girl pushes the envelope on expectations by explaining, “Like um I can raise my hand all day and not get picked on. I keep trying to get the teacher to acknowledge me because maybe I have a question that I felt they didn’t answer so I don’t get it answered.” Moon Girl alludes to one of the most damaging issues that Black girls experience — being ignored and silenced by educators when the young scholars indicate that they need help. Black girls like Moon Girl learn that their voices are not valued in the classroom, especially when they engage in age-appropriate classroom behavior like “raise my hand.” These scholars would benefit, then, from educators who ensure equitable opportunities and alternative communication options for every voice to be heard and acknowledged.

Moon Girl and Misty reveal that Black girls experience internal conflicts around anger that forces them to constantly question if their emotions are valid and even if they can have negative emotions. For example, Black girls are in a constant debate trying to decide whether they are allowed to be mad, and if their anger is justified. This internal conflict creates added tension and requires a significant amount of energy that may hinder them from relaxing to focus

on school work and social interactions. I present this mini-narrative of the focus group to illustrate the competing influences and lessons that Black girls experience in school while at the same time trying to develop their academic identity and social inclusion and acceptance in the classroom.

In a dyadic focus group Thunder and Lightning shared their frustrations with me about how educators fail to recognize their "hustle," a reference to the value of moving quickly and making moves toward progress, a term that acknowledges a skillset that surpasses the average ability. Hustle also often entails managing several different sets of responsibilities and expectations simultaneously. In an example of the girls' determination and multi-tasking, Thunder and Lightning both spent the summer at OFS as well as at a job training program to help them get a job for the upcoming school year. Thunder shared,

I think they expect us not to give our all or to actually try, they take us to be their class clown all the time and stuff like that, and not care.

Thunder believes educators perceive her to be not serious about her education nor future, and to play into that expectation and fail. Thunder counters the class clown label by holding herself as holding higher expectations for her academic and personal life. Thunder is constantly trying to improve herself, and she cares about her goals. Thunder is questioning if educators care about Thunder and if educators are able to view the strengths such as humor and leadership, in a "class clown".

Caregiver Expectations and Roles— Providing What's Lacking in Schools

The first tenet of expectations, a sense of self, relied on focus group data to describe how educators' negative expectations of Black girls influence their sense of self. The second tenet, caregiver expectations and roles, focuses on two scholars, Crimson Avenger and Shuri.

Their stories illustrate how caregiver expectations and roles positively influence their strong sense of academic identity. Like many of the scholars in this study, Crimson Avenger and Shuri's role models are their moms as they commented, "my mom she strong...and has knowledge" and "she's strong and independent. She's a good example to me because she shows me how I should be treated". Crimson Avenger and Shuri's positive experiences, relationships and perceptions of their mothers are consistent with 87% of surveyed Black adolescents' experience of their mothers as powerful role models, listeners, and having high expectations of their academic achievement (Lamborn & Felbab, 2003). Caregivers play a significant role in academic identity development and for Black girls they are an asset in helping them understand their double consciousness. Crimson Avenger revealed that her strong academic identity comes from acting tough. Crimson Avenger views herself as smart and aspires to be a lawyer, though at school and in her community, she points out that "you gotta act tough, you gotta act like you're ready to fight at any moment". Crimson Avenger maintains this façade with everyone except her dad — "I act the same with everyone except my dad; I don't have to act like I'm super tough". Crimson Avenger did not explicitly state why she acts tough with everyone except her dad, perhaps this is connected with her role in the family as the youngest child in her family. Nonetheless, the role of fathers in developing a strong academic identity appears to be allowing their daughters to be vulnerable, allowing them to drop the façade they carry around every day. This is somewhat similar to Vixen and her dad's playful role as he changes his response to her when she has an attitude. Crimson Avenger's parents also help her maintain a strong identity as well as academic identity when the educators try to push a negative identity onto her.

Crimson Avenger—Learning that Black plus female does not equal trouble

When asked if being Black and female impacts how she is treated in school, Crimson Avenger remarked,

Oh yeah, because my teacher thinks I'm a trouble maker. She'll [teacher] say 'you're always the one in trouble somehow' when this girl said the N-word I checked her I said you can't say that and you ain't Black. She [the girl who said the n-word] was the one saying the racist word, um, to me...she [teacher] was like why you starting drama, you trouble....my old teacher she used to shame students and call it lessons. She made me call my mom and dad in front of the whole class, and tell em' I was talking in class

This is another aspect of the challenge that Crimson Avenger face as she navigates her double consciousness — she is publicly given labels like “drama” and “trouble” from teachers when she speaks out in class on racial topics that directly apply to her (“when this girl said the N-word, I checked her, and I said you can't say that and you ain't Black”). Crimson Avenger and the other Black girls learn to stifle their ideas, feelings, and language in such a hostile environment. They learn that their academic identity must be strong enough to withstand the abuse from teachers who may shame you and peers who may hurt you. This teacher's behavior can be interpreted as a tactic to make Crimson Avenger feel like she is a less capable student because she is less than human. Although educational leaders in this and other instances fail to support a scholar in co-creating a positive academic identity, Crimson Avenger gains strength from her caregivers.

Crimson Avenger continued her story,

She [teacher] said, 'So we're gonna call dad and mom.' I talked to them [Crimson Avenger's parents]. Then she [teacher] goes and takes the phone and tells them [parents] 'she's [Crimson Avenger] was not listening at all. She was talking'...my mom and dad understand. They take my side over hers. During the parent-teacher conference my dad got really upset. She [teacher] said 'Crimson Avenger is very disrespectful and she's very out of control blah blah blah' and my mom was like tell'n the teacher “as a teacher you should handle disruptions without having my child call me in front of the class. That's disrespectful and shaming. Don't ever do that again' and my dad said what steps were taken to address the N-word being used in your classroom...

Perhaps caregivers like Crimson's Avengers are aware that they must advocate for their child's safety, and that their safety is not simply their physical wellbeing, but also their mental

wellbeing. By advocating for Crimson Avenger and her strengths, the caregivers give power back to their child and remind her that she is not a pawn to be controlled in class.

Educators' Expectations

When Crimson Avenger reflected on how it feels to be shamed in class she openly processed and shared other occasions where she felt shamed in school, from having to call her parents in front of the class to being sent out of the classroom. In a soft tone, with a pitch that sounded like it was hurting to speak, Crimson Avenger became teary-eyed as she shared,

Uh it [being shamed in school] kind of makes me just like be quiet, basically...her [principal] whole thing is to follow the rules. It doesn't matter, she [principal] doesn't care what it is or if it's racist or whatever. She says, 'follow the rules...or it'll get you in places like this.

I noticed and documented in my journal notes that while Crimson Avenger shared this part of the story, her affect and body language screamed that she was hurting, but she would not allow a tear to fall. Her deep desire to show strength through the pain she was feeling illustrated an academic identity personifying the idea of being chipped, but never broken. She interpreted the school's overall expectation for her as silence, to be voiceless, compliant, and obedient. For this expectation to be achieved in school, Black girls must follow the rules even when they are the victims of rules that were not even designed to protect them in the first place.

I asked Crimson Avenger how her racial and gender identity impacts how her community members and school personnel view her as a student.

They aren't allowed to see me as a Black girl, they see me as the troublemaker, and like whatever label they [educators] pick to put on me...

Black girls like Crimson Avenger are othered and given exclusionary labels, as noted when Crimson Avenger says "they aren't allowed to see me a Black girl". Crimson Avenger alludes to

the idea that to be a Black girl is to be human but her school reality is to be othered — “whatever label they pick to put on me.” This young scholar’s own expectations reveal a perspective, a deep feeling that her academic identity is viewed as troubled, problematic, and below standards of femininity. Other Black girls like Crimson Avenger, are denied access to knowledge and academic achievement by educators who use social exclusion and shaming tactics under the guise of lack of proper and/or expected behavior in conscious and unconscious efforts to deny Black girls a high-quality education. The path for Crimson Avenger to form a strong and viable academic identity is layered with stereotyped and exclusionary expectations and biases, and yet she shows pride in her academic achievements despite the hellish experiences she’s endured in school. Crimson Avenger spoke fondly of her favorite class and her STEM teacher to reveal that she has high academic expectations for herself.

Okay, so I got an A in STEM, that was my highest grade. I didn’t get any like Cs and Ds. Um the rest were Bs. I like STEM there’s projects and sometimes we have slideshows or drawings. My STEM teacher she’s nice, but she kind of unnecessary. Like she extra [she’s excessive/dramatic]..but she’s give us student help and time with her to do work. She’s not mean even when she’s being a little kinda annoying.

Crimson Avenger’s pride in her A grade was unabashed, which perhaps speaks to how hard she worked in the course as well as enjoying the class. For Crimson Avenger, teachers who are “nice” and “extra” are personable and can support and challenge scholars like Crimson Avenger to be future leaders in STEM. Crimson Avenger’s most challenging class, though, is math.

I missed like 2 days. My teacher [math class] would not stop and go back over chapter I missed. So like I went in at lunch time for help, but like he didn’t have time to help me, so I started going to math tutoring.

Crimson Avenger has learned that Black girls must advocate for themselves, and tries to act on her family’s encouragement for her to go to tutoring. Crimson Avenger also demonstrates a strong sense of awareness of her academic needs, she knows that a specific subject is a challenge

for her so she seeks help and does not stop until she gets the help she needs. This example of resourcefulness also shapes how Black girls develop a strong academic identity. Although, Crimson Avenger's academic identity is rooted in acting tough, she is also a resourceful and strongminded student who has learned how to navigate certain aspects of her educational system.

Shuri—learning to work twice as hard

As a high schooler, Shuri's academic identity is rooted in her daily academic grind and friendships with peers. Positive peer relations are a beneficial support system while navigating school for many scholars, and Shuri shared that the advantages of making friends in school is

just people I can talk to and they understand me, stuff I go through. I go to them instead of like the teacher at school. Like I go to my friend J for help because she understands me. She gives me the best support and advice.

This peer support system helps shape academic identity by supporting the young scholar through the stage of identity versus role confusion and provides insight into the unspoken expectation/reality that Black girls are benefit from peer supports. When asked if she felt her race and gender influence her experience in school, Shuri replied “no”. Then when asked if her racial and gender identity impacted how community members and school personnel viewed her, she replied “um, I would say yeah.” These straightforward responses allude to the fact that Black girls' intersectionality does not impact their individual and personal experience, but their intersectionality does impact how Black girls are perceived by the community and educators. Shuri went on to explain her response.

My school is diverse, but it's um still a lot of white kids. So, I would say they see me differently because they don't really know how to like (pause) I wouldn't say talk to me but they don't really understand, me, Black girls' experience, needs. So, like something happened to one of my friends, she was being abused at home and it doesn't have anything to do with race but they didn't really know how to take it because they've never had that happen to them...

Shuri's perception suggests that sometimes a challenge does involve race and gender, and Black girls are more likely to understand other Black girls' needs and experiences. Shuri's insights, however, also indicate that sometimes educators lack perspective and insight about trauma and mental health, which results in a failure to support and serve the true needs of Black girls. Shuri's comments also indicate that educational leaders lack training and skillset in addressing trauma. Shuri is aware that she is seen differently and this awareness shapes how she learns, how she participates, and engages in class. During her story, Shuri also shared about her role as a student.

I am the type of student who does everything like clubs, activities, plus daily coursework. I pay attention in class twice as hard. I am determined and focused. I go to tutoring support every lunch anytime I need help with coursework. I put in work...like Spanish class right now is favorite class in school. So my first week I had a hard time like getting the conjugations and stuff because you have to know how to conjugate in the past and present and all that. But I finally I got it and I ended the school year with an A in it. Yeah I'm going to keep taking Spanish next school year.

Black girls like Shuri often have to work twice as hard in school, and their desire to succeed helps to give them a strong sense of academic identity as noted when Shuri says, "I am the type of student who does everything...I pay attention in class twice as hard...I put in work". Shuri appears to be taking extra steps to prove that she wants to learn and is not lazy. Shuri, like Thunder and Lightning, also has a strong academic hustle. However, Shuri may be avoiding labels like "class clown" by working twice as hard at school, and limiting social engagement at lunch time by going to tutoring. This effort may come at an added cost that does not affect other students. Shuri also illustrates initiative to take her education into her own hands by "going to tutoring every lunch" as well as an awareness that she has to work harder in school, and work harder than her peers. Shuri is also insightful about effective teaching by comparing her best class, Spanish, with her more challenging class, English.

I feel like my Spanish teacher is more hands on...she explains more. She makes sure we get it before we move on to a different topic...but my English teacher he goes really quickly and he doesn't give us time to comprehend. Like he'll tell you one thing and then when you ask questions, he'll say I already answered that even when he hasn't. And he just made it really hard.

Shuri knows that Black girls are expected to be patient with their teachers, even when the teachers are not patient with students. This quote speaks to research questions two and three — Black girls' academic identity is shaped by every encounter in school whether with peers or educators, and from their daily experiences with these encounters, Black girls learn how to negotiate and support their academic identity by taking initiative and engaging in academic hustle, obtaining support from caregivers, having friends to confide in, and learning to combat racist and sexist stereotypes through predicting educators' expectations.

Shuri also revealed that for her to be successful in school she needs “love and support” from her family and friends, as well as some people at school. Unlike Ironheart, Shuri needs more than to be just left alone. However, compared to Ironheart, Shuri has not been broken down by her school to the point of closing off and shutting down. Also, Shuri's school has the funding and resources to provide students with “a lot of ways to get things done”, which help students like Shuri succeed in school. Although Shuri, like the other Black girls, is in a constant state of expecting or anticipating to be treated differently, persists in developing a strong academic identity that honors her intersectionality. For instance, Shuri has learned to realize that she must find her own supports and strategies when she is ignored and silenced in classes such as English.

Like he'll tell you one thing and then when you ask questions, he'll say I already answered that even when he hasn't. And he just made it really hard.

Navigating and Negotiating Stereotypes

“...I'm angry, and I'm too loud. I'll be quiet, and I'll try not to get mad” -Crimson Avenger

Black girls' duality of being Black and female is a constant battle in and out of school. Sometimes this battle cannot be captured in words, so I gave the students the opportunity to draw what influences their academic and personal identity. In addition to the consent provided before starting the study, scholars were asked if they agreed with a photograph of their art being taken and used in the dissertation. Students who provided verbal consent for their artwork to be featured are primarily captured in this section and photographs of their art can be found in appendix C. During an art activity, Thunder drew a picture of well-manicured eyebrows with the words "beauty is pain" underneath. Storm drew a picture of a Black girl with a nose piercing and natural hair pulled into a neat ponytail. The picture features the Black girl with her eyes closed or looking down so the onlooker can see her full lashes. Lastly, Captain Marvel drew a picture of her family using triangles and circles for herself and her mom and a rectangle and circle for her dad.

Thunder's picture is consistent with feminine norms or female stereotypes that suggest that females will endure a lot to look or feel beautiful. It suggests that Black girls pride themselves on their appearance. Storm's picture speaks to the silence that Ironheart, Vixen, and Crimson Avenger's experience in school — in Storm's picture I saw Ironheart, Vixen, and Crimson because the character in the picture appears quiet and closed off. Storm's picture also sheds light on the idea that beauty is to be seen and not heard as denoted by the girl featured in Storm's picture who has closed lips that show no emotion. Storm is a very intentional artist who can express her thoughts via art, and so for her picture of what it means to be feminine, she used a white piece of cardstock paper and wrote, "What does it mean to you to be feminine?" in all narrow capital letters, and then applied glue in random areas and poured blue glitter on it, dusted off the excess and handed it to me as she said, "Here you go, feminine". It was intentionally

messy, and it sparkled. It appeared to personify her idea of feminine as a Black girl as defying certain gender perceptions of girls being neat and tidy. Thunder and Storm's drawings provide a peak into what it's like for them to be girls as well as Black girls. Both pictures are well drawn, and though the girls didn't elaborate on what the pictures meant, they did share that their art indicated certain aspects of their identity. Thunder and Storm's identification with their artwork suggests that they are mindful of the competing narratives around Black Femininity which may help them negotiate their identity. Captain Marvel's picture, however, provides insight into how Black girls find solace while navigating and negotiating stereotypes from school and society. It was not Captain Marvel's picture that provided insight into how she navigates and negotiates stereotypes, but what she shared.

That's my mom, me, and my dad. He's [dad] dead, but I visit him often like every month. Bring flowers, clean off his plaque. I talk to him about what's going on...like school, how I did at my meet, hard stuff. He gives me courage and makes me feel brave. I think it makes my mom sad, but I try to make her laugh.

Captain Marvel speaks to the significance of family for Black girls, and how family can be a constant resource for Black girls' ability to challenge stereotypes and seek solace away from stereotypes. Captain Marvel's father passed away, and her devotion to her dad and the solace she gains from her visits bring strength to "feel brave". When asked about stereotypes associated in being a Black female the scholars reported the following:

Lightning "ratchet, ugly, ho3, THOT [that hoe over there or thirsty hoes over there]"

Vixen: "that Black girls are mean" -

Shuri: "loud and ghetto"

Lightning's use of slang helps to capture the current language of her generation. For example, "ratchet" is another variation of the Jezebel stereotype similar to "thot". THOT is a derogatory term, though acceptable in most urban groups of people, and is rooted in the history of over-

sexualization of women, most prominently women of color, and the connection of this promiscuity to the acquisition of money from men. In focus groups the scholars all mentioned how they aren't allowed to be angry and have to stop and rethink, second guess, weigh all options, and more before speaking up in class, talking to a teacher, or confronting a peer. One way that the Black girls negotiate and navigate stereotypes is how they present themselves. Storm and Misty, for instance, spoke about how they present themselves as a strategy to negotiate their identity development while navigating stereotypes and relying on supports from a range of people (teachers, family, mentors, and peers) who impact their academic identity formation. When asked if she's ever been called a stereotype frequently associated with Black girls, Storm replied,

No because I don't present myself in them ways. My mom taught me better.

Storm is making the conscious decision not to present herself in a manner that could be perceived as validating a racist or sexist stereotype. Storm reveals that her mom taught her about stereotypes and to be mindful that how she presents herself and behaves can consciously or unconsciously motivate others to perceive her as embodying a stereotype. "My mom taught me better" suggests that conversations about stereotypes and receiving negative perceptions and judgments based on sexist/racist stereotypes from others is a conversation that Black girls are having with their caregivers. These conversations with mom or perhaps another caregiver support and teach Black girls to expect to be stereotyped and how to adjust to avoid being stereotyped. Storm, like many of the other scholars, views her mom as a role model and spoke highly of her mom and older brother as guides for her through school. In saying that her mom taught her better, Storm is suggesting that her mother guided her on a path that taught about the world from a Black female perspective. Storm expanded upon how she presents herself and

pointed out that her school personnel may view her differently based on her race and gender, but she combats this with how she presents herself.

I feel like it impacts on how I'm presenting myself and how I'm acting around certain people. I present myself as, like, chill. Like, not as, like, all wild and doing all that. I present myself as chill. But in front of my friends and, like, we're at each other houses, then it's a different story. But, like, at school I present myself like I'm supposed to. Like, I just don't do what I may want to do or do what I do when I'm with my friends.

Storm's insight that "at school I present myself like I'm supposed to" alludes to lessons she learned from her mom, not to give in to stereotypes by presenting herself differently. Storm has puts energy into changing how she presents herself across all settings until she is in a safe or comfortable space like her home or her friends' homes. Storm's insights suggest that if Black girls learn how to code switch how they communicate verbally and non-verbally, and also how they behave, then this may change how they are perceived. Many Black girls, though, may experience damaging internal tensions from having to code switch their existence in school and with educators, which can impact their academic identity development as they progress through the P-12 educational system. Storm spoke highly of her experiences in school and benefited from them. For some Black girls, code switching may be second nature, and for others it may be an unnecessary burden. Storm, like many Black girls, has learned that you cannot be free-spirited as a Black girl because you must have control over yourself or others will use it against you. Storm discussed control in relation to presentation and shared advice that she would give Black girls entering into the 8th grade or high school.

To just present yourself way better... well, presenting yourself as somebody...not like wild, all over the place, don't care a lot, and, like, just don't have no self-control.

Storm and the other Black girls dedicate themselves to a higher level of self-control to navigate and counter stereotypes in school, and they rely in part on the support of family members, peers,

and some teachers, mentors. Storm explained how her mom and brother support and guide her academic identity formation.

As a mom, it's her job to, like, make sure I'm doing good in school, make sure I'm not failing. So she just push me to do better. And she don't stop when she really want me to do better...he [brother] got standards. Like, he expects certain grades in certain classes. Like, if it's an easy class he expects an A or a B. He understands if it's math, then he be like, "I expect a B or C." He expects that I just stay focused and listen the first time instead of have to listen the second time [in school/class].

This particular role that caregivers take on ("it's her job") supports the growth of a positive academic identity formation for Black girls and instills a value in education that goes beyond the classroom. Storm and the other young scholars understand and deeply value the role of family and utilize family as motivation "to do better". Black girls benefit from someone caring about their education. Family members and others support Black girls' academic development through such supports as high-grade expectations, which counters the low and poor academic expectations from schools. For example, by Storm's brother setting academic "standards" for Storm, he demonstrates that he values her and her education, which contrasts with Thunder's educators who expect her to be "the class clown" or Crimson Avenger's educators who expect her to be a "troublemaker." Storm's family also demonstrates how Black girls' family members can provide them with specific survival-based coping tools like "listen the first time" when they engage with educators.

In the same focus group session, Misty expanded on Storm's comments by discussing how she confronts stereotypes of Black females.

"I don't act that way and I tell people the things I am and the things I'm not."

Misty's direct nature in challenging stereotypes is bold and shows self-confidence, but questions arise as to how many Black girls are as bold as Misty. Can Black girls safely be bold without repercussion? Misty shared her strategy for countering stereotypes and negative labels.

People have called me ghetto because I be loud, and I don't know how it makes me feel, but I tell em I'm not ghetto, I'm just loud.

Misty counters the narrative of ghetto as a negative stereotype by normalizing her loudness as a characteristic of her particular identity and personality. In doing so, Misty rejects the Sapphire stereotype that is used as a social control mechanism by society against Black females. Misty claims her loudness and does not perceive her loudness as a negative trait. Misty may be grappling with her feelings about being called "ghetto," but she is perceptive in not letting others' terms define herself and separates herself from social and racist repercussions associated with being loud vs. ghetto. Misty, like some other Black girls, are aware of the stereotypes placed on Black females and they work to critique them. Although Misty did not provide further insight into how her peers, school personnel, or family respond when she is loud, she wants to present herself as loud and refuses to allow her authenticity to be tarnished by a stereotype. There are Black girls like Misty who critique the stereotypes and challenge educators and others who try to shape their personality and deep sense of self and internal identity.

During one focus group, the scholars discussed how society (schools, teachers, community members, etc.) can be more aware of the school experience of Black girls and help them to be successful adults.

Vixen: "Study Black history more, be around us because we're different."

Lightning: "By not being shy...school is hard enough without having to deal with adults who don't get me."

Misty: "Check-ins...ask me how I'm doing, ask me if I'm okay, ask me if I need help...check-in with me."

Moon Girl: “Take time to understand us.”

Ironheart: “Acknowledge that we students and sometimes this is just how we act.”

Crimson Avenger: “By asking us questions.”

The scholars were open and honest, and their needs are realistic. In my reflective journaling I posed the following questions after the focus group: (1) What would happen if educational leaders tried to do what these scholars have mentioned? and (2) Would it change how Black girls currently negotiate their academic identity formation with adults in their life? Continuing the discussion on how schools and society can be more aware of Black girls' experience, Misty expanded upon the conversation and shared with the group that she's tired of worrying about stereotypes.

I think that teachers or other students, they feel that they have the need to do something disrespectful to us because we're females and we're Black. So, we probably have more anger than anybody else would because we're always disrespected in a way. Or, um, that we just, they don't like us for whatever reason. We have something that they don't or that they won't and that they can't get from us because we're Black. And we always making movements, saying, um, how racist other people, like, white people are and they don't like that, and they feel like they have...to disrespect us just because of that.

Misty labels the anger that Black girls may feel within their academic setting as the result of being constantly disrespected, and that Black girls have a right to be angry and their anger should not be silenced. Misty, like the other girls, also has to do the heavy psychological work of deciphering teachers' intentions and reasons behind their stereotyping Black girls — “We have something that they don't or that they won't and that they can't get from us because we're Black.” Despite having to navigate stereotypes, expectations and existing with attitude, Black girls keep hope alive. The last theme, H.O.P.E., stands for Helping Others Process and Endure, which encapsulates the strengths of Black girls.

H.O.P.E

“Have responsibility and have hope” -Moon Girl

The focus groups were expressive sessions with the scholars where they brought their authentic self and shared from the heart. Though the girls did not all know each other prior to entering these groups, a sense of comradery and community was quickly built. The theme of Helping Others Process and Endure (HOPE) speaks to how the scholars came together to share and connect in story, to understand experiences uniquely their own, and to learn and grow from a collective experience. Help, process, and endure appeared as codes during my coding and peer debriefing process, which helped to shape the creation of this theme. One critical element of HOPE for the girls involved their mothers. Although, mothers were captured in previous themes, I return to their mothers again to emphasize the significance of Black mothers as the critical support for Black girls to process and endure institutional and societal racism and sexism.

Captain Marvel: “My mom won’t give up on me so I won’t give up on me.”

Thunder: “My mama and my auntie deal with a lot but they still standing.”

Lightning: “She [her mom] gives me hope and like encouragement.”

When asked in a focus group what it means to be a Black girl in your community, school, and/or family, Shuri and Ironheart said,

Shuri: “I feel like it’s an honor to be a Black girl in my community.”

Ironheart: “It means everything because all Black women are strong.”

These quotes allude to the love communities can have for Black girls as well as the instilled sense of strength. These strengths come at a price, though, of being labeled as a stereotype or having your experiences minimized, but it’s worth it for the girls when they have a way to express their true self. For example, in an individual interview with Crimson Avenger, she

shared that during her previous school year, "I was like depressed, I wanted to die, like I uh thought about it a lot. I didn't do nothing, but I umm told my friend and she told my teacher and my teacher told me don't talk like that...you're fine". Crimson Avenger was experiencing suicidal ideations and her feelings and experience were minimized. It's unknown whether the educator involved in Crimson Avenger's example was responding from bias associated with stereotypes, but one side of the strong Black woman identity is an intersectional cultural coping style for depression and suicide that increases the risk for suicidality (Green, 2019).

The scholars also shared and discussed the people and pursuits that shape their identities.

Lightning: "My mom because she is kinda the reason I act and look a certain way"

Crimson Avenger: "My mom, music, politics because they help me with certain things"

Shuri: "My family because they teach me important things"

Ironheart: "Music, writing, drawing, singing"

Thunder: "Acting because I can express how I feel"

Storm: "When I'm with my family my real self comes out"

Vixen: "People I'm around because they show me how I need to act around others"

For the young scholars, these factors provide HOPE by providing methods of self-care, creative expression, family, and outlets that help them gain insight into their experience and provide tools such as patience and a counter-narrative to survive school. For example, Captain Marvel's visits to her dad's burial are a form of self-care as well other family supports, and Moon Girl quickly learned healthy self-care by capitalizing on her interest in cooking.

oh I cook when I am mad or like really sad [laughter] I cook whenever because I am happy when I cook and folks don't bother me. Like I don't have to hide like I do at school when I need a break.

Art and sports were also forms of creative expression for many of the young scholars. This ranged from Storm "drawing cartoons characters or like reimagine them to look like me" to

Captain Marvel and Misty's expressiveness through dance and athletics. Shuri's role as the youngest of seven children, influences her value in family — "they're [her family] different, but in a good way...they're supportive, caring, loving, like they got my back".

Misty found HOPE and comfort in outlets that recognize her achievements.

When I was going to school in Hayward we did this thing, I forgot what it was called but it was at Chabot College. And they like had picked all the best African-American students to come...it was probably like a couple hundred of us and we went to Chabot College, and there were thousands of parents and siblings and all that there in um the stands. They called us up one by one and congratulated us for our hard work. It was cool, I was happy...I was seen.

Misty is able to process and endure by receiving positive recognition from others. On that college stage Misty was seen for the young Black scholar she is and not a stereotype. As previously mentioned by Thunder and Lightning, Black girls can get frustrated when all of their hard work and how they present themselves in and outside school is not recognized and made visible. Large-scale opportunities like Misty experienced or small moments of praise in the classroom can help Black girls continue to process and endure the educational system.

HOPE is a theme that the scholars also demonstrated in their focus groups. In a collective group activity to create an I am poem about who they are, the scholars wrote,

I am respectful. I am short. I am known. I am a student. I am smart. I am a musician. I am an artist. I am a singer. I am pretty. I am a Gemini. I am tired. I am nappy headed. I am a lip gloss addict. I am a sneaker head.

The scholars' I am poem speaks to who they are in the group as well as who they are in life across the settings of school, home, and community. To be a Black girl is more than to be Black and female, but until educators understand and recognize two of the core pieces (gender and race) of Black girls' intersectionality then they will not get to know the student, the artist, the lip gloss addict, nor the sneaker head. In my journal I frequently made comments about how

comfortable the girls felt around me and each other. We laughed and yelled and entered into each focus group session as our authentic self. In our last focus group, I wrote the following journal entry, "These queens are dope AF and they helped me process and reflect on my experience when I was their age. In community they helped each other by listening and validating each other's experience. They [Black girls] deal with a lot from school and I hope nothing pushes them out from school...how far can my hope get them?" Looking back on this journal entry now, I feel that educational leaders rely too heavily on young scholars, specifically, Black girls to have hope in a failed system. I believe that hope can get you far in life, but with the support of effective laws and policies Black girls can get further.

Summary of Themes

The young scholars' narratives capture each of the four key themes — with attitude, expectations, navigating and negotiating stereotypes, and HOPE — to reveal the core survival technique in Black girls' educational experience of code switching and countering the dominant school and societal narrative about Blackness and Black females.

In the first theme, with attitude, the young scholars shed light on educators' policing Black girls' attitudes. This theme also challenges the standard definition of attitude to also include feelings and emotions as well as verbal and non-verbal communication skills/styles. The theme of with attitude also becomes the catalyst by which Black girls identify code-switching as a tool for survival. As their narratives transitioned to expectations, the young scholars explain how to navigate expectations and how expectations influence their academic identity development. Specifically, the scholars learned that many educators may expect less from them and view them as simply a label such as troublemaker or view them through the lens of a racist stereotype. The scholars reveal that they have to take initiative around their education and be

proactive in getting their educational needs met, and they also identified family as a critical support during this process. Some expectations presented in this section, though, demonstrate that Black girls are still combating expectations on their own in schools which creates internal conflicts that can hinder Black girls' academic achievement.

The young scholars' narratives also focused on navigating and negotiating stereotypes, which illuminate the reality of Black girls' level of acceptance in schools and society. Code-switching continues to prevail for some Black girls as a survival tool in school to combat stereotypes, while others take a different stance by countering the narratives of racial stereotypes. The young scholars argue that how they present themselves is an essential coping mechanism to challenge stereotypes and they learn this code switching talent from their mothers. In this theme, the scholars bring attention to the emotional and psychological energy it takes to code switch, to combat stereotypes, and to hide or mask one's authentic self to avoid being questioned or judged due to racist and/or sexist stereotypes.

The young scholars' narratives also indicate the significance of HOPE and what they need from educators and society to help them process and endure through their educational journey. These Black girls are asking for recognition for their work and to be seen as more than a stereotype. Their narratives reveal that they have tools to help them continue to be young strong Black women, but these tools come at a price to their educational attainment, academic identity, and mental health. For instance, Crimson Avenger's suicidal ideation was not responded to effectively and as a result Crimson Avenger learned that she is not allowed to be depressed and that society does not recognize her mental health needs because it is not in alignment with stereotypes.

Collectively, the four themes captured in the young scholars' narratives show teachers, educational leaders, and policymakers that constantly code switching is tiring, having to make oneself small in order to succeed in school is tiring, dealing with racism and sexism is tiring, and not being able to tell someone about these oppressive structures and processes without being labeled by a stereotype is tiring. Stereotypes, then, negatively impact Black girls' social inclusion and academic identity formation and depending how educators, family members and/or communities respond to Black girls, they negotiate their identity to appease or subdue them, and in some cases, they have to liberate themselves from burdensome stereotypes.

Chapter 5

Why is being listened to healing? Listening creates relationship. Our natural state is to be together...Everybody has a story, and everybody wants to tell their story. — Margaret Wheatley

Because that child will suffer and that's what can most affect me. The little girl I met this past summer said, "Don't forget me". I won't forget you, how could I with all you went through? A bullet hit yo' cousin in temple while he was with you and while you was talkin', I was tearin' up, where's the tissue? If you was my sister, then I would kiss you and tell you that I'm sorry for the pain you had to live through. I know I'm blessed because yo' stress is realer than anything I done been through. — Window Pain, by J. Cole

I start with this lyric to situate readers in my experience unpacking the Black girls' experiences as it addressed my research questions. This chapter takes a different approach because I wish to honor the process of unpacking this research as well as remind audiences that this experience is not sterile — the narratives captured here are a mere whisper to the reality of Black girls. I am stepping away from the rigid (Eurocentric, patriarchal) guidelines of many dissertations and research, and creating a closing chapter that collaborates with the broader audience of Black females to co-create an open-letter using imagery, video, and audio that complements and extends this chapter. I begin this chapter with a personal reflection, followed by a summary of findings and then provide implications and recommendations for further research. I also include a video co-created with the help of several Black women that captures key pieces of this project's themes and connections with my recommendations for educators, educational leaders, and policymakers. The video is also framed as an open letter to Black girls as they wait for positive change to happen in their educational system. This open letter is for Black girls and also for their educators who can benefit from watching and listening to the content shared in the video letter. However, cultural references and statements are included in the video that some educators and policy makers may not understand. I do not define these cultural references and statements because it is the responsibility of educators and policy makers to take

the necessary steps to educate themselves. This open letter is designed and constructed as a tool to disrupt oppressive patterns that occur as a result of institutional whiteness and institutional racism. I center this open letter to Black girls because, as mentioned in the letter to the system that opened this dissertation, this research is for them. Black girl magic exists, I have witnessed these young scholars' magic and I hope future researchers will take the time to strengthen and cultivate their magic before Black girls are pushed out of the US educational system.

Summary of Findings

I found the narratives of these 10 Black girls to be powerful and insightful. As a whole their collective narratives addressed all three of the research questions. Research question one sought to understand the role of schools and teachers in accepting and/or rejecting Black femininity and supporting the academic identity development of Black girls. The findings suggest that a part of Black femininity is attitude and attitude is not simply an emotion but the way you walk, talk, dress, behave, laugh, and simply exist In academic spaces. Black femininity is "just loud" and " just present[ing] yourself way better". The findings show that Black girls' identities in schools continue to be frequently diminished by racist and sexist stereotypes, confronted with low and negative expectations, and erased from academic recognition due to anti-blackness and negative labels regarding their identity as Black and female. This is in accordance with relational dynamics between educators and students, and the attitudes and expectations that are conveyed through these relational interactions that suggest that educators have low expectations academically and high expectations behaviorally of Black girls (Carter Andrews, Brown, Castro, & Id-Deen, 2019). This indicates that educators are hypervigilant about how Black girls are behaving in school, but that hypervigilance does not focus on how Black girls perform academically (i.e. low academic expectations). Moreover, my findings show

that teachers not only reject Black femininity, they shame it. For instance, Thunder and Lightning share their desire to be recognized for their daily hustle and grind and not being labeled as a class clown or when Crimson Avenger spoke out against racist remarks made in the classroom she was shamed for her outspoken nature. The display of public shaming experienced by some of the young scholars continues an historical line of racism from the public lynching and whipping of Black bodies that occurred during the slavery on through the late 1960s. Public lynching and whipping were methods of control and power as well as a direct message to all other Black bodies to stay in line and that Black bodies are not free from punishment. I use the term Black bodies instead of Black people because Black people were viewed and in some contexts, still are viewed as less than human.

Black girls want as Misty says, “to learn and be free,” but they are blocked by educators because as Crimson Avenger also notes, ‘they [educators] aren’t allowed to see me as a Black girl’. Black girls want to be seen and recognized for their positive accomplishments, but too often feel invisible from everything except physical expulsion, exclusion, and shame for their language and attitude, suicidal ideations, and punishment. All of the aforementioned factors address research question one, yet Black girls are determined to support their own Black femininity and that of their peers in schools, which may pose a challenge to educators in that Black femininity will not be erased. Educational leaders, then, must learn to see, find, and support the strength in Black femininity and begin to perceive it differently.

Research question two sought to identify and explore the strengths of Black femininity as a strategic tool for the girls’ academic success and as a protective shield for the young scholars to confront gender and race-based oppression in schools. The young scholars spoke to their ability to code switch as they are forced to navigate varying expectations as well as rewrite and counter

the dominant narratives intended to demonize or other them. For example, when Vixen said, "I know how I talk and I don't think it's bad, but it may be a big problem to somebody else," she is introducing others into her reality of double consciousness. Vixen has to assess how she speaks and assess how others may perceive how she speaks. My findings also illustrate that the enforcement and expectation of compliance in the face of blatant racism detracts and hinders social inclusion and access to academic knowledge and support for Black girls. Black girls like Ironheart learn to come to a level of acceptance of what their schools are academically and financially capable of doing for them, which in some cases is "nothing, just leave me alone". Black girls like Shuri, who attended a better funded school, know what they need academically such as "tutoring" and they are just waiting for educators to ask them what they need. Yet the young scholars also learn to recognize that their strong sense of academic identity to keep moving forward is attributed to their family involvement and support. Their families, especially their mothers, understand that Black girls need to learn how to learn in a hostile environment; an expectation that other students do not face, and some of my findings show that Black girls must confront this burden even more than Black boys.

These young Black female scholars reveal an incredible sense of initiative and strength and resourcefulness to rely on resources where as other students benefit from the resources that are provided for them in schools. Scholars like Shuri are doing double or triple the work of learning how to do school and also learning the content. The findings suggest that compassion, a willingness to push the scholar to achieve, opportunities for 1:1 support like tutoring, as well as spaces where Black girls can support to complete work without conflict with educators are some resources and supports from community and family and others that Black girls rely on to make up for what is lacking in schools. Black girls' caregivers and families provide emotional support,

expectations to do well academically, tools to survive racist and sexist stereotypes, and provide spaces where code switching is not necessary. As the young scholars in this study realize, family "gives me courage and makes me feel brave", they "always got your back", and they "push me to do better". Henkel (2005) suggests that having a space that allows for critical self-reflection about what is good or bad, important or trivial is essential to identity development. The young Black scholars valued community with family or friends or in a large-scale community-based recognition. Even with family support, the girls also understand that Black femininity requires Black females to critically self-reflect as they navigate the world. Yet, every Black girl is not like Misty who can proudly say, "I tell em I'm not ghetto, I'm just loud". Critical self-reflection is an important process that takes time before every Black girl can learn how to counter the dominant narrative of stereotypes every time someone tries to label them or judge them unfairly. For example, Vixen covert code-switching lessons with her dad taught her how to speak "professional" as well as love her language and communication skills without judgment, but with laughter and love. Moreover, not every Black girl is like Storm who was taught to recognize stereotypes as well as to behave, speak, and act in a manner that disaffirms potential stereotypes. These Black girls learn that they cannot present themselves as "wild" to combat the Black female stereotypes of the jezebel, ratchet, ghetto or any other stereotype that impacts the lived experience of Black females.

Last, research question three sought to assess and evaluate how Black girls communicate and represent themselves socially, culturally, and academically on their own and with peers and families and other caring adults. The scholars revealed that they code-switch sometimes, and they also have supportive peers and adults in their lives who value them unconditionally. For example, Shuri shared that her friends are "just people I can talk to and they understand me, stuff

I go through". It is important for Black girls to have support systems. I still sit with Ironheart's question, "Don't you get tired of, you know, think bout' other people's feeling about you?" I have come to a point in my life where code-switching is second nature, and even when I do not have access to safe spaces or people that do not require me to code-switch I have learned to deal with it by keeping my head up and putting all that I cannot change in God's hand. However, Black girls should not have to deal with survival tactics like code switching as they negotiate academic identity formation with teachers, mentors, peers, and family members. Educators and society should do more to evaluate how they communicate and respond to Black girls' communication skills and appearance.

In understanding the role of schools and teachers in accepting and/or rejecting Black femininity and supporting the academic identity development of Black girls these young Black female scholars assert that they are doing the work for themselves to succeed academically. These young Black female scholars are doing this by working to their strength such as their communication skills or hard work ethic. By identifying and exploring the strengths of Black femininity as a strategic tool for academic success and a protective shield and support when dealing with gender and race-based stereotypes and oppression, these scholars revealed that they built community with their friends and family and select teachers (when available), to help them process and endure. Black girls communicate and represent themselves socially, culturally, and academically with a natural attitude that is unique to every Black female. This attitude shapes communication and self-representation because it is a result of their duality and double consciousness.

Based on all the themes, in relation to the research question one, it is suggested that some Black girls may grow to be jaded by the school system that hurts them and others may learn get

their needs met wherever they can. All this shapes their strong sense of academic identity, however that strength can weaken if educational leaders continue to rely on perseverance and resilience for Black girls to achieve and succeed academically. Black girls exist with attitude and endless expectations, all while learning how to navigate and negotiate school as well as the world around them. The third theme, navigating and negotiating stereotypes, address research question three, as well as provides greater insight into Black girls' experience in school. These stereotypes discussed by the young scholars are examples of the many negative connotations that they must navigate and negotiate between on a regular basis. The presented narratives illustrate the maintenance of the angry Black woman, jezebel, and sapphire motifs.

The main themes, with attitude, expectations, navigating and negotiating stereotypes, and HOPE addressed my three main research questions. The first theme, with attitude reveals that Black girls are experiencing pushout practices that is shaped by their attitude or communication with adults. Crimson Avenger, Vixen, and Ironheart spoke heavily about how their engagement with educators was meet with discipline due to their attitude. The second theme, expectations, and the third theme, navigating and negotiating stereotypes, illustrate the need for current and new teachers, principals and administrators, as well as policymakers to collaborate on increasing the academic expectations of Black female students as well as addressing the impact of stereotypes in curriculum, praxis, and policy. Moreover, the second theme, expectations, reveals that Black girls' academic experience is impacted by some educators who have low academic expectations for them, so they have to the build upon natural supports from family and friends. These scholars' narratives reveal that educators' expectations of them are heavily influenced by stereotypes. The third theme, navigating and negotiating stereotypes, expands upon the influence of expectations to reveal that Black girls navigate and negotiate stereotypes differently.

Specifically, the theme navigating and negotiating stereotypes illustrates that stereotypes negatively impact how Black girls present themselves across all settings (home, school, community) and how Black girls understand and process their double consciousness as well as double standards held by educators and society. Lastly, the fourth theme, HOPE, reveals that Black girls process and endure in school because they have peer support, family, and Black female role models like their mother who provides them with spaces where they can be their authentic self as well as supports them in their personal and academic development.

Personal Reflections

This research process was hard not for me because it was a lot to do, but because it was a lot of trauma to hold. I never anticipated that as a researcher I would experience vicarious trauma by listening to my participants' stories. I empathized with these girls because I have known their experience and it hurts to know that it remains a hidden problem. I believe that as a Black female, my data collection and analysis processes were richer than someone without the cultural connection and identity and professional knowledge about bias and stereotypes. This belief was shaped around how the girls responded to me, as there was a natural rapport that quickly arose between myself and each participant. Perhaps it was because we all identified as Black and female or because I do not appear my age and/or that I offered to listen and allowed them to control the time and space that they'd speak in. These confounding variables as well as how I co-created community in the focus groups and individual interviews shaped my experience as well as the young scholars experience in this study. As a Black woman and scholar, I resonated deeply with each theme and have my own story for each as well. I chose to name the first theme with attitude because there was some much, yet so little, that Black girls cannot do with attitude, which the scholars shared about in their narratives.

Attitude is a point of view and privilege and right that Black girls are not afforded because of their positionality as Black and female. Additionally, the expectations for failure and success that heavily influenced the scholars' stories begs the question, are Black girls enough? Misty's stories allude to the narrative that she is enough, though. Yet, so few Black females can claim the positive affirmation that I am enough; this statement and affirmation is connected to and weighted in Black girls' self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-awareness. Black girls are enough, yet cannot boast it in schools for various reasons ranging from their internal conflict associated with code switching to navigating others' perceptions of them. The reasons for this may vary, but as a Black female I too rarely boast I am enough because there's an expectation that I can be better and I can do more. I struggle with accepting the positive affirmation, I am enough, despite my accolades and experience because I am constantly being challenged about my merit or Blackness as well as my status as a woman. Stereotypes exist and they impact academic identity development and social inclusion in schools and students' overall feelings of self-worth. As a doctoral candidate, I too have experienced micro aggressions from the professors positioned to teach me about equity and education. Consequently, like Ironheart, I disengaged from some courses because I did not have the energy to code switch. Instead I paid attention to relational dynamics between the professor and the class as well as the professor's communication style (word choice, pitch, intonation, gesture, etc.), and, based on my interpretation of this information, I decided how much I would engage or communicate when necessary.

To know that even at one of the highest levels of education I am still under attack reminds me that I cannot remove my superhero mask and façade; I must continue to exist within my double consciousness. I must continue to code switch and try that much harder if I am not to

be another statistic or an exception to the rule of Black stereotypes. The young scholars however taught me HOPE, and that if you have someone who is willing to Help You Process and Endure, Black females may thrive. Currently, the U.S. educational system continues to fail to offer HOPE because Black girls continue to be invisible in research, policy, and praxis; handfuls of scholars like Monique Morris and policymakers like Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley recognize and acknowledge that Black girls are slowly and silently being pushed out of the educational system. The magic (beauty, power and resilience) of the young scholars in my research showed me that despite their encounters with racism and stereotypes and classroom conflict, they have taken the initiative to learn what they have to do to survive the United States P-12 system, leaning on peers and family members and trusted educators. Unfortunately for some, though, this has meant silencing themselves, code-switching their existence as Black and female, and/or constantly critiquing critics who attack their character. For example, when Thunder voiced her frustration about educators not recognizing her hustle, she said, "I think they expect us not to give our all or to actually try, they take us to be their class clown...". Thunder is trying not to be silenced and trying her best academically as she tries to disaffirm the label of "class clown" for herself and other Black girls. But even when Black girls like Thunder try to avoid being silenced by molding themselves to fit the subjective mold of a good student, they are still not recognized for their efforts or achievements.

As I reflect on the superhero pseudonyms of the scholars, I wish for each girl's strength that they hide inside to be captured on the outside; I wanted people to see the hero who lives inside every Black female. I found solace and escape as a child in superhero comics and as an adult I continue to find comfort in them. I have learned that every time a Black female no matter how old or young dies spiritually, emotionally, or physically in the hands of institutional

oppression, racism, and sexism, society does not seem to notice or lend a helping hand.

Moreover, Black girls like superheroes must hide their true identities from the world. It was in an X-Men comic that I found my first Black superhero, Storm, an African goddess to be revered until the day Professor X attempted to rewrite her narrative by telling her that she was a mutant, not a goddess, and that by coming to America to join the X-Men, she would not be welcomed in society as she was in Africa. Storm went on to become the most well-known Black superhero as well female superhero, and became the first female and first Black female leader of the X-Men. Although Storm is not a real person, her strength lives on in the hearts of many Black girls. Many Black females encapsulate this superhero strength and demeanor to the world around them as they fight for their education, for their identity, and for acceptance of their Black femininity in school. To be a superhero is emotionally tiring, but like many Black females, they would never wish for anything else.

Implications

This research centered solely on Black girls so their input and voice could speak to their academic experiences, talents, and needs. In this section, I focus on how my research can support preservice preparation and training for teachers, and leadership training for principal and administrators to improve in service professional development and school discipline policies to transform school structures and strategies for understanding and supporting the educational achievement of Black girls. I highlight the following six implications: (1) increasing awareness of stereotypes and bias, (2) integrating history and knowledge of racial and sexist stereotypes about Black girls and women inside schools and out of schools, (3) integrating equitable participation strategies, (4) selecting literature that is culturally responsive for Black girls, (5) helping future teachers understand how they can connect improve communication and

connection with families, and (6) integrating the importance of critical reflection in praxis for all educational leaders.

Teacher Education, Preparation and Trainings

My research findings illustrate how stereotypes about Black women and girls created over 400 years ago are still maintained today and thriving in the US educational system. All teachers regardless of tenure-status, age, race/ethnicity, and gender should learn about the history of these stereotypes and how they are maintained in society and schools. Teacher education, preparation, and training should teach educators that shaming students is not the best way to nourish positive and strong academic identities. More specifically, integration of equitable participation strategies such as think-pair-share can help future and current teachers learn how to acknowledge and support the academic talents of Black girls in classrooms. Furthermore, teacher, education, preparation and training must provide teachers with the tools necessary to critically self-reflect on their power and privilege as educators responsible for teaching Black girls. Trainings around "being extra" can be implemented to teach educators that Black girls want to be challenged academically as well as respected as students, but the approach that teachers use to engaging with Black girls must honor their intersectionality. In honoring Black girls' intersectionality, future and current educators in partnership with principals and administrators must integrate access to literature in the classroom, school library, as well as curriculum that is culturally responsive for Black girls.

Lastly, Black girls need less judgment from educators, so it's essential that teachers learn about the importance of critical judgment while earning their credential, infuse critical judgment into their daily teaching practices, and attend trainings that support their life long development in exercising critical judgment. Critical judgment is important when using a racial equity lens.

Critical judgment is "the process of separating the essential from the non-essential, distilling any number of decisions into those best matched to our desired outcome or vision" (National Equity Project, 2020, p. 18). Critical judgment implies that educators should disrupt the status quo. This is beneficial to supporting Black girls because it forces educators to take responsibility by seeking to embody key principles such as taking responsibility for what out of their direct control (structural racism, systemic oppression, and all forms for bias) and engaging in a cycle of action and reflection to learn from successes and failures (National Equity Project, 2020). Critical judgment can be used in combination with bias training such as the Harvard Implicit Association Test (Harvard IAT) to support leadership in increasing their awareness of stereotypes and bias.

Leadership Training for Principals and Administrators

Before discussing implications for leadership training, it is important to note that educational leaders should not expect Black girls to code switch and change who they are to fit the status quo. Black girls should not be judged against a standard of femininity that views their existence as less than. Due to the silent pushout of Black girls currently impacting the P-12 system, principals and administrators need an increased level of awareness of the history and knowledge of racial and sexist stereotypes about Black girls and women in and out of schools, so that they can work actively to decrease the likelihood of racial and sexist stereotypes negatively influencing praxis and school policies. Moreover, as I consider leadership training, my positionality as a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) and my research suggests that teachers are mirroring the behavior of principals in regards to how they treat and communicate to Black girls, and teachers are perhaps not properly supported in how to respond to trauma and mental health as noted especially in *Crimson Avenger* and *Shuri's* narratives.

As an LCSW, I would assert that the leadership training would need to provide psychoeducation around the impact of maladaptive schemas and stereotypes on students' identity development as well as discuss the significance of positive praise. Equitable access to mental health support within the school setting is also essential for improving the mental health needs of Black girls. However, for this to be a reality, principals and administrators must create a school climate that normalizes instead of stigmatizes mental health. This will ensure that when a Black female student reports depressive symptoms or suicidal ideations, their experience is not minimized or masked with a stereotype, but properly addressed and supported. Principals need to learn to model the behavior that they want to see from teachers, so that they can collaboratively address Black girls' academic needs. Principals and administrators alongside teachers should be engaging in meaningful, critical race and gender reflection as an ongoing process to support the learning of educators and the P-12 journey of quality improvement from an equity lens.

More specifically, leadership training should support principals in co-creating a school climate conducive to Black girls' learning needs by addressing the needs that my young scholars identified:

- 1) increasing the value and lessons on Black history across all subjects
- 2) take time to get to know Black girls and accept that "we're different"
- 3) acknowledge, explore, and address implicit bias about Black girls so Black girls do not feel like they have to cater and accommodate "adults who don't get me"
- 4) "Check-ins" ask Black girls about how they are really doing and if they need help or resources

5) develop spaces that allow time for educators, principals, and Black girls to build positive relationships “take time to understand us”

6) challenge yourself as educational leaders to assess whether an assumption made about a Black girl is in alignment with her developmental stage, chronological age, and normative student behavior “acknowledge that we students and sometimes this is just how we act”

7) ask Black girls what they need “by asking us questions”

More specifically, by increasing the value of lessons on Black history across all subjects, leadership and educators would be teaching scholars that Black history is US/American history and Black people have made significant contributions to multiple fields of education. If educational leaders and educators take time to get to know Black girls for who they are, as unique individuals not rooted in stereotypes then they may be able to acknowledge that our educational system is not built with Black girls in mind. Furthermore, as my young Black female scholars stress the need for leadership to acknowledge, explore, and address implicit bias, it is essential for educational leadership praxis to address systemic oppression manifest in the individual (unconscious mental model), the interpersonal (interactions and discourse), institutional (school’s norms, policies, and practices), and structural (macro relationship) (National Equity Project, 2020).

Leadership is encouraged to initiate check-ins, ask Black girls what they need to be successful, as well as host spaces to build principal-student connections and relationships. This would also help to build positive communication between the school and the student’s family. Additionally, it would create behaviors and skills for current and future teachers to model as they

learn how to connect with the families in support systems for Black girls. Educational leaders can further investigate Black girls' needs and take immediate action steps to provide them with an equitable educational experience. As a LCSW, this research can be used in praxis to empathize with Black girls and the potential toll of their intersectionality on their lived experiences in and outside of school. Principals and administrators as well as other educational leaders can take this research and use it as a foundation to review the school climate and classroom climate to decrease as well as eliminate the hostile learning environments that Black girls endure.

Discipline Policies

A thorough critique, review, and evaluation of discipline practices and policies is essential for current and new teachers, principals and administrators, as well as policymakers because Black girls are being impacted by subjective and exclusionary disciplinary practices and policies. Black girls should actively be involved in the review process of discipline practices and policies by using approaches such as youth participatory action research. This research can be used as a basis to begin exploring classroom, school, and district level discipline practices by promoting and requiring educational leaders to critically reflect and address how they maintain double standards for students. Specifically, educational leaders should address the subjective level of site discipline policies. The young scholars' narratives spoke to how they punished for having attitude and how in some cases were provoked into responding to authority figures. Wun (2014) reminds educational leaders that subjective policies have contributed to Black girls as more likely to be disciplined for disruption, profanity, and defiance. Furthermore, educational leaders and policymakers can utilize this as a push and reminder that Black girls need the current bill, P.U.S.H.O.U.T., to be approved and signed into law so Black girls can gain some legal

protections that will decrease the likelihood of them being pushed out of the P12 system.

Ironheart, Vixen, and Crimson Avenger narratives connected heavily with the reality of pushout practices from shaming via public classroom humiliation to being berated and attacked by subjective discipline policies for attitude. Pushout extends beyond these scholars and impacts Black girls' academic experience, yet it is not making headlines, which contributes to the invisibility of the Black girl experience. For example, on September 19, 2019, Kaia Rolle a 6 year old Black girl from Florida was arrested and placed in zip tie handcuffs for having a tantrum at school; in October 2015 a Black female high school student from South Carolina was physically flipped out of her desk in class by the SRO and arrested for disturbing school; in 2013, three Black female middle school students from California were arrested with cause because the school wanted to teach them a lesson about complaining about bullies; in Palmdale, California a 15 year old was arrested and later expelled from school for littering after some cake fell from her tray while in the lunchroom. These examples are reminders of the failures in the current discipline policies and practices as well as to reinforce this dissertation's narratives that discuss experiences and/or impacts of pushout. Lastly, Black girls need protections in school discipline because California Education Code § 35183(b), California Education Code § 220, California Education Code §§ 35183(a)(5),(b), and California Education Code § 35183(d) only ensure that schools cannot discriminate against students based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Teachers, principals and administrators, as well as policymakers need to work in collaboration to ensure these protections are not violated in school/district policies, which contributes to problematic policies that harm students and impact Black girls' academic success.

Conclusion

If we shadows have offended, think but this, and all is mended, That you have but slumber'd here while these visions did appear. And this weak and idle theme, no more yielding but a dream, gentles, do not reprehend: if you pardon, we will mend: and, as I am an honest Puck, if we have unearned luck now to 'scape the serpent's tongue, we will make amends ere long; else the Puck a liar call; so, good night unto you all. give me your hands, if we be friends, and robin shall restore amends. — Puck, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

I have chosen to end my dissertation in a similar way I started, with a video letter. As mentioned previously this co-created video letter is for Black girls with some direct and indirect messages to the system (educational system, system of oppression, etc.). I open the video letter by saying, "Dear Black girls and System, I hope you're listening" as a reminder to audiences that this research is to support Black girls in getting their rightful academic needs met as well as to let Black girls know that their pushout is not invisible to everyone. The Black women who helped co-create this video letter vary in age, occupation, belief systems, and educational attainment; each of these women taught me what it means to live and exist in this body as a Black female and Black female scholar and researcher. The letter provides additional recommendations and implications for Black girls as well as brief considerations for educational leaders and policymakers. I elected to collaborate on this open letter because the stories that the young superheroes portrayed in this dissertation and shared with me were not new; other Black females and I have and continue to experience their oppression in educational settings. Their narratives remind me that history repeats itself and it's time to end the oppressive experiences of Black girls in the P-12 system. Perhaps if educational institutions stop oppressing Black girls they would no longer be pushed out and their high school graduation rates as well as college acceptance and graduation rates will increase. The co-created open-letter ends with a picture of my granny and her voice as a symbol of matriarchy and a reminder that the conversation about Black girls' educational experience is far from over.

This letter is intended to be a tool to help Black females process and critically reflect upon their intersectionality as Black and female. The letter centers on the P-12 system experience of Black females from the perspective of adult (age 18+) Black females, and is designed for Black girls to connect in spaces like after-school programs or youth community spaces that support Black identity and Black femininity. I intend this letter to promote conversation amongst Black girls and Black females by using a five-part reflection process (Appendix E). Part one focuses on the scholars exploring their immediate thoughts about what it means for them to be a Black girl. Part two involves the scholars' reactions and critique to the letter, which is followed by part three that builds on each scholar's takeaways from the letter. Part four involves identifying strengths of being a Black female and Black femininity. Lastly, part five provides prompts to help initiate a plan to support the group as a whole participate in helping each other process and endure (HOPE). As educational leaders in schools and the community access this tool to support Black girls, it is important that they, educational leaders, note that if the tone, pitch, diction, and rhetoric presented in this video letter do not align with your perceptions or understanding of Black girls and their academic needs and talents, please take the time to unpack the meaning of the terminology and cultural references. However, Solange put it best, "Don't feel bad if you can't sing along. Just be glad you got the whole wide world. This us. This shit is from us. Some shit you can't touch."

My research reveals that although Black femininity is perceived in schools as a deficit, it is a strength. Black girls develop a strong sense of academic identity by taking initiative and adopting survival and coping mechanisms to aid their navigation of their educational and social climate, and with the support of certain teachers, mentors, peers, and family members they also engage in critical self-reflection, turning their double consciousness into a supportive tool for

self-actualization and achievement. As educational leaders, caregivers, community leaders and society learn to see and embrace Black girls' I am reminded of my granny's prayer, "Angels are in camp around and about me no evil shall befall me and no plague come down my dwelling." This is the prayer that my granny, Ruthie Brown, taught me and made me say every morning before leaving for school. It was not until middle school that I questioned my granny about why I had to say the prayer. I recall her telling me that it was her way of keeping me safe from everyone and everything that would do me harm because there were people who were going to try to tear me down. My granny knew that institutional and structural oppression for a Black female was hard and my research continues to remind scholars, educational leaders and policymakers of the impact of institutional and structural oppression on Black girls. In 2013, CaShawn Thompson popularized the term "Black girl magic" to show the world and remind Black girls and women that Black females to make themselves visible for ourselves and for others, and that Black girls and women want the world to know this is who we are and how we have always been. I partially titled my research "(In)Visible Magic" as a reminder to Black scholars and Black girls that I see them, which is what the young 10 Black scholars want from educators — to be seen and "to learn and be free." This is their story, and I hope you see their magic.

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Appendix A

San Francisco State University
Informed Consent to Participate in Research

(In)Visible Magic: Narratives of Black Girls Experience Developing and Negotiating their Academic Identity

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The purpose of this research is to identify factors that influence academic identity development for Black girls in schools. Specifically, this study seeks to understand what Black girls need to be successful in their school setting as well as the barriers that limit academic success.

The researcher, Lee Porscha M. Moore, is a graduate student at San Francisco State University *conducting research for a doctoral degree in SFSU Educational Leadership department*. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a student in Oakland's Freedom School.

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this research, the following will occur:

- you will be interviewed for approximately thirty to sixty minutes about three times.
- the interview will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy in reporting your statements.
- the interview will take place in the afternoon at your Oakland Freedom School site.
- the researcher may contact you later to clarify your interview answers and/or focus group answers for approximately fifteen within *one month of the interview*.
- You will also be interviewed in a group (focus groups) 3x for approximately 45 minutes to 90 minutes.
- The group/focus group will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy in reporting your statements.
- Interviews/focus groups time will include optional activities (collage, photos, poetry, video, etc). No more than one – two activities per meeting. Activities are approximately 15-45 minutes long.
- total time commitment will be no longer than four hours and thirty minutes.

C. RISKS

There is a risk of loss of privacy. However, no names or identities will be used in any published reports of the research. Only the researcher will have access to the research data. There is a risk of discomfort or anxiety due to the nature of the questions asked; however, the participant can answer only those questions he/she chooses to answer, and can stop participation in the research at any time. Also, because the focus groups include discussion of personal opinions, extra measures will be taken to protect each participant's privacy. The researcher will begin the focus group by asking the participants to agree to the importance of keeping information discussed in the focus group confidential. The researcher will then ask each participant to verbally agree to keep everything discussed in the room confidential, and will remind them at the end of the research period not to discuss the material outside.

Only the researcher and faculty advisor will have access to the data collected. Any tapes and transcripts of the focus group or individual interviews will be destroyed after one year or at the end of the study (no later than Saturday May 30, 2020).

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

The research data will be kept in a secure location and only the researcher will have access to the data. All research data will be stored in an encrypted document on a password protected computer. Audio will b

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San Francisco State University
Institutional Review Board

Approval Date 05/22/2019

Expiration Date 05/21/2020

Protocol No. 119-06

(415) 338-1093

destroyed at the end of the study. Audio recording will be saved until the study is completed, and all audio recordings will be deleted by Saturday May 30, 2020. The one video activity, which is optional, is password protected on a locked computer. The video will be destroyed no later than Saturday May 30, 2020. All research data will be stored in a device with full disk encryption and password-protection. All data will be kept in Professor Daniel Meier's office at San Francisco State University. Only the researcher and my faculty advisor will have access to the data.

E. DIRECT BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefits to the participant.

F. COSTS

There will be no cost to you for participating in this research.

G. COMPENSATION

There will be no compensation for participating in this research.

H. ALTERNATIVES

The alternative is not to participate in the research.

I. QUESTIONS

You have spoken with the researcher about this study and have had your questions answered. If you have any further questions about the study, you may contact the researcher by email at leeporschamoore@csueastbay.edu or you may contact the researcher's advisor, Professor Daniel Meier at dmeier@sfsu.edu.

Questions about your rights as a study participant, or comments or complaints about the study, may also be addressed to the Human and Animal Protections at 415: 338-1093 or protocol@sfsu.edu.

J. CONSENT

You have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to participate in this research, or to withdraw your participation at any point, without penalty. Your decision whether or not to participate in this research will have no influence on your present or future status at Oakland Freedom School.

_____ initial here if you chose to opt out of audio recordings

_____ initial here if you chose to opt out of video recording

Signature _____ Date: _____
Research Participant

Signature _____ Date: _____
Researcher

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Appendix B

Interview questions

Interview will be conducted in 3-parts and questions orders will vary for each part. Students will be provided a printed list of interview questions during each interview. Each interview will be 45min to 1-hour.

Focused Life History Demographic Information

1. How old are you?
2. How would you describe yourself?
3. What grade are you in?
4. Where are you originally from?
5. How do you identify racially?
6. Tell me about your family. How would you describe them?
7. Do you have siblings?
8. How would you describe the role you play in your family?
9. Tell me about your neighborhood.
10. Who is your role model or someone you look up to?
 - a. Describe them
11. What are your passions, interests, etc.

The Details of Experience

1. What does a typical school day look like for you?
2. What is your earliest memory in school?
3. What is one of your most memorable POSITIVE? experiences in school?
4. What experiences have you had that influenced how you see yourself as a student.
5. How have your experiences in school changed across elementary, middle and high school?
6. Do you feel race and gender influence your experiences in school?
7. Do you believe your race/racial identity impacts how community members and school personnel view you as a student?
8. What is your best class in school? Tell me about it.
9. What class challenges you the most in school? Tell me about it.
10. Tell me about the opportunities you have had to show your strengths in school.
11. In our previous interview you mentioned _____, tell me more about that.
What made _____ important?
12. Is there a specific teacher in your school career whom you feel understood and supported you?
 - a. Who are the groups of people or individuals who support you most in your academic career?
13. Do you feel that you are encouraged to speak up in class discussions
14. What strategies do you use to seek teacher clarification and direction, etc?
15. Do you face any challenges as a Black scholar in your school? If so, what are they?

- a. Do you believe you're overcoming these challenges? If so, how?
16. What reactions do you get from peers in school and peers in the community regarding your academic achievement?

Reflection on Meaning

1. How do you feel about being a high school/middle school student? What does it mean to you?
2. How does the memory of your school experiences impact how you see yourself as a student?
3. What does it mean to be a high school/middle school student?
4. What does the concept of scholar mean to you?
5. How have your previous experiences influenced how you understand scholarship?
6. When you look back on your school experiences, what are you most proud of learning?
7. What are your future plans after high school?
8. Do you act or behave the same way in school as you do outside of school (language, actions) why or why not?
9. What skills or characteristics do you believe you have that help you achieve in school?
10. In our previous interview you mentioned _____, tell me more about that. What made _____ important?

Appendix C

Focus Group Questions

2-3 Focus groups will be held and will be 45min to an hour long.

1. How would you define race?
2. What have you learned about race in school?
 - a. What have you learned about the value of your race and gender from school?
3. How do you think that race & gender matters in the ways that students are treated in your school?
 - a. What role do your teachers play in what happens to students of different races or ethnicities?
 - b. What role do you think other students have in what happens?
4. What have you heard about race from your family? What did they say? Who told you?
 - a. What do you believe?
 - b. What other things have you learned about race that you didn't learn from your family?
 - c. Where did you learn those things?
5. What do you think that society expects of a student who looks like you or comes from your ethnic/racial and gender background?
6. How do you think that your race or ethnicity will make a difference in whether or not you reach your SCHOOL AND LIFE? goals?
 - a. How might your ethnic background be helpful or not so helpful in reaching your goals? (Depending on student's answer, prompt)
 - i. How have you learned about this? Did somebody talk to you about that?
7. Do you think that your experiences in school are most affected by your race or your gender? Or both?
8. What are the advantages of being a Black girl?

Appendix D

Activities

Activities may occur in individual interviews and focus groups as a means to help students communicate their narratives in other ways

Activity option #1

- Draw a picture of your family. In your picture in consider adding elements of how your family views you at school
- **Direction/Verbal Prompt for interviewer:** Can you draw a picture of your family? How do you think your family views your school? Can you draw a picture of your family at your school? Explain to me what your family is doing at your school?

Activity option #2

- Draw a picture of how you think your teacher sees you
- **Direction/Verbal Prompt for interviewer:** Think about your teacher, it can be your favorite teacher, worst teacher, a former teacher or your OFS teacher. How do you think your teacher sees you as a student scholar? Draw a picture of yourself, but draw it how you think your teacher sees you as a scholar and your academic abilities

Activity option #3

- Make a collage of pictures of people you view as role models for you in school
- **Direction/Verbal Prompt for interviewer:** Feel free to look thru these magazines and cut out pictures of people you view as role models for you in school, social, and/or in life. Glue the pictures to the board and feel free to decorate it in any way you wish. Let me know if you need me to print an image from the internet.

Activity option #4

- I am...Poem—Have students think about who they, how they see themselves in the world and school, how they hope to be seen in socially and academically, and how other people see them

Direction/Verbal Prompt for interviewer: On the paper provided you're going to write who you're and/or are not starting each line with the statement "I am". Then pick 1 or 2 I am statements you have on your paper that best describes what makes you magical. Decorate a board with your statement(s) and lastly take a picture with your sign.

SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY
Assent to Participate in a Research Study
(In)Visible Magic: Narratives of Black Girls Experience Developing and
Negotiating their Academic Identity

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

My name is Lee Porscha Moore. I am a graduate student at San Francisco State University and I am conducting a research study about how Black girls navigate their academic environments and form their academic identity. I am inviting you to take part in the research because you are a student in Oakland Freedom School.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this research study, the following will occur:

- you will be interviewed about your academic experience as well as racial and gender identity for approximately thirty to sixty minutes about three times.
- the interview will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy in reporting your statements.
- the interview will take place in the afternoon at your Oakland Freedom School site.
- the researcher may contact you later to clarify your interview answers and/or focus group answers for approximately fifteen within *one month of the interview*.
- You will also be interviewed in a group (focus groups) 3x for approximately 45 minutes to 90 minutes.
- The group/focus group will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy in reporting your statements.
- Interviews/focus groups time will include optional activities (collage, photos, poetry, video etc). No more than one – two activities per meeting. Activities are approximately 15-45 minutes long.
- The video portion of the focus groups is an optional activity that you can chose not to participate in, and still be able to participate in the group.
- total time commitment will be no longer than four hours and thirty minutes.

RISKS

There is a risk of loss of privacy. However, the researcher will not use your name or any other identifying information in any published reports of the research. The research material will be kept in a secure location, and only the researcher will have access to the data. At the conclusion of the study, the researcher will destroy all audiotapes of your interview, will remove all identifying information from the transcripts, and will keep the data in a locked cabinet in an office. All audio will be saved and destroyed by Saturday May 30, 2020. Video created in the focus group is an optional activity and will be destroyed by Saturday May, 2020. The video will be saved and password protected on a locked computer. Also, because the focus groups include discussion of personal opinions, extra measures will be taken to protect each participant's privacy.

DIRECT BENEFITS

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research.

COSTS

There will be no cost to you for participating in this research.

COMPENSATION

There will be no compensation for participating in this research.

ALTERNATIVES

The alternative is not to participate in the research

QUESTIONS

You have spoken with Lee Porscha Moore about this study and have had your questions answered. If you have any further questions about the study, you may contact the researcher by email at lmoore3@sfsu.edu or you may contact Professor Daniel Meier, the researcher's advisor, at dmeier@sfsu.edu.

You may also ask questions about your rights as a research participant, or send any comments or complaints about the study, to Human and Animal Protections at San Francisco State University at 415: 338-1093 or protocol@sfsu.edu.

Participation in research is voluntary. You do not have to participate, and you may stop participating at any time, or at any point in the project, without any penalty to yourself.

G. CONSENT

You have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

_____ Initial here to opt out of audio participation

_____ Initial here to opt out of video (focus group activity) participation

I understand the purpose and the procedures of the research as stated above, and agree to participate.

Participant's Name (print) _____

Signature _____

Date: _____

Research Participant

Signature _____

Date: _____

Researcher

2 of 2

San Francisco State University
Institutional Review Board

Approval Date 05/22/2019

Expiration Date 05/21/2020

Protocol No. 419-00

(415) 338-1093

Student Art

All student art is from students who provided consent. However, art that is not identified by a specific scholar is because the student did not want their name include. Not all art discussed in the dissertation is included below due to student consent.

Art by Storm

Who Do You Look Up To

I LOOK UP TO MY

MOM

- inspiring
- strong
- she makes good choices
- magical
- respectful
- kind
- beautiful
- trustworthy
- caring
- loving
- family
- prepared
- educated
- responsible
- confident
- fair
- friend
- thoughtful
- smart

Art by Storm

Art by Thunder

Appendix E

Open Letter Video Questions

Link to video- [https://csueb.zoom.us/rec/share/_95-](https://csueb.zoom.us/rec/share/_95-Frrdq15JHInK7X3TVogjI6rFaaa8gylK8vcJxE4uYO7h4mwHONzT3TJHKxtZ?startTime=1588362539000)

[Frrdq15JHInK7X3TVogjI6rFaaa8gylK8vcJxE4uYO7h4mwHONzT3TJHKxtZ?startTime=1588362539000](https://csueb.zoom.us/rec/share/_95-Frrdq15JHInK7X3TVogjI6rFaaa8gylK8vcJxE4uYO7h4mwHONzT3TJHKxtZ?startTime=1588362539000)

Password: 6q*t9?2W

Part One—Exploring meaning of Black femininity and Black female identity (pre-video)

1. What does it mean to you to be a Black girl?
2. What does it mean to you to be a Black girl in your school, community, and family?
3. What are examples of Black femininity in your life?
4. What does Black femininity mean to you?

Part two—Reactions, thoughts, feelings, & critique (post-video)

1. What did you think about the video?
2. What stood out to you and why?
3. Were there statements made that you disagreed with?
 - a. Can you elaborate on your perspective?
4. Were there statements made that you agree with?
 - a. Can you elaborate on your perspective?

Part three—Food for thought and growth

1. What did you take away from the letter?
2. What do you think the letter celebrates about Black girls?

3. What do you think the letter celebrates about Black femininity?

Part four—Identifying strengths

1. What are the strengths of being a Black girl?
2. What are your strengths?
3. How do you play to your strengths at school, with family, and/or in your community?
4. What makes you strong?
5. What weakness/challenges do you see in your strengths?
 - a. What weakness/challenges do you see in the strengths of being Black girl?

Part five—Building a collective HOPE plan

1. Does this group want to work together and support one another's goals?
2. What is needed to work together?
3. How will the group work together?
4. HOPE is an acronym that stands for Helping Others Process and Endure. Create a group definition of hope.
 - a. Discuss what it means to have hope and what gives you hope
 - b. Reflect as a group or individually about what you are hopeful (i.e. your future, academic goals, professional goals, etc)