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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, UNSILENCED: BLACK GIRLS' STORIES, by LATOYA RUSSELL OWENS, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education and Human Development, Georgia State University.

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UNSILENCED: BLACK GIRLS' STORIES

by

LATOYA RUSSELL OWENS

Under the Direction of Joyce E. King, PhD

ABSTRACT

Black girls continue to suffer from inequitable treatment in schools resulting in disparate academic and social outcomes. While deficit ideologists have continued to attribute outcomes to cultural deficiencies within the Black community, research has found various systemic issues of racism and sexism seriously affecting Black girls in schools. However, the experiences of this population remain under or uninvestigated. When Black girls' experiences in school are investigated, they are commonly framed as a group in need of saving and their perspectives and voices eliminated from the work. Further, this group is often homogenized and all their experiences limited to those of the inner-city or urban environments. Using a critical raced-gendered epistemology, grounded in critical race theory and Black feminism/womanism, this qualitative interview study explores Black high school girls' experiences in a predominately White suburban public school in the southeast. Through the method of storytelling that includes constructing counter narratives, five girls (ages 14-16) relay their experiences in this predominately White suburban educational space. Parent reflections as well as document review augment these girls' stories to further illuminate their experience. A grounded theory analysis of these data uses my own cultural intuition. This analytic approach foregrounds the intersectionality of Black girls' understanding of their racial and gendered educational experiences in a predominantly White suburban environment, the systemic barriers that serve to inhibit their success, and the methods of resistance girls use to persist in these spaces. This study is significant in both its methodology as well as results, offering critical insight into how to conduct equitable and liberatory research and create education policies to improve outcomes for this underserved group.

INDEX WORDS: Black girls, Black Feminism, Womanism, Critical Race Theory,

Emancipatory Research, Intersectionality, Resistance

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LATOYA RUSSELL OWENS

A Dissertation

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Degree of

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in

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in

Educational Policy Studies

in the

College of Education and Human Development

Georgia State University

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2016

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to TJ.

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I want to thank the ancestors for equipping me, my parents for preparing me, my husband for loving me, my friends for supporting me, my mentors for assisting me, TJ for completing me and Black girls for intruiguing me. I love you all.

"I'm here for a greater purpose, I knew right from the start."

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1 THE PROBLEM

Introduction

This inquiry is a qualitative interview study designed to construct counter-stories and give a platform for the voices of Black high school girls in a predominantly White suburban community (Olson, 2011). This study investigates issues that negatively affect their education, parental socialization, and school experiences. In this chapter, I provide a description of the research problem, including Black girls' academic identities, deficit ideologies, intersecting race, gender, and social class oppressions, social statuses, and experiences. An overview of these issues supports a specific focus on Black girls because they have experiences distinct from both Black boys and White girls, and are disadvantaged in ways not commonly addressed in research (Evans-Winters, 2005).

Using a critical raced-gendered epistemology informed by critical race theory and Black feminism/Womanism, this qualitative interview study explores Black high school girls' experiences in a predominately White suburban public school in the southeast. The method of storytelling that includes constructing counter narratives permits five girls (ages 14-16) to relay their experiences in this predominately White suburban educational space. Parent reflections as well as document reviews augment these girls' stories to further illuminate their experiences. A grounded theory analysis of these data uses my own cultural intuition. This analytic approach foregrounds Black girls' understanding of their racial and gendered educational experiences in a predominantly White suburban environment, the systemic barriers that serve to inhibit their success, and the methods of resistance the girls use to persist in these spaces.

Academic Identity

Black girls in suburban, high-performing, well-resourced, and predominately White schools are academically underperforming in comparison to their White peers. Using enrollment in Algebra 1 as a measure, Diette (2012) found that "the marginal effects of racial composition on the relative disparity in enrollment are significantly larger for Black females than Black males" in highly integrated schools (p. 322). Research shows that Black students in high-achieving suburban schools struggle with educational achievement and access. They are less likely to be enrolled in advanced courses, which affects their academic self-concepts as well as their college enrollment prospects (Darity, Castellino, Tyson, Cobb, & McMillen, 2001; Diette, 2012).

Deficit Ideology

The disparity in achievement between students is generally discussed in terms of the achievement gap. In this discussion, Black and Brown students, the victims of institutional oppression, are deemed responsible for the difference in outcomes because of the presumed deficits in their culture. The existence of this achievement gap is determined by the difference in academic outcomes for students along racial lines in terms of a variety of measures that indicate a deficit in ability among students of color (King, 2005; Irizarry, 2009). However, many scholars argue that what has long been deemed a failure of these students is actually a fault of the education system and its failure to respond to the culture and needs of students of color (Carter, 2008; Hilliard, 1978; King, 2010; Paris, 2012; Valenzuela, 1999). Thus, Black students are often deemed failures for their inabilities to fully assimilate to White middle-class values. Assimilation is required in schools as cultural training, where children are forced to exhibit dominant language, literacy, and cultural norms aligned with White middle-class values in order to be suc-

cessful. For girls, exhibiting such norms means they must also conform to ideal forms of femininity by displaying docility, passivity, complacency, and “ladylike” behavior (Henry, 1998; Morris, 2007). Thus, those Black students who retain cultural ties and behavior are depicted as underachieving, deviant, and impediments to the overall success of the race, a phenomenon that supports the disproportionate criminalization and mistreatment of Black girls in schools, and ultimately results in a show of disparity in outcomes (Paris, 2012). Consquently, in discussions of the achievement gap, it is imperative to highlight this underlying deficit ideology. Indeed, the achievement gap itself is a problematic concept, as test measures that are really indicators of institutional racial disparity are instead used as indicators of academic outcomes or achievement. This deficit approach is important to note when researching Black girls and when considering the current research available on this population.

Race and Gender Oppressions

Relatedly, Black girls suffer from various forms of inequitable treatment in school, including racial and gender stereotyping, lower academic expectations, harsher disciplinary penalties, and barriers to various school activities. Black girls face additional obstacles in comparison to other groups due to their race and gender, and are forced to negotiate bias among school personnel in order to succeed academically. Black girls’ inequitable experiences in school include more frequent citations for dress-code violations, more disciplinary referrals than their White peers, more frequent and higher levels of discipline for talking back to teachers in class, and more suspensions than their White, Latina, and Asian peers (NAACP Legal Defense Fund, 2014). A recent report on educational inequity for African American girls found that, “While African American males are the most likely to be disciplined in school, African American females are also disproportionately suspended and expelled (NAACP Legal Defense Fund, 2014).

Additionally, the report notes that African American girls are being disproportionately pushed out of schools due to overly punitive disciplinary policies that result in lost learning time and early involvement with the juvenile justice system. African American female students are also disproportionately suspended and expelled compared to girls of other races. In fact, an analysis of 2006-07 data on the suspension of middle school students showed that African American girls in urban middle schools had the fastest growing rates of suspension of any group of girls or boys (NAACP Legal Defense Fund, 2014). The types of offenses that are responsible for Black girls' disproportionate discipline are important; Ohio State University's 2012-2013 data indicated that "the most subjective category, disobedience and disruptive behavior, was the category for which Black girls were the most often disciplined" (NAACP Legal Defense Fund, 2014, p. 150).

Social Status and Experiences

Black girls' social patterns are also often viewed as backwards or inappropriate by teachers and administrators in schools (Chavous et al., 2008; Frazier-Kouassi, 2002; Morris, 2005; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). Offenses like disobedience and disruptive behavior are subjective in nature and left to the discretion of the teacher or administrator. Thus, viewing stereotypical images of Black girls as loud, confrontational, or assertive as opposed to "traditionally feminine," modest, and passive, generates different types of punishments for Black girls than for girls of other races (Morris, 2007). Blake, Butler, Lewis, and Darensbourg (2011) further explain that Black girls' failure to meet traditional Euro-American standards of femininity may also be the cause of disproportionate rates of discipline when they are involved in physical altercations, since physical fights or visibly and physically expressing anger is considered unladylike behavior.

Consequently, even when Black girls achieve academically, they have to navigate very unique educational obstacles because teachers often question their manners and behavior. General perceptions of White womanhood often prompt teachers to deem Black girls as unfeminine (Morris, 2007). Black girls and women alike are often stereotyped as “angry” or “aggressive,” and “promiscuous” or “hyper-sexualized,” assumptions that shape teachers’ and administrators’ views of Black girls, creating an implicit bias against them in school (Harris-Perry, 2011). Navigating these stereotypes and biases create additional obstacles that ultimately affect Black girls’ academic outcomes as well as their identity development (Morris, 2007). However, in discussions of the achievement gap or general Black girl underachievement, these additional obstacles are rarely discussed or even acknowledged, and therefore go unaddressed. However, it is essential to address them, as they are directly related to disparities in the education system.

Further, studies on Black students in predominantly White suburban schools found that highly capable Black students with monetary resources were often either discriminated against or overlooked (Carter Andrews, 2009, 2012; Proweller, 1998; Tatum, 2004). For example, in a year-long qualitative study of resistance among high-achieving Black students in a predominately White high school, Carter Andrews (2009) found that students had to navigate racial microaggressions in the forms of racial spotlighting and racial ignoring. The author noted that these microaggressions were embedded in school culture and experienced in all facets of school life, including classroom and social and extracurricular spaces, which caused emotional and psychological stress. Solórzano (1998) refers to these instances of subtle but prevalent racism as racial microaggressions, and describes them as the contemporary form of racism that continues to play itself out in the daily lives of students of color. Carter Andrews (2009) adds that being the only Black student in a classroom intensifies the experience of racial microaggressions.

Specifically analyzing the gendered element of the Black student experience in a predominately White suburban high school, Holland (2013) found that Black girls integrated into a predominantly White school expressed a discomfort in the environment not indicated by Black boys. Black girls noted having to deal with negative stereotypes and intense academic pressure, having less contact with students outside of their racial group and neighborhood, and never socially integrating into the school. Yet, while the girls indicated feeling a "weight on their shoulders," or an extra burden upon entering the school, Black males in the study felt that a weight lifted, and they enjoyed minor celebrity status as athletes and informants on hip hop culture while escaping the struggles of the inner-city (Holland, 2013). Though both gendered groups recounted instances of racism in the school, the same associations with the inner-city and hip hop culture that enhanced Black males' social statues positioned the girls to be stereotyped as loud or obnoxious. Holland (2013) also found differences in dating practices and school structure that disproportionately affected male and female students' social integration; Black girls indicated that they felt less able to cross racial lines in dating and other forms of in-school socialization than Black boys, and they were left with fewer possibilities for dating and friendship.

Also related to dating, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund's (2014) report noted that, in addition to violence and trauma, sexual harassment is a barrier to learning that disproportionately impacts girls and their academic achievement, and African American girls report widespread sexual harassment in school. A survey study found that 56 percent of school-aged girls report experiencing sexual harassment (Hill & Kearl, 2011). African American girls were more likely than White students to "change the way they go to or from schools," or even change to a new school in response to sexual harassment (Hill & Kearl, 2011). There are nationwide differences in the ways African American and White girls experience harassment: 67 percent of African

American girls report being sexually harassed compared to 56 percent of White girls (American Association of University Women Education Fund, 2001). Furthermore, speaking to the significance of both race and gender, research suggests that responses from teachers and administrators to the reported harassment of African American girls is inadequate and is also fueled by stereotypes about Black girls, with school personnel often misidentifying Black girls as aggressors in instances of sexual harassment (NAACP Legal Defense Fund, 2014).

Parental Socialization and Experiences

Additionally, research highlights that Black parents in predominately White spaces are aware of students' navigation of racialized school environments. Tatum (1987, 1992, 2004) found that middle- and upper-middle-class Black parents were aware that their predominately White environment may endanger the positive racial identity formation of their children, and engaged in different approaches in rearing and socializing their children in an attempt to combat environmental effects. Tatum (2004) concluded that young people raised in race-conscious families developed a more positive racial identity that enabled them to persist in and undermine the White-dominated racial order that participants indicated existed in their predominately White suburban schools.

However, the experience of Black girls in these spaces is not represented in research on girls, as it overwhelmingly focuses on the experience of White middle-class girls. Similarly, research on the Black student experience does not reflect the gendered aspect of Black girls' experiences (Brown, 2009). Consequently, there is very little research on the educational experiences of Black girls, an oversight that leaves them generally invisible. Brown (2009) attended to this issue of invisibility for Black girls by arguing that part of the reason why their issues are not addressed in research is because Black women themselves are readily dismissed in conversations

about Black girlhood. Thus, girls are not seen as experts on their own experiences. In fact, they are neither seen nor heard; rather, it is the "problems" they pose to society that are addressed—not their existences as human beings. As a result, research, education, and programs that spring from this focus on the Black girl do not consider them, but instead highlight what have been deemed "Black girl problems" or inadequacies. These problems have been decided for Black girls, and their designation as "inadequate" precludes them from creating knowledge or informing the decisions made about themselves.

When suburban contexts are considered, the research is even more limited (Banks, 2005; Morris, 2007; Proweller, 1998). Indeed, more research is needed to account for the specific experiences of Black girls in these spaces as well as the variations in those experiences. Thus, the research problem is that systemic racism and gender stereotyping have taken on various forms in PK-12 education that directly affect the experiences and thus the identity development and academic outcomes of Black girls. This issue is ignored in predominantly White suburban spaces, and is further compounded by Black girls' and women's lack of inclusion in research on Black girls' educational experiences and academic outcomes. These works speak not only to the need for more research on Black students in predominately White suburban environments, but for a specific look into the schooling of Black girls, as there are demonstrated intra-racial disparities related to gender (Diette, 2012; Holland, 2013). We presently do not know the experiences of Black girls in predominately White suburban spaces, nor how best to support and improve their academic experiences therein, which is why I ask the following questions and conduct my research in a way that counters Black girls' invisibility in research.

Research Questions

This qualitative interview study is couched in two theoretical frameworks: critical race theory and Black feminism/Womanism. These frameworks allow for the use of Delgado Bernal's (1998) cultural intuition as a methodological research practice that connects personal experience, historical and ancestral wisdom, and the research process. Cultural intuition highlights the importance of the researcher's ability to interpret the research based on collective and personal experience as well as community memory, thus challenging the notion/validity of objective research. This is key to an analysis of Black girls' academic and social identity experiences, as various factors shown to affect those experiences have been previously neglected in deficit-based research (Evans-Winters, 2005).

The research questions that guide this study are: 1) what are the experiences of Black girls in predominately White suburban educational settings? and 2) what are the tools and strategies girls use to resist intersecting oppressions in order to persist in these environments? In order to investigate these questions, this study has collected stories to "unsilence" Black girls, thereby allowing educational researchers to better understand the raced, gendered, and classed educational experiences of Black girls in predominantly White suburban environments.

Overview and Purpose of the Study

This study has the following purposes: to explore how Black girls in a predominately White suburban high school context experience intersecting oppressions; to highlight the ways in which Black girls show resistance in predominately White school environments; and to provide a culturally informed methodology for bringing Black girls' resistance to light by using their inter-

views to construct counter stories that illuminate their perspectives on their educational experiences. In doing so, my participants and I eliminate the researcher-subject divide, develop a relationship, and participate in a dialogical process that yields their stories.

It is not expected that all narratives will inherently counter dominant or traditional frameworks; however, my cultural intuition—i.e., my insight as a researcher and as a Black woman who has experienced education in this kind of setting—is particularly relevant in constructing, interpreting, and analyzing these stories. The necessity of reflexive and dialogic conversation for humanizing a culturally informed research process is exemplified in King and Mitchell's (1995) *Black Mothers to Sons: Juxtaposing African American Literature with Social Practice*. In this study, the researchers engaged the participants as co-researchers, using a group conversation or "kitchen table" method of interviewing based on Afrocentric ways of knowing. King and Mitchell (1995) note that this method served not only to honor indigenous ways of knowing in a "communal, spiritual and holistic" manner, but also to reduce tension in the research process and facilitate in-depth personal and emotional discussions (p. 3). In this present study, stories were created through a methodological approach that includes mutual dialogue on Black girls' experiences in school—experiences shared by both the participants and the researcher—to create mutual learning and understanding. This mutual understanding was pivotal in both the data collection and analysis processes. Mutual respect and understanding allowed me to form a relationship with the participants that in turn created a space for them to provide richer data than would have been possible if such a relationship had not existed. Also, the relationship we formed alongside the participants' review of their data enhanced the way I used my own cultural intuition in the analysis process, which ensured that I was able to interpret their data correctly.

This research draws on various qualitative methods, including storytelling via semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and cultural intuition. The use of dialogue is critical for the entire research process because it extends the focus beyond the told stories to the storytelling process itself. Indeed, the storytelling process holds potential for girls to be recognized as knowledge holders of their own experiences, as well as to change the nature of research on this population by changing the relationship between the researcher, the participants, and the processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Chase, 2007). Indeed, it is imperative to attend to the subject positions of both the participants and the researcher by engaging in continuous self-reflection and transparency, because this study aims to attest to the importance and value of both the everyday experiences of these girls as well as my own experiences in informing the process of story collection and narrative interpretation.

Therefore, my researcher subjectivities are also crucial to this inquiry; in fact, my own experience in both predominately White and predominately Black educational settings prompted my interest in this work. As a child, I attended predominately White elementary and middle schools in the suburbs, but in high school I took advantage of a busing/magnet program that allowed me to attend a more racially diverse school in the inner-city. (It is important to point out, however, that if I were currently attending school, my experience would be drastically different because the end of busing/magnet programs has produced extreme re-segregation in this particular district.) Reflecting on this reality, I feel that coming of age in such an isolating context had a significant effect on my social and emotional states as well as on my academic decisions, even though I had some relief in high school. This research study is designed in an effort to understand how Black girls who are currently in similar situations are negotiating this very particular academic context.

Significance

My own story navigating the racialized and gendered terrain of the PK-12 education system, which is discussed in Chapter 3 and serves as a template for this work, acknowledges the significance of voice as a political tool. My narrative tells how, as a Black girl in predominantly White suburban educational settings, I have experienced systemic racism, sexism, and resistance in the education system. Resistance is defined as efforts to self-define and speak back to and within marginalizing and oppressive educational spaces (Collins, 2001; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). In this way, girls who are resisting can be seen, not as victims of oppression, but as survivors. This work is also significant because it addresses the intersectional experiences of Black girls from the point of view of the actual perspectives of Black girls. This research not only diversifies the literature on the Black student experience, but also the sparse literature on Black girls in general. This study represents variation in their everyday lives and perceptions, even within the same socio-economic class. As Evans-Winters (2005) noted:

> Not all African American female students are poor or working class, live in the inner city or urban areas, nor all identify as Black or perform 'Blackness' in the same way. Thus, most will benefit from a more all-embracing multivocular Black feminism. (p. 16-17)

Finally, this study is especially significant considering the work being done to improve educational and life outcomes for Black boys through the US federal government's 2014 My Brother's Keeper Initiative (Obama, 2014). Morris (2012) has argued that the current crisis, the criminalization and incarceration of Black children, is not adequately fought by developing interventions for males and translating them to issues for Black girls. Rather, we need an intersectional approach that adequately speaks to the particular positions of Black girls and women. This research is intended to benefit educators, community members, policymakers, and parents in their quest to

improve outcomes for Black girls who suffer from an inequitable education system in ways that are distinct but equally deleterious as those of the larger Black community. The research is also intended to support the girls who participate in the work. Storytelling as a methodology is used to empower girls to self-define and speak back to dominant stereotypes.

Assumptions

This research is designed with the following assumptions: Black girls' school experiences and academic outcomes are impacted by intersecting oppressions (Collins, 2001; Crenshaw, 1989; Phillips, 2006); Black girls use tools or strategies to persist in predominately White spaces (Evans-Winters, 2005; Proweller, 1998); parents of Black girls participate in their schooling and thus offer valuable knowledge pertaining to girls' narratives (Tatum, 2004); and girls have diverse school experiences informed by their histories and socialization (Stevenson et al., 2003; Tatum, 2004; Yosso et al., 2009). Additionally, using the methodological tool of cultural intuition assumes that, as a Black woman with similar school experiences, I have a unique insight that enables me to construct the stories of these Black girls and to interpret and analyze these and other data produced from this study (Delgado Bernal, 1998).

2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, I synopsize literature related to the experiences of Black girls in education, specifically in predominately White spaces of education. I begin by discussing educational theoretical literature concerning the relationship between classism and racism, with particular attention given to the Black student experience in predominately White spaces. Next, I review literature that highlights the state of Black girls in education and the systemic racism, classism, and sexism that mark their experiences. Finally, I provide an overview of critical race theory (CRT), and Black feminist and Womanist frameworks, which offer this work a critical raced and gendered intersectional perspective. These bodies of literature provide a conceptual foundation for an understanding of the raced, gendered, and classed experiences of Black girls in predominately White educational settings.

Black Students in Predominately White Spaces

What follows is an explanation of Black students in predominately White spaces, including research focused on student deficits, resistance and resilience against structural oppressions, and the significance of race in these spaces.

Academics

A bulk of the education research conducted on Black students has focused on explaining and remedying the achievement gap between Black and White students. There have been several explanatory frameworks offered to shed light on the existence of this perceived academic gap (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Ogbu, 2003). While low-income or inner-city Black youth are often the focus, scholars have also attended to the disparity in academic outcomes among middle class Black and White students (Darity, 2001; Diette, 2012; Patillo-McCoy, 1999).

Academic Identity

Because there is variation in Black student academic orientation as well as identity, it is critical to study the spaces in which these identities are formed. Carter (2009) has described academic orientation as a personality trait traditionally characteristic of academically motivated students; in short, students with a positive academic orientation see themselves as good students and place high value on self-defined achievement. Nasir (2011) defined identity as "a sense of self constructed from available social categories, taken up by individuals and ascribed by cultural groups and social settings. Identities take shape as a part of cultural process of becoming—a becoming that guided by our ever-evolving sense of who we are and who we can be" (p. 17).

Thus, identity informs how Black students situate themselves as learners. While many Black parents have made the choice to move their children from underserved inner-city schools to high-achieving predominately White suburban schools, studies show that Black students do not fair better academically or socially in these contexts; the racialized gap in academic performance persists (Darity, 2001; Diette, 2012; Ferguson, 2002). Accordingly, research indicates that many Black students in predominately White secondary schools often feel marginalized based on the color of their skin (Cary, 1991; Domhoff & Zweigenhaft, 1991). This research indicates that though predominately White suburban schools may increase Black students' access to educational resources, systemic inequity and sociological and psychological issues maintain the race-based difference in academic outcomes, and thus affect Black students' ability to situate themselves as successful learners.

One of the most persistent and contested explanations of the racialized gap in academic achievement—also referred to as the achievement gap—is the oppositional identity theory, or the 'acting White' hypothesis proposed by anthropologists Fordham and Ogbu (1986). Building on

Ogbu's research and theories concerning the variability of the academic performance of minority students, this study of Black students at a Washington, D.C. high school posits that Black students have developed an oppositional culture to academic achievement because of the association with assimilationist efforts. In other words, such students disengage because they view educational attainment to be directly associated with dominant European culture, which they do not wish to emulate. Later, Ogbu and Simons (1998) addressed intra-racial differences, further explaining that involuntary (African American or non-immigrant) minorities are less economically successful than voluntary minorities. They suggested that non-immigrant minorities do not exceed the levels of immigrant students, and experience more cultural difficulties in school because they link academic achievement to assimilation into White culture (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). The authors argued that there are strong negative effects of "fictive kinship" and collective identity on the academic decisions and outcomes of Black students (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). They also noted that "What the students reject that hurt their academic performance are 'White' attitudes and behaviors conducive to making good grades" (Ogbu & Simons, 1998, n.p.).

In a later study of suburban middle-class Black students in Shaker Heights, Ohio, Ogbu (2003) offered a more in-depth explanation of the oppositional culture theory termed the 'acting White' phenomenon. In an investigation of disproportionate academic outcomes among middle-class students, Ogbu (2003) found that behaviors associated with acting White included speaking standard English, enrollment in Honors and AP (advanced placement) classes, being seen as smart during lessons, and having White friends. Thus, he concluded that Black students experience from their Black peers pressure to refrain from adopting what the peers perceive as White attitudes and behaviors. This refusal negatively affects academic outcomes, as those behaviors are directly associated with academic achievement.

Ogbu (2003) maintained that an oppositional identity to schooling is developed among Black students as students, parents, and community members attempt to preserve a group identity, previously termed *collective identity*. The researcher cited two ways the belief in acting White and the struggle to preserve group identity can result in academic uncertainty for Black students. He argued that Black students feel they have to choose to either conform to school demands and receive rewards for certain attitudes and behaviors that are viewed as White, or adhere to community interpretations and disapproval of (or ambivalence toward) those same attitudes and behaviors (Ogbu, 2003). Similarly, in an earlier study of Capitol High in Washington, D.C., Fordham (1988) found that, in order to deal with the burden of acting White, which is the pressure to adopt mainstream or Eurocentric characteristics for academic and general achievement, Black students adopted strategies of racelessness, a form of accommodation to dominant racial and class structures in public schools—in short, a coping mechanism (Fordham, 1988). In order to adopt a raceless identity, students are said to minimize "their relationship to the Black community and to the stigma attached to 'Blackness'" (Fordham, 1988, p. 57). Fordham noted that students perceived racelessness as a way to increase their chances for vertical mobility in school and in their future work roles. Dominant racial and class structures include school curricula predicated on a Euro-American culture (Buras, 2008), language or speech biases (Delpit, 2012), and discriminatory hiring practices among teachers (Buras, 2008; King & Russell, 2015) among other structural issues.

However, neither the 'acting White' nor racelessness hypotheses provide explanations for high-achieving Black students who retain their culture. Those researchers who do focus on the resiliency/resistance of Black students have found that high-achieving Black students are often supported by their cultural and racial identities as well as by peer networks (Carter-Andrews,

2012). Further research focused on the assets and strengths of Black students in the face of oppression reveals that the work of Ogbu and Fordham (1986) is deficit-based, steeped in perceived deficits of Black children and the Black community in general. The variation in Black students and communities as well as in Black student achievement indicates that what serves as a barrier to Black student achievement is neither Black culture nor orientation to education and academic achievement; rather, it is the racism embedded in the education system.

Resistance and Resilience

Thus, many scholars investigating the experiences of Black middle-class students have explored Black students' resistance mechanisms, which oppose the coping mechanisms found in the previous studies. In an investigation of the ways Black students deal with discrimination, Ward (1999) distinguished resistance from coping, explaining both as ways in which Black people respond to experiences with racial prejudice and discrimination. The author notes that resilience is the successful negotiation of these stressful circumstances; thus, resistance supports resilience.

For example, in a study of academically successful Black students, D. Carter (2008) found that their "critical race consciousness and pride in being members of the Black community were two elements that enabled them to develop strategies for succeeding in the school context and pursuing their future goals" (p. 20). As a result, D. Carter (2008) called for a "combination of a positive racial identity, critical race consciousness and a pragmatic attitude about the utility of schooling," to enable Black students to persist in school (p. 16). Specifically researching Black students in predominantly White contexts, Carter Andrews (2009) noted that, while these students did not adopt a raceless identity, they did think of academic achievement as a raceless trait. Thus, she posited that, for high achieving, racially isolated Black students, thinking of

themselves as Black achievers and understanding how racism works to constrain or deter their academic success was critical to their ability to resist the notion that academic success was the property of White students (Carter Andrews, 2009).

Relatedly, in a study of Black males, Graham and Anderson (2008) provided evidence that positively embracing concepts of "Blackness" is associated with higher academic achievement and resilience. This research negates the oppositional identity theory, as these studies have found that socialization practices rooted in Black cultural ideals and strong group identity encourages academic success. It is this same idea of a group identity or fictive kinship system that Ogbu and Simons (1998) found discouraged academic achievement among Black students. Graham's and Anderson's (2008) results also transcend class boundaries; the study found evidence of positive racial associations with academic achievement among both lower-income and middle-class Black students. This finding directly informs my study, as I am investigating the effects of race at a particular social class level, and contending that race and racism are factors in the educational experiences of middle-class Black girls.

Addressing Fordham's (1988) theory of racelessness, James Stanlaw and Alan Peshkin (1988) conducted an ethnographic study of Black youth in a predominantly White public high school. These researchers discovered that, at their specific school site, Black students were able to fully integrate themselves into the school culture and benefited from what the researchers called a positive Black visibility. This finding suggests that, instead of simply adopting raceless identities (Fordham, 1988), Black students handle racism and marginalization in predominantly White school settings in other ways. While developing a positive Black visibility is an act of resistance to negative pressures, a strategy of racelessness is seen as a coping mechanism, and both of these behaviors may be evident among Black youth in the same environment (Stanlaw &

Peshkin, 1988). While Stanlaw and Peshkin (1988) do not directly dispute the existence of the raceless strategy, their theory of positive Black visibility expands a monolithic or single representation of Black students' academic behaviors. Highlighting the variation in Black student identity even among high-achieving Black students, scholars argue that academic identities develop differently in different school environments (Stanlaw & Peshkin, 1988).

Similarly, investigating Fordham's (1988) claim that Black students use a raceless identity to achieve academically, Harris and Marsh (2010) found that students who had some racial conception of themselves were much more successful in school. As a result, the researchers argued that discussions of race and curricula explicitly geared toward developing a healthy racial concept may better help students achieve academic success. Thus, one conclusion is that differing research findings on Black student achievement is a result of varying school environments and education practices. This research indicated that some school environments and communities may encourage the development of a Black achiever identity, while other school environments are discouraging. For future research, Harris and Marsh (2010) advised scholars to study whether the patterns they found differed under different conditions, including gender differences.

Further investigating school structure inequities, Diamond, Lewis, and Gordon (2007) explored educational opportunities in a desegregated suburban secondary school. In an interview study, researchers found that, while Black students reported that racism limited their educational opportunities, specifically identifying the tracking mechanism at the school, they did not oppose school achievement. The authors did not specifically explore how gender operated in this particular school space. While their first finding was in line with the basis of Ogbu's (2003) argument, which holds that Black students are more likely to perceive limits to their academic opportunities

because of racial inequity, this research conflicted with Ogbu's second finding, as students perceiving these limits did not develop an oppositional orientation toward education or academic achievement.

This research supports the push for more attention to structural impediments as it indicates that, not only did Black students report experiencing very little negative peer pressure related to academic achievement (in fact, it equaled that reported by White students), students reported significant challenges with White peers and teachers as an equal obstacle or barrier to academic achievement (Diamond et al., 2007). This research adds a new element to the existing findings, as Diamond et al. (2007) studied not only behavioral patterns of Black students, but White students as well, thus allowing them to underscore the finding that adolescents can experience negative academic peer pressure regardless of their race. Researchers have also argued that Ogbu's (2003) research on Black student disengagement "is limited because only Black students and not White students were interviewed and, as a result, distinguishing between general patterns of school aversion that occur among all students and those that might be specific to Black students' peer groups is difficult" (Diamond et al., 2007, p. 655).

Tyson et al. (2005) noted that:

> Typically, high-achieving students, regardless of race, are to some degree stigmatized as 'nerds' or 'geeks.' The data suggest that school structures, rather than culture, may help explain when this stigma becomes racialized, producing a burden of acting White for Black adolescents, and when it becomes class-based, producing a burden of 'acting high and mighty' for low-income Whites. (p. 585)

When Tyson et al. (2005) noticed racialized differences in achievement, Black students made decisions based on fears of not faring well academically rather than the influence of peers, contradicting the 'acting White' hypothesis and pointing again to school structures as sites encouraging racialized difference in achievement. For instance, students may avoid optional standardized tests, such as the PSAT or advanced courses because of racialized tracking practices. Thus, they argue that the 'burden of acting White' cannot be attributed solely to Black culture; White students were shown to have the same experiences, suggesting that some school cultures contribute to the animosity between high- and low-achieving students.

Race Matters

Davis and Welcher (2013) investigated whether class position buffers students in middle- and upper-class suburban areas against racial disadvantage in school, a claim supported by various researchers (Featherman & Hauser, 1978; Hout, 1986; Wilson, 1978, 1987, 1996). Wilson (1978) is an original supporter of this idea, and theorized that class relieves the negative impact of race for Black people, thus making race less of a factor in middle-class Black life than class. However, many scholars refute Wilson's hypothesis, instead arguing that race is a salient factor in the lives of Black people at every class position. These scholars argue that "race matters": racism and racial discrimination are embedded in school structures, and they take new forms and play out differently in different arenas (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Feagin, 1991; Feagin & O'Brien, 2010; Feagin & Sikes, 1995; Hughes & Thomas, 1998).

Davis and Welcher (2013) found data that supports the race matters argument. In their analysis of school quality, defined by "academic climate, behavioral environment, and physical facilities of a school, as well as school demographics associated with poverty and disadvantage of middle-class Black students," they concluded that middle-class Black students were highly

vulnerable to racial inequality, and did not enjoy the same class privileges afforded to White students (Davis & Welcher, 2013, p. 468). Additionally, these researchers found that:

> . . .because residential segregation produces schools that contain fewer higher scoring students, more teacher turnover, higher levels of poverty, and more classroom disorder, middle-class Blacks must use fiscal resources that could be allocated to other necessities (savings for college, retirement, etc.) in order to acquire access to the kinds of schooling environments that residential location affords Whites. (Davis & Welcher, 2013, p. 486)

Supporting this finding, Lindsay (2011) observed that Black and White students had different experiences at all socio-economic levels, and Black middle-class students—middle class being defined as one parent with a college degree—are shown to have experiences similar to that of low-income Black students as compared to middle-class White students. Similarly, Tatum (2004) conducted an interview study of Black college students who had grown up in predominately White neighborhoods and schools, and found that students across the board noted that, in their suburban, predominately White environments, they felt teachers did not expect them to excel academically, that peers had stereotypical views of them, and that they were alienated by or invisible in the curriculum, but used a positive race-associated identity to succeed and persist academically. Tatum (2004) reported that, according to interviewees:

> Opportunities to immerse themselves in information and contact with people from their own racial background was important but often lacking for these youth. In all of the cases presented, the opportunity for same-race peer relationships, the opportunity to gain new information about African-American heritage and accomplishments, the availability of role models, and the encouragement of significant

> adults were reported as important components in these students' successes and in their resolution of racial identity issues. (p. 133)

Tatum (2004) concluded that, as a result of a missing framework in the educational practice literature on racial identity development, Black students are not receiving the needed support to excel both socially and academically in these environments. Tatum (2004) explained that, beyond being integrated into White environments, "Black children need to know that there is a heritage of African American excellence to which they can aspire," and argued that the concept of Black excellence is imperative for Black students to view themselves as achievers (p. 133). Hilliard and Sizemore (1984) this concept of cultural excellence, and argued for change in school structure. Hilliard and Sizemore (1984) explained cultural excellence as self-knowledge that allows a Black student to "become a contributing problem-solving member of his or her own community and in the wider world as well" (NABSE, 1984, p. 23).

In his study of Black communities in St. Louis, Morris (2009) deemed the Black students in a predominately White suburban school "sacrificial lambs" (p. 59). Morris (2009) found that Black students' relationship with the predominately White suburban school was sacrificial because it did not allow for reciprocal exchange of culture, values, or knowledge, among other things. Black students were received into the school as inferior, and only welcomed in order for the school to prove its compliance with integration and its ability to produce "good Black students" (Morris, 2009, p. 83). Morris (2009) also observed a dissonance in expectations from Black parents and teachers in the school. The author explains that, while Black parents had high expectations for their students, teachers generally felt that they were not academically prepared to attend the school. These beliefs, which are reflected in school practices as well as in the cultural disregard of Black students, resulted in Black students' invisibility in the space (Morris,

2009). That is, the school did not include Black culture in any educational experiences and erased students from history as well as from their current space in the school, thus impeding their ability to define themselves as Black achievers (Morris, 2009).

Carter Andrews (2012) argued for the need for attention to Black excellence as a way to encourage the development and maintenance of positive racial self-definition among Black students in predominately White schools. In her study of the adaptive behaviors of high-achieving Black students in a predominately White upper-class high school in Massachusetts, her findings revealed that, not only did Black students' strong racial senses of self help them manage racial micro-aggressions both in classroom and non-classroom contexts, but their experiences with racism encouraged stronger senses of racial selves. She noted that this racial sense of self was a motivating factor for achievement despite their oppressive environment. Consistent with Tatum's (2004) findings, the Black students in Carter Andrews' (2012) study reported dealing with various forms of racial assault, including

> assumptions about these students as members of the Black racial group by positioning them as native informants, staring at them during race-related discussions, stereotyping them as delinquent individuals based on preconceived notions about their neighborhood environment, devaluing their thoughts and ideas during class discussion, positioning them as invisible during class discussions, and attempting to dehumanize them by directing derogatory racial slurs at them. (p. 38)

Carter Andrews (2012) concluded that students' concepts of racialized achievement and collective identity were strategies that allowed them to "effectively navigate within and across classroom and non-classroom domains despite experiencing racial discrimination and to acquire and maintain school success without rejecting their racial identity" (Carter Andrews, 2012, p. 4).

Carter Andrews (2012) described racialized achievement as the exhibition of a strong awareness of racism, and developing strategies for managing racial microaggressions and subtle insults directed toward people of color (including verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual insults) that allow one to remain engaged and academically successful while maintaining a strong racial sense of self.

These studies indicate that these middle-class suburban educational spaces are imperative to research for various reasons. With the gap between rich and poor widening, and districts ending many race-based programs geared toward integration, such as busing or magnet schools (Smith, 2004), many suburban Black students are left stranded in racially isolated, heavily marginalizing environments. While at least 30 percent of Black children are currently being schooled in these predominately White suburban environments, there is very little research focused on analyzing their experiences (D. Carter, 2005; Orfield, 2001; Tatum, 1987, 1992, 2004; Wells & Crain, 1999). Further, while the few studies mentioned captured the influences of race and class on the experience of Black middle-class students in predominately White suburban schools, they failed to acknowledge the role of gender in students' experiences.

Black Girls in School

In order to further understand the systemic oppression experienced by Black girls in predominately White educational settings, it is important to examine the interplay of race, class, and gender in this environment. While the research discussed speaks to the myriad of race and class-based challenges that Black children face in schools, a specific review of literature detailing the intricacies of the way gender intersects with race and class is required in understanding how Black girls navigate this academic climate. This section addresses Black girls' absence in conversations of gender narratives, academic and peer interactions in school, issues of racism and

sexism for in education, experiences with invisibility in school, and positive academic influences.

Gender Narrative Exclusion

Traditional research focused on deficiencies and pathologies of Black girls, and aimed at controlling or managing female reproduction and or societal concerns, fails to recognize the multitude of structural stressors that negatively affect these girls. For example, the Moynihan Report argued that the rise in Black single-mother-headed families and the Black female disposition were to blame for Black poverty and the demise of the Black family and community, but it seemingly disregarded structural racism, slavery, and various economic issues facing the Black community (Moynihan, Rainwater, & Yancey, 1967). Thus, reform efforts and the programs aimed at improving educational outcomes for this group have not been effective because they have not considered the assemblage of issues Black girls confront. The normative discussion concerning the education of Black girls is associated with the Black/White achievement gap or general Black underachievement, and is hampered with deficit-based ideology about Black student capabilities. Aside from the deficit-oriented literature on Black students as a whole, there is a specific "gaze" from society that describes Black adolescent girlhood in terms of promiscuous sexuality and deviant behaviors (Leadbetter & Way, 1996; Moynihan et al., 1967; Tolman & Higgins, 1996). Thus, Black girls are seen as students who must overcome both their race and gender, characteristics that make them inherently inferior. Ladner (1971) contradicted this view of deviant adolescence in her study of Black girls living in a housing project in St. Louis when she concluded that there were various myths surrounding the Black female adolescent, and noted that the issues they experienced had much more to do with a lack of available resources.

While the My Brother's Keeper Initiative (Obama, 2014) has recognized a need for specific attention to the experience of Black males in school, research that highlights gender-based obstacles for girls is also needed. Various researchers have observed that Black girls face additional obstacles in comparison to other groups due to their race and gender, and have been forced to negotiate bias among school personnel in order to succeed academically.

Further, Black girls are commonly dismissed from contributing to research on their own experiences. Brown (2009) attended to this element of the invisibility of Black girls not only in school but also in research and programs with Black girls in general. Brown contended that Black women are readily dismissed in conversations about Black girlhood, but insists on including Black girls in the conversation as experts on their own lives; she notes that this kind of inclusion is missing in conversations about hip hop, and in girls' studies as well as in girls' programming. She noted that the *Reviving Ophelia* narrative (Pipher, 1994) and "Girl Power" are feminist organizing discourses in girls' studies that have failed to include Black girls, which "effectively silence[s] and exclude[s] the experience of girls of color in general" (p. 36). Brown (2009) added that there is a narrative discrepancy wherein Black girls are not consulted on the multitude of issues wherein they are the center of discussion, which again highlights the need for theoretical frameworks like Black feminism and Womanism that rely on Black women's voices and perspectives.

Academic and Peer Interactions

Holland's (2013) study on the social integration of urban Black and Latino minority students into a predominately White suburban high school in the northeast also relates to the position of Black girls in predominately White areas. Holland (2013) found racial divides similar to those in other studies of Black students in predominately White schools (Tatum, 2004). She

noted that students were divided by race in various school spaces, including the cafeteria and classrooms, but she also found a variation in integration patterns within race among minority students. Holland (2013) found that girls dealt with negative incidents associated with stereotypes of Black girls influenced by hip hop culture, whereas Black boys received positive attention from White peers for the same associations with hip hop (Holland, 2013).

In another study relevant to Black girls' experiences with teachers in predominately White schools, Proweller (1998) identified teacher attitudes and practices that discouraged Black girls' engagement in a private school. These practices included:

> (a) tendencies to interact more positively with Black girls who were of African and/or Caribbean descent, (b) lack of genuine care for their academic and social well-being, (c) teachers' stereotypical beliefs regarding African American girls and (d) utilization of instructional strategies that were incongruent with the needs and experiences of the students. (Proweller, 1998, p. 216)

The author concluded that, as the primary reason students either engage or disengage in school, teachers must seek effective culturally relevant practices for meeting the unique needs of Black girls (Proweller, 1998).

Racism and Sexism

Also concerning the distinctive position of Black girls in school and their interactions with teachers, Morris (2007) had similar findings in an ethnographic study of Black girls in a predominately minority school. The researcher found that, while girls achieved academically, they had to navigate very unique educational obstacles, as teachers often questioned their mannerisms and behavior, perceiving them as loud and unladylike. Black girls' behavior was generally viewed as unfeminine by teachers and administrators. For example, Morris (2007) noted that

both male and female teachers of various races viewed Black girls as both "coarse" and "overly-assertive," which shaped the girls' experiences in their classrooms (p. 491). These perceptions were drawn from behaviors such as calling out answers or questioning teachers about information. Morris (2007) observed that, when other ethnic groups or males did the same thing, they were less likely to be scolded or disciplined for such behavior.

The author also noted that, given their comments about Black girls being prematurely adult and "fast," teachers viewed Black girls as socially but not academically mature (p. 503). Black girls' perceived loudness was the teachers' biggest criticism in this study. Thus, it was not for breaking rules that Black girls were being admonished, but for the "way" they acted or behaved. Ultimately, Morris (2007) found that Black girls' school experiences are shaped by teachers' efforts to reform what they perceive as unladylike behavior, and to move the girls from being loud and aggressive to being silent and passive. On the contrary, Black and Latino boys, whom Morris (2007) observed as receiving the harshest discipline, were punished for mainly behavioral issues. Morris (2007) noted that navigating these additional obstacles could ultimately affect Black girls' academic outcomes, as well as their identity development.

Adding to Morris' (2007) study, Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein (2012) revisited Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) oppositional identity theory, studying how African American girls cope with inequities and discrimination to achieve success in school. The researchers found that girls were "viewed as 'inadequately feminine,' with school personnel spending more time correcting their speech and dress patterns, and less time promoting their academic skills" (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2012, p. 200). Among the girls included in their study, researchers found that many resisted personnel with various strategies, including creating strong relationships with peers and school personnel who were respectful toward them and assisted them

achieving their goals; depending on family support; and developing a strong racial identity (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2012). Thus, the authors argued that tenets of the oppositional identity theory were both evident and missing, and generally do not account for Black student academic excellence. They maintained that the achievement gap itself is a failure to recognize Black students' needs to maintain a positive social identity, rather than Black students' disassociation with achievement, as indicated by oppositional identity theory (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2012).

Invisibility

Similar to Morris' (2007) finding that Black girls' efforts to be noticed or visible by teachers often resulted in some form of discipline, Rollock (2007) noted an element of invisibility in the lives of Black girls in school. In a study exploring the effect of multiple oppressions on the academic success of Black girls, Rollock (2007) conducted ethnographic research with Black girls in an inner-city school, and found that teachers felt that female students were predisposed to being motivated, focused, and organized, requiring less surveillance than boys. Accordingly, she found that they occupied a less visible, or invisible position in the school. Thus, because they were perceived to be in a better position than Black boys, Black girls' educational issues garnered little attention. The author argued that, although African American girls have low educational attainment as compared to their White peers, they remain excluded or largely invisible from debates regarding educational achievement of Black students because they are noted to have higher achievement than Black males. Rollock (2007) insisted that Black girls tend to become important only in direct relation to educators' and policy-makers' beliefs and concerns about Black boys.

Highlighting the importance of making Black girls visible and addressing issues with racism, classism, and sexism in pedagogy and school structure, Evans-Winters (2005) examined how Black girls achieve in school in the face of adversity in her ethnography titled *Teaching Black Girls: Resiliency in Urban Classrooms*. Evans-Winters made critical observations for future work with both urban African American girls and resiliency studies. Her observations included the importance of same-gender relationships with peers, family members, and school teachers and administrators; the finding that muse relationships seemed more beneficial than mentor relationships for African American girls; and the importance of critical consciousness development. The author also found that adult collaborations that are fueled by the effort to educate and nurture the whole child are imperative, though the same intervention was not always successful with each girl (Evans-Winters, 2005).

Influences

Evans-Winters' (2005) study also indicated that African American female students' families have the most influence on their educational outcomes. For example, female caregivers in particular have the most significant impact. Girls in this study preferred programs that were gender exclusive and that included strong female figureheads from their families or the community. The author found that girls also expressed a desire to have more Black female teachers and/or noted wanting culturally competent teachers who were not necessarily Black (Evans-Winters, 2005). Additionally, Evans-Winters found the need for a whole-child approach to educational reform that considers family, community, and school as resiliency-fostering factors that aid girls in accessing various resources. Evans-Winters' (2005) findings highlight the diversity in the experiences of Black girls in the same neighborhoods and schools, and indicate the need for more research on Black girls to represent this variation in experience. These findings also support the

push for attention to the gender-specific nature of their experience; as Evans-Winters (2005) noted, girls often express a need for same-gender relationships with both peers and mentors, and suffer from gendered and race-related discrimination, including unjust practices of teachers and administrators.

Theoretical Framework Overview

As a result of this deficit framing of Black girls, and as a byproduct of Black culture, deficit approaches to teaching and learning remain in place, and educational research and scholarship have included the expectation that students will shed or overcome their inferior cultural and community identities in order to be academically successful (King, Akua, & Russell, 2013). While both Black girls and boys suffer from this deficit approach to education, girls occupy an especially precarious position because society sees them as the producers of this community (Burman, 1995). Their position as future mothers of deviant children and their own "sexual deviance" marks their bodies in specific ways. In this position, Black girls are both hypervisible and invisible; and yet, though the control of their Black bodies and reproduction are a top priority, their voices are rarely—if ever—heard (Brown, 2009).

However, frameworks including critical race theory, Black feminism, and Womanism approach the study of Black girls in strikingly different ways than traditional deficit-oriented research. Critical race theory offers a framework to critically analyze racial inequity in education. Because racial inequity, which is prevalent in education, often results in traumatic experiences for students of color (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981), CRT offers an important lens for researching Black girls in predominately White settings. This framework identifies the harmful effects of racial isolation and other forms of discrimination on the educational experience of students of color (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).

Additionally, while the bulk of literature and news on or including Black girls focuses on teenage pregnancy, family “training” or “preparation,” and academic underachievement, some authors have used these frameworks to explore the resiliency of Black girls in the face of these multiple oppressions (Brice, 2007; Brock, 2005; Evans-Winters, 2005; Richardson, 2007; Rollock, 2007). Black feminism/Womanism are theoretical focuses that recognize the need to create a place for Black women in research, where the invisible is made visible, and where a space and platform are created for Black women to serve as experts on their own stories. These theoretical approaches respond to what Wade-Gayles (1984) noted as the “triple jeopardy of Black women”: race, class, and gender (p. 117).

Therefore, in order to contest various oppressive forces in the education of Black girls, it is imperative for Black girls and women to have a voice and be producers of research and knowledge. The literature indicates that inequity related to issues of race and gender persist across class contexts, yet the literature has failed to give adequate attention to the triple jeopardy of Black girls. This qualitative study builds from existing education research, CRT, and Black feminist and Womanist literature to further explore how Black girls experience multiple oppressions, and the tools and strategies they use to resist and persist in predominately White suburban educational settings.

Two theoretical frameworks are used to guide data collection this study: a) critical race theory and b) Black feminism/Womanism. In this section, I will explain the tenets of CRT and its implications for my work, as well as Black feminism and Womanism. A third theoretical approach, Grounded Theory, which is used to analyze the data, is discussed in the next section.

Critical Race Theory

CRT is a useful framework to analyze the participants' experiences. This theoretical framework identifies the harmful effects of racial isolation and other forms of discrimination on the education of students of color (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). CRT also allows for a central focus on race and racism in the study, creates a platform for challenging dominant ideologies, and privileges the experiential knowledge of participants (Solórzano & Yosso, 2009). Using this framework also allows me to learn how race and gender intersect at a particular middle/upper-class level.

Solórzano (1998) noted five elements that define the use of CRT in educational research: a) the importance of transdisciplinary approaches; b) an emphasis on experiential knowledge; c) a challenge to dominant ideologies; d) the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination; and e) a commitment to social justice. This inquiry uses a transdisciplinary approach that draws upon critical race sociological and educational research traditions as well as women and gender studies paradigms that include the experiences of Black women and girls. In this study, a focus on storytelling and voice is used to advance the importance of experiential knowledge and subjectivity. Through this focus, the research resists hegemonic ideologies that privilege notions of objectivity and validity. Also, in recognizing the importance of race and gender, this study acknowledges the presence of racism, sexism, and classism as well as other forms of oppression in Black girls' daily lives, and thus uses these oppressions as a central focus of the research. Thus, CRT is applicable to both this study and work with Black girls in general, as it allows researchers to refute deficit-based dominant ideologies of Black girls by situating them as both knowledge holders and producers working against forces of oppression on their own behalf. The storytelling methodology used in this study is also a critical element of CRT; the framework advances the importance of work that benefits the participants

and is itself an act of resistance. This work accomplishes both through the use of untraditional and culturally informed research methods, and subsequently empowers girls to critically reflect and self-define.

Black Feminism and Womanism

In the tradition of many pillars of the fields, including Collins (1996) and Phillips (2006), I use Black feminism and Womanism interchangeably, uniting them under a joint focus on women of color. In “What’s in a Name? Womanism, Black Feminism and Beyond,” Collins (2001) explained that both Black feminists and Womanists have a common agenda: seeking self-determination and self-definition for Black women. Supporting this stance, Omolade (Collins, 1996) added that “Black Feminism is sometimes referred to as Womanism because both are concerned with struggles against racism and sexism by Black women who are themselves part of the Black women’s struggle to receive equity and liberty” (p. 10). Similarly, Maparyan (2012) stated that part of the purpose of Womanism is to use the scholarship of recovery and personal practice to dispel myths about everyday women of color who are considered backward or inadequately feminine. Both the scholarship of recovery and the practice of self-determination are imperative in this study, as girls are prompted to reflect on or recover and craft their own stories.

The present study explores the experiences and persistence strategies of Black girls in a predominantly White educational setting. Therefore, in relation to this study, these frameworks support: a) the notion that policies and programs in education create a system of privilege based on racial and gender inequity (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002); and b) Black girls face intersecting oppressions that make their experiences both similar to and different from those of Black boys (Collins, 2001; Phillips, 2006).

Cleage (1993) has defined Black feminism as "the belief that women are full human beings capable of participation and leadership in the full range of human activities—intellectual, political, social, sexual, spiritual, [and] economic" (p. 28). In distinguishing Black feminism from traditional feminism, Collins (2000) noted issues specific to Black women as its main focus. Citing Black women's long history in feminist acts geared towards the well-being of Black people, Collins (2000) highlighted the work of pioneering scholar Anna Julia Cooper's *A Voice from the South* (1892), a text that examined Black women's intersectional oppressions; and Black male scholar W.E.B. Du Bois' work, "The Damnation of Women" (1930), which addressed Black women's struggles in contending with both racism and sexism.

Intersectionality is a critical concept in the work of Black feminists; it moves researchers beyond discussions of experiencing race, gender, and class to an analysis of systems that privilege and exclude based on those and other social indicators. Crenshaw (1989) defined the experience of multiple oppressions as intersectionality. Speaking to the ways Black women are excluded from both conversations of race and sexism, Crenshaw (1989) explained that, unlike White women, Black women cannot simply oppose Black men, because although patriarchy exists within the Black community, racism inhibits the creation of such a political consciousness; instead, we must negotiate the racial stereotypes of our male counterparts that serve to harm the entire race. Crenshaw (1989) then argued that the "problems of exclusion cannot be solved simply by including Black women within an already established analytical structure. Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism, classism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 58).

Intersectionality is used as a frame to address the numerous issues identified by Black feminists, including the exploitation of Black women's labor, the political denial of Black women's rights, and the controlling images applied to Black women (Collins, 2000). Collins (2000) explained that Black feminism emerged from the recognition of the historical denial of full participation in the women's movement for Black women. Thus, feminism became entrenched with overt racism, and an exclusive concern for middle-class White women's issues. She noted that Black women have been omitted from the feminist movement; thus, corresponding feminist theories are limited in application to White and middle-class women. Likewise, hooks (1989) has offered that, because traditional and privileged Western theories are often rooted in racism and/or sexism, Black feminism has moved beyond them to collectively challenge ways and systems of knowing.

Moreover, Black feminist critic Hazel Carby added that, even in instances where the literature or political concerns involve Black women's issues, they do so from a White, middle-class standpoint that involves Black issues, but not actually Black women (Collins, 2000). Crenshaw (Lemieux, 2014) elaborated on the need for a feminist movement that was responsive to Black women's issues. On sexism, Crenshaw explained:

> It doesn't happen to Black and White women the same way. The way Black women and girls experience discrimination is often framed as secondary or collateral to what's happening, or downstream to what's happening for men and boys, and that's significant because it creates the belief and expectation that the way to handle the crisis facing Black women and girls is first, fix what's happening with men. (p. 129)

Crenshaw concluded by stressing the interdependence of Black women and men, which is important because Black women contend that they also share in the experiences of Black men

as part of the larger Black community. Collins (2000) argued that, "Overall, even though Black women intellectuals have asserted their right to speak both as African Americans and as women, historically these women have not held top leadership positions in Black organizations and have frequently struggled within them to express Black feminist ideas" (p. 400). Collins (2000) noted that the work of Black feminism involves "reclaiming Black women's ideas and discovering, re-interpreting, and, in many cases, analyzing for the first time the works of individual U.S. Black women thinkers" (p. 407). These reclaimed ideas and knowledge can then be used to develop new epistemological criteria as well as challenge what is constituted as intellectual discourse.

Reclaiming ideas and positions as holders of knowledge is especially critical in the education of Black girls, as they are often ignored in the research and, when addressed, are only discussed in conversations of teen pregnancy, drug abuse, welfare reform, sexuality, promiscuity, school failure, poverty, and violence (Banks, 2005; Leadbeater & Way, 1996). In these conversations, Black women and girls are homogenized by stereotypes of their social experiences, which allows for their further exclusion from the research because they are framed as helpless or in need of saviors. This work recognizes the importance of placing Black women's narratives at the center of the research and analyzing their interactions with systems of oppressions that often go unrecognized in traditional Eurocentric research.

Also broadly addressing a range of oppressions, Womanism is a theoretical position focused on using Black women's subjectivities for social, political, and economic justice. It shifts the focus away from dominant frames of knowing toward an epistemological standpoint centered on valuing Black women's folk traditions (Phillips, 2006). Rather than investigating phenomena of social and political injustice with the assumption that marginalized Black women and girls need support or "saving," as compared to traditional Eurocentric research traditions, Womanism

stresses the inherent strength and expertise gained from Black women's everyday experiences of living and navigating oppressive social conditions. Unlike some traditional theories (e.g., feminism, postmodernism, and positivism), Womanism offers a unique space for Black women to engage in dialogue, investigate their own social condition, name and address challenges, and take action to solve their own issues (Phillips, 2006).

In dialogue, Womanists use a method called *recovery* to reclaim the validity and importance of personal experiences. Phillips (2006) explained the Womanist way of knowing by stating:

> Part of what Womanism is out to prove (often through the scholarship of recovery but sometimes simply through personal practice) is that everyday women of color (and similar people of all genders and colors) who do this labor are not backward; rather, they are incredibly forward-thinking and integral to humanity's survival, despite their compromised visibility on the world stage and in the academy. (p. 12)

One feature differentiating Womanism from traditional Eurocentric theories is that it does not privilege rationality or "science." Womanism has a triad of concerns involving humans' relationships to the spiritual, to other humans, and to nature. While Womanism does not claim to be a theory, "Womanist methodology is about being able to envision a desired outcome, then going back to the level of thought and feeling to transmute originating conditions in ways that lead to that outcome" (Phillips, 2006, p. 52).

While noting differences in each theory that includes Womanists' commitment to the survival of the wholeness of both men and women, and while identifying Womanism as a continuously evolving ethical system, Collins (1996) proposed that, in the struggle for survival, Black

women must move beyond differences in naming to "analyze the centrality of gender in shaping a range of relationships within African American communities" (p. 15). Thus, Collins illustrated a way to ensure group unity in order to accomplish common goals while also recognizing the "heterogeneity that operates within the boundaries of the term 'Black women'" (Collins, 1996, p. 9).

Therefore, using a critical raced-gendered epistemology steeped in the traditions of both Black feminism and Womanism allows the researcher to address the multiple realities of Black women and girls while focusing on resisting the numerous oppressions often enacted against them. These frameworks allow for an approach to research that does not privilege scientific rationality or presume objectivity, but instead advances the importance and the usefulness of lived experience and culture in research, resisting oppressions by changing the way research on marginalized populations is conducted. This particular approach thus works for researching the educational experiences of Black girls, supporting the investigation of the multiple oppressions they experience that are embedded in the structures of the educational system.

Intersections among Frameworks

Both theoretical frameworks require an emphasis on experiential knowledge. Drawing on the transdisciplinary possibilities of CRT, I use Black feminism/Womanism as a theoretical framework when researching Black girls to more fully analyze the gendered aspect of the experience of students of color. Delgado (2002) is critical to note here, as she explained that:

> A critical raced-gendered epistemology does not position the debate between objectivity and subjectivity. Rather, it sees all stories as subjective and the production of knowledge as situated. And those working from this perspective understand that education in the United States has a way to go before it is a meritocratic, unbiased,

> and fair process. Working from within a critical raced-gendered epistemology does not mean that one is interested in replacing an old body of knowledge that purports to be the truth with an alternative body of knowledge that claims to be the truth. It does mean that one acknowledges and respects other ways of knowing and understanding, particularly the stories and narratives of those who have experienced and responded to different forms of oppression. (p. 120)

Considering the importance of these frameworks, I am using a critical raced-gendered epistemology that works to address intersectional experiences of Black girls while avoiding the privileging of one oppression over the other. Evans-Winters and Esposito (2010) explained that this critical raced-gendered epistemology, also referred to as critical race feminism, is predicated on the following notions: 1) that the experiences of women of color, thus perspectives, are different from the experiences of men of color and those of White women; 2) that Black women face multiple forms of discrimination; 3) that Black women are not a homogenous group, but have multiple identities and consciousness; 4) that Black women's intersectional oppressions must be studied from a multidisciplinary scope; and 5) that critical raced-gendered studies must simultaneously combat gender and racial oppression.

By specifically centering narrative, this study avoids the claim to objectivity in research, and instead privileges the perspectives of Black girls regarding their lived experiences, which is inherent in a critical raced-gendered epistemology. Since particular frameworks speak to the experiences of women of different ethnicities, there are multiple forms of these epistemologies. For this study, Black feminist and Womanist theoretical frames are used to conceptualize the experiences of Black girls.

CRT is reflected in this study through:

1. An examination of the ways race and racism are embedded in the education system, affecting the academic experiences of students of color (Ladson-Billings, 1998).
2. Use of counter-storytelling to challenge dominant ways of knowing, thus giving authority to the lived experience of student and parents of color (Yosso et al., 2009).
3. The use of CRT to challenge dominant ideology, thus critiquing dominant or widespread beliefs about educating Black students (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).

This research is couched within a Black feminism and Womanism framework through:

1. The use of cultural intuition as a way of knowing (Collins, 2001; Delgado Bernal, 1998; Maparyan, 2012).
2. Recognition of intersecting oppressions in the lives of Black girls (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000).
3. Work grounded in activism and the transformation of women's lives (Collins, 1998, 2000; Maparyan, 2012; Phillips, 2006).
4. The recognition of culturally informed lived experience through storytelling that supports everyday survival (Collins, 2000; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Maparyan, 2012).

Storytelling

Storytelling is related to CRT and Black feminism/Womanism in that they both privilege this nontraditional or non-Eurocentric way of knowing that serves as both a way to preserve this historical way of knowing and to use it as a tool of resistance. This work employs CRT's method of counter-storytelling as a critical tool to challenge dominant ideology, including deficit theorizing about Black girls. Counter-storytelling is the act of telling stories that push back against the

dominant narrative by telling the other side of the story and by drawing from knowledge populations largely considered inadequate producers of knowledge—in this case, Black girls. Dominant stories claiming a color-blind or objective approach in regards to education research have overwhelmingly characterized Black adolescent girlhood in terms of promiscuous sexuality and deviant behaviors (Leadbetter & Way, 1996; Moynihan et. al, 1967; Tolman & Higgins, 1996).

Counter-stories from Black girls serve to highlight the ways a race-neutral or color-blind approach further exclude students of color by ignoring the manifestations of racism in school policies and practices, and by silencing marginalized students (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In this study, counter-storytelling is used to give Black girls who are normally silenced in discussions of Black girlhood a platform to testify or tell their stories. Storytelling is appropriate for this group as they are subject to multiple oppressions, and their experiences hold the possibility of exposing elements of White privilege and gender oppression in education. This use of counter-story is also supported in Black feminist and Womanist frameworks, as storytelling is used as a vehicle to affirm the strength and knowledge born from the lived experiences of Black women who navigate multiple oppressions.

Black feminism/Womanism also supports this use of story in its commitment to traditional ways of knowing and respect for the lived experiences of Black women. Storytelling has a long tradition in communities of color (Bell, 1987). In the Black community, stories have been used to pass down historical knowledge, teach lessons, and preserve culture. For Black feminists/Womanists, stories are a way to move beyond privileged Western theories to collectively challenge ways and systems of knowing (hooks, 1989). Black girls' stories specifically challenge theories rooted in multiple oppressions by drawing on their own intersectional experiences in the education system, thus reconstituting the meaning of intellectual discourse.

Counter-Storytelling as a Historical Tradition

A second intersection between the theoretical frameworks that shape this inquiry is counter-storytelling. This is a tradition in the Black community, and it has also been referred to by indigenous researchers and other non-Eurocentric communities as *pedagogical witnessing*. In pedagogical witnessing, Black and indigenous communities privilege those communities' ways of knowing and passing on history and knowledge. Iseke (2011) described pedagogical witnessing as follows: "The process of witnessing another person's testimony is a part of the process of pedagogical witnessing that allows my reading, viewing, or listening to be an event in which I allow the understanding of someone else's life to interrupt my own life" (p. 312). In this way, Iseke (2011) spoke to the constructive and dialogical nature of storytelling, illustrating how the method draws upon the voice of not only the individual, but of the community.

In referencing the decolonizing possibilities of storytelling and pedagogical witnessing, Smith (1999) noted that, although Western knowledge makes claims to objectivity, it is "underpinned by a cultural system of classification by views about human nature, human morality and virtue, by conceptions of space and time, by conceptions of gender and race" (p. 44). Thus, using traditional ways of knowing for indigenous people serves to support colonized and oppressed peoples' struggles for "recovery of ourselves, an analysis of colonialism, and a struggle for self-determination" (Smith, 199, p. 7). Consequently, storytelling is a form of research method in this recovery of cultural knowledge that also aids an ongoing struggle for self-determination.

Solórzano and Yosso (2002) defined counter-storytelling as a method of telling stories of marginalized people who have often been silenced in the telling of majoritarian stories. The authors offered counter-story as a tool to expose, analyze, and challenge the White privilege pervasive in master narratives. In this study, counter-stories or accounts of the educational experience

were constructed using a dialogical interview process. In this type of discussion, girls' abilities to resist and persist are enhanced. (Two excerpts from interviews illustrating a dialogic interview process are below.) The counter-stories were then analyzed to explore girls' educational experiences as well as strategies of resistance and persistence. I did not assume that narratives would be inherently oppositional, as I recognized the possibility that girls may have internalized the dominant narrative. However, for marginalized people, the telling of one's own story is inherently counter to traditional approaches to research. Voice is a particularly important element to consider in telling stories. Marginalized people's stories have often been co-opted by researchers who use the populations for their own benefit, and the voices used to tell those stories are also determined by those who have power and authority over those stories.

Storytelling pushes back against majoritarian narratives that serve to silence marginalized people through a discounting of indigenous ways of knowing in the following ways:

1. A focus on the personal experiences of marginalized people.
2. A privileging of perspective and voice of the research participant.
3. A dialogic nature of producing knowledge where the researcher/subject divide is eliminated, yielding a mutual learning experience.
4. Honoring of culture and cultural ways of knowing.

Voice

A third intersection among the frameworks is "voice." This study is centered on "voice" as an identified component of both CRT and Black feminism/Womanism (Maparyan, 2012). Ladson-Billings (1998) described voice as "naming one's own reality" (p. 13). Similarly, Maparyan (2012) noted the importance of the scholarship of recovering and documenting the

lived experiences of everyday women of color from their own perspectives in order to aid in survival and in countering invisibility. In storytelling, voices of people of color are used to bring power to discussions on racial injustice and in fostering the recognition that people of color have experiential knowledge about racism (Delgado, 1989). Through the use of counter-story, participants' voices will relay their individual experiences navigating a racialized school terrain. This work seeks the voice of both girls and their parents in order to learn the full history of the girls' school experiences. Collins (1986) has noted that voice is critical for Black girls and women because "self-definition and self-valuation are not luxuries—they are necessary for Black female survival" (p. S19).

The privileging of Western voice in scholarship has long been a concern for the Black community. Tillman (2002) noted that Black scholars, including W.E.B. DuBois (1973), Anna Julia Cooper (1892/1988), and Carter G. Woodson (1933/1977), argued that research on Black people needed to include Black voices; otherwise, the work would lead to inaccurate generalizations of Black life from those with limited cultural and historical context. Tillman (2002) argued for the use of culturally sensitive research approaches that are inclusive of Black voice and perspective in order to fill the void in what the larger research community understands about Black Americans and their experiences.

Providing a platform for the voice of marginalized groups helps disrupt the "master script" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 18), which Ladson-Billings (1998) described as the White, upper-class, male voice that is considered standard knowledge. Consequently, this standard knowledge serves to silence marginalized groups and maintain White supremacy (Ladson-Billings, 1998). In this effort, the voices of minority groups are used to refute master script silencing and challenge the dominant culture's authority and power (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

3 METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the study's research site, participants, research methods, data sources, data analysis techniques, researcher subjectivity, and study limitations. These elements are part of the larger research methodology, which works to investigate the experiences of Black girls in this predominately White suburban educational setting, as well as the tools and strategies they use to persevere.

The Research Site

The research site is a suburban neighborhood and school in a large Southern metropolitan city. Since the dismantling of the ABC busing and magnet program (Hecht and Pappione vs. ABC Board of Education, 1997) (pseudonym), Black suburban youth are more racially isolated in overwhelmingly White contexts.

School Statistics

The girls attend a suburban high school with grades 9-12. The school has a total of 2,392 students, with 115 full-time teachers and a 21:1 student-to-teacher ratio. The school is not Title I eligible. Of the 2,392 students, 13 percent are classified as economically disadvantaged, with 10 percent of students eligible to participate in the free lunch program, and four percent eligible for the reduced-price lunch program. The school has a total minority enrollment of 34 percent, including: .3 percent American Indian/Alaskan Native, 12 percent Asian, 14 percent Black, and 7 percent Hispanic. A total of 66 percent of the students are White. The school gender breakdown is 50 percent male and 50 percent female (US News & World Report, 2014). The school offers an array of advanced placement courses with a 54 percent participation rate from the student body. Of the students who participate in the advanced placement courses, there is a 93 percent

average pass rate for those courses and an 85 percent average pass rate for the advanced placement exam (US News & World Report, 2014).

Neighborhood Statistics

This is a site- and population-specific study. The girls in this study live in suburban community developments near the school that are mostly comprised of single-family homes built in the early to mid-2000s. The home prices typically range from $275-400,000 and range from 2200-4000 square feet. The estimated median house/condominium value for the zip code is $315,657, which is more than double the state average of $154,500. The average household size is 2.6 people. The average adjusted gross income for individuals in this zip code in 2004 was $94,296, also more than double the state average of $45,376. The average salary/wage of residents in this area is $87,286; the state average is $39,442. The racial breakdown for the zip code is as follows: 45,648 White residents; 5,438 Black residents; 4,633 Asian residents; 3,465 Hispanic/Latino residents; 429 American Indian residents; 876 residents of two or more races; and 850 residents of an unidentified race (City Data, n.d.). With home values and household incomes significantly higher than the city and state average, and a White population eight times that of the Black population, these statistics were used to classify this area as a predominately White middle- and upper-middle-class environment, and to select this site as an appropriate setting for this study.

Participants

The study includes five Black high school girls (ages 14-16) living in a particular majority White middle/upper-middle class suburban neighborhood and attending the neighborhood high school. I chose to study Black girls who lived in a predominantly White community and at-

tended a school with a very small minority student population. I worked with a purposeful sample of Black high school girls. Purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) was used to select five participants for the study. The maximum number of girls I was willing to allow to participate was 10. Though six were initially recruited, one relocated to an area that was not a part of the required study setting. Thus, she no longer met the criteria and was eliminated from the study. Participants were recruited by a flier posted on a neighborhood board located in the clubhouse of the study neighborhood. Girls who were interested had their parents contact me via email or phone. Most of the recruitment was conducted through word of mouth as girls told their friends in the neighborhood about the study. I then contacted each participant by email in order to set up a meeting with both the participant and her parents to discuss the participant criteria, the details of the study, and to sign consent and assent forms. Participants had to meet the following criteria in order to take part in the study: 1) identify as a person of African descent; 2) identify as female; 3) currently reside in the identified study area (middle/upper-class predominately White suburb); and 4) attend the local high school. I recognized that experiences might vary among participants concerning the ways they racially or ethnically identified as well as their history in the predominately White setting, among other factors.

The following demographic data in Table 1 (below) describes the girls who participated in this research. As a requirement for participation in the study, all girls racially identified as Black. However, two participants had parents who identified as biracial with a White and Black parent. Participants were ethnically diverse, with three participants having immigrant parents: one had a parent from the Caribbean, and two others had parents from West Africa. The other two girls' parents identified as African American. In regards to location within the United States,

the study focuses on girls within a particular Southern metropolitan city and neighborhood; however, three of the participants noted being born and attending school in a Northern state before relocating. Two participants were born in the city in which the study was conducted.

This study was designed to capture the educational experiences of girls from higher-income suburban families in high school. Therefore, all the girls in this case study identified as coming from socio-economic backgrounds ranging from: 1) middle class to 2) upper-middle class. In contrast, all of the participants' parents noted that they were from backgrounds ranging from 1) poor to 2) working class to 3) lower-middle class. Participants' parents' educational backgrounds and occupations were also diverse. Their education levels varied from high school graduates to holders of graduate and professional degrees, and their occupations ranged from in-home and blue-collar labor to positions in corporations and the healthcare industry.

Each girl participating in the study attended only public schools. The size of each participant's family was assorted, with two participants coming from a single-parent household, one from a shared-custody household, and two from a two-parent household. None of the participants identified as only children, and sibling numbers ranged from one to three. All parents were still of childbearing age. Two of the participants in the study were siblings; they are identified as such in Table 1 below. Each girl identified herself as college-going; in other words, they all expected to attend college upon completion of high school.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Data

Participant Name	**Kendall**	**Dion (Sibling)**	**Alaina (Sibling)**	**Laila**	**Michelle**
Neighborhood	Palisades Place	Palisades Place	Palisades Place	Wesley Falls	Palisades Place
School	HK	HK	HK	HK	HK

Grade	9th	11th	9th	9th	9th
Parent 1 Education	Graduate degree	Professional Degree	Professional Degree	Undergraduate Degree	High school
Parent 2 Education	Some college	NA	NA	Undergraduate Degree	High school
Parent 1 Occupation	Finance	Pharmacist	Pharmacist	Corporate/White collar	Stay-at-home mom
Parent 2 Occupation	Blue collar labor	NA	NA	Corporate/White collar	Professional musician
Participant Race	Black	Black	Black	Black	Black
# of siblings	2	3	3	1	3
Region born	South	North	North	South	North
Academic track	Honors	Mixed	Standard	Standard	Honors
Extracurricular activities	NA	Track (9th grade)	Lacrosse	NA	Choir, Basketball manager

Data Sources

During semi-structured interviews, I used interview questions to engage the girls (see Appendix A) and parents (see Appendix B) in the inquiry. Based on the tenets of CRT and Black feminism/Womanism, the interview questions focused on girls' experiences navigating intersecting oppressions in their school environment. Question categories for girls included: 1) racialized school experiences; 2) social life; 3) dating; 4) teacher interaction; and 5) resistance (see Chapter 5). The interviews with parents focused on parent socialization and involvement in their daughter's schooling. Each participant was given the opportunity to review and approve transcripts of each interview. Upon concluding the study, I met with each participant to discuss their story, and participants had the chance to request changes in their story or to opt out at that time.

The qualitative methodology used to conduct this research was anchored in five two-hour semi-structured interviews (Olson, 2011), of which one included photo-elicitation. The second data source was the transcripts from those interviews. The third and fourth data sources were one

semi-structured parent interview and transcription. Fifth, six, and seventh data sources consisted of field notes, document analysis, and "I am" poems (See Table 2, below).

Table 2

Data Sources

Data Source	Description
Document Reviews	Documents including census data, student schedules, school yearbooks, school senior books, the school website, and school newspapers were reviewed to give context to the study.
Participant Interview	The actual interview served as an opportunity for the researcher to observe the participant and the setting.
Participant Interview Transcripts	Each girl was interviewed for one to two hours on five different occasions over a period of three months. Four interviews were semi-structured and one interview was photo-elicitation. Photos used in the photo-elicitation interviews were selected by the researcher from documents provided by the participants, including school yearbooks, senior books, and school newspapers. Each interview was transcribed verbatim and member-checked by the participant. When all five interviews were complete, the cumulative transcripts were used to construct stories.
Parent Interview	The actual interview served as an opportunity for the researcher to observe the parent and the setting.
Parent Interview Transcripts	One parent per participant was interviewed after all participant interviews were complete. Each parent interview lasted one to two hours. Each parent interview was transcribed verbatim and member checked by the parent. Parent transcripts were used to construct parent reflections.
Field notes	I took notes during interviews and pre- and post-interview interactions with participants and parents over the course of three months. Notes were also taken during document reviews.
I am poems	This worksheet activity prompted girls to fill in blanks in a given poem structure. The objective of the activity was to produce an autobiographical poem describing the participant (See Appendix G).

Data Collection Activities

The five Black girl participants were interviewed a total of five times over the course of three months. Each interview was transcribed word for word by me immediately after it was conducted. Before beginning each interview, the participants were allowed to member-check the previous interview transcripts and approve or make any changes or clarifications. In the field, I

took notes during pre-, ongoing, and post-interview interactions. I conducted document analysis of census data, student schedules, school yearbooks, school senior books, the school's website, and school newspapers, and reviewed the "I am" poems the girls produced. All data sources described above were then used to construct the school stories for each participant, which consists of the eight-data source. As a researcher and co-constructor, I participated in the construction of the stories via the methods previously mentioned. Through a very specific type of interview process that was dialogical in nature, the work yielded interview transcripts that cumulatively resulted in the girls' school stories. Thus, the actual stories as well as the transcripts from interviews serve as data.

Interviews

I will begin this section by discussing interviews and the creation of narratives or stories, then discuss the role of documents used in the inquiry, and conclude with a review of the analysis, including an in-depth review of grounded theory data analysis and cultural intuition.

Qualitative interview methodology allows for individual story construction, which is used to represent diverse experiences of girls and avoid monolithic Black girl representation. In this study, I used both semi-structured interviews (Bernard, 1988) and photo-elicitation interviews (Harper, 2002) to drive the interview discussions and construct stories; I used document analysis to give context to the study. I first analyzed documents, and then conducted four semi-structured interviews and one photo-elicitation interview with each participant. I followed participant interviews with semi-structured interviews with parents. In concluding the study, I requested one "I am" statement from each participant, and allowed the participants to conduct a final review of the collected data.

Semi-structured, dialogical interviews allow for the telling of stories because they require a less formal dialogue or conversation between the researcher and participant. While there is an interview guide, the researcher can make natural deviations as appropriate, which provides an opportunity to see and understand the topic in new ways (Bernard, 1988). Using a critical raced-gendered epistemology as part of the research process allows for a mutual exchange of knowledge and information (Collins, 2000). Similarly, photo-elicitation was used to jog participants' memories or to enlighten the researcher on new categories or themes. To confirm the information previously presented and to go further in depth with our conversation on the topics that the participant and I had discussed in previous interviews, I presented photos related to those topics. Participants were also invited to present photos related to our conversations. Harper (2002) has noted that photo-elicitation is used specifically for identity work because people often represent themselves through pictures. Photo-elicitation can also be particularly helpful in studies about race, and in this case, the photos allowed us to see what we were discussing. Because race is a construct, there is room for error and confusion when discussing and describing people according to race (Knowles, 2006); however, visual representations can complete and confirm images or other discussed visual elements (Winddance Twine, 2006).

In order to conduct photo-elicitation interviews, I collected high school yearbooks and senior books from one participant. I based the photos used in the elicitation interview on the participants' four previous semi-structured interviews. I then selected photos from the two sources that I felt could help me further understand the girls' interview responses as well as prompt them to elaborate on or clarify previous ones. Thus, photo-elicitation interviews served dual purposes: 1) to clarify visual descriptions; and 2) to encourage any additional thoughts or explanations from each girl. I selected approximately 10 photographs to use with each interview participant.

Like the semi-structured interviews, photo-elicitation interviews lasted approximately one to two hours depending on the participant.

Dialogical Interviews

The interview below serves as an example of a dialogic exchange as the participant provided information but reached a new level of understanding and thus explanation of the situation by prompts or questions from the researcher.

Figure 1 (below) illustrates a portion of a dialogical interview process with a study participant (Kendall). In the interview, Kendall began by simply stating that she wanted to go to another high school. After further conversation, she explains that she would prefer a high school with more Black students. After continuous exchange, however, she names the specific difficulties of being a Black girl in her current school that have prompted her desire to change environments. In this way, the participant moves from saying she would simply prefer another school, to acknowledging issues with beauty standards in her current school.

Researcher	"There is more Black girls at other schools? So how do you think (if at all) you will be different in those schools than you are in this school?"
Kendall	"Cause it's easier to be myself and like easier to make friends."
Researcher	"What do you mean by "be yourself"? In what ways do you feel like you can't be yourself now?"
Kendall	"Umm, probably my hair, like wear my hair in different styles 'cause like at a white school it's like a big deal to try different hairstyles 'cause people talk about you and like yeah people talk about you."

Figure 1.

Dialogical Interview Excerpt: Kendall

A second excerpt illustrates a portion of the dialogical interview process with another study participant (Dion). In the excerpt, Dion acknowledges unfair discipline policies among administrators, but through the conversation, she begins to think about how the administrators may be profiling her not only because of what she wears, but also because of her appearance. Generally, she discussed her issues with administrators as complaints about her headbands. However, through dialogue, both Dion and I realized that her hair's curly, more ethnic style also prompted more attention from administrators.

Dion	". . .so if I would wear a headband around my hair because usually I wear my hair natural like buns and stuff—like—and in the mornings sometimes I don't have enough time to like brush my hair up or put conditioner in, so I just wrap like a hairband around my head… And every single morning they would tell me to take it off and stuff and I wouldn't take my headbands off because my hair wouldn't look good. And they would be like, "Oh, take the headgear off. It is not acceptable." And I would be like, "I'm not wearing a hat." And they would just like bully me about it."
Researcher	"Ok, and that was the administrators or the teachers?"
Dion	"Yeah, all the administrators."
Researcher	"And did you see them doing that to other students? Like, did you feel like it was fairly enforced or unfairly enforced?"
Dion	"No, I think it was totally unfair. Because like if White girls wear headbands, then it was no big deal, but if I had to wear it, then it would be a big problem because they said I wore it dramatically or something like it was a distraction. And I don't understand how."

Researcher	"So do you think it was your hair or the headband?"
Dion	"I think both because my buns are like huge on top of my head because I can't make it like any type of other way, so it's just how I wear my hair."
Researcher	"Ok, but they never actually said it's your hair, but they said you're wearing your headband dramatically?"
Dion	"Yeah, just my headbands."
Researcher	"Was there any difference between your headband and other girls' headbands?"
Dion	"No, definitely not."

Figure 2.

Dialogical Interview Excerpt: Dion

Storytelling

A primary data source for this study is counter-storytelling. Stories were constructed with both semi-structured interviews with girls and parents, and with photo-elicitation interviews (along with document analysis) with only girls. As a researcher, I participated in the construction of stories, assisting girls in making meaning of lived experiences, and writing actual stories. In this construction process, I positioned myself as an authority equipped with the theoretical and cultural sensitivity necessary to interpret the girls' responses and conceptualize coherent stories. The identity of the person who has the authority to interpret work is an important consideration in narrative inquiry. It is imperative for both the researcher and the participant to collaborate in the creation process as well as the analysis. It is my own experience—coupled with my knowledge as an educational researcher—that aided me in my endeavor to find the significance

in participants' stories. Thus, I leaned heavily on my cultural intuition in order to construct stories with research participants. Tillman (2002) has emphasized the critical nature of culturally sensitive research approaches, noting that it allows for collaborative work and mutual understanding between the researcher and the participant, which produces emancipatory experience and work. These stories serve to counter dominant ideology about the school experiences of Black girls. Additionally, Ladson-Billings (1998) explained that stories are important in critical race studies because "they add necessary contextual contours to the seeming 'objectivity' of positivist perspectives" (p. 11).

Girls' positioned as knowledge holders and experts on their own stories serves to undermine White privilege. Speaking from the position of the minority, stories facilitate an understanding of normalcy outside that of the upper/middle-class White heterosexual male. Counter-stories also serve as tools of resistance and survival for girls, countering the internalization of the dominant narrative through the actual act of telling, collecting, and documenting. Black girls telling their own stories in their own voices in the midst of research that considers them invisible is a form of resistance. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) highlighted three types of counter-stories, including personal stories, other people's stories, and composite stories. This study collected other people's personal stories, and the girls' stories of their experiences with intersecting oppressions were told in third person. Additionally, parent reflections were also told in third person. These parental reflections were necessary for this study, as literature has indicated that Black parents are a critical part of their daughters' educaitonal experiences, since they too must negotiate majority White spaces. Parents are also involved in the school selection process, and participate in their daughters' schooling (Tatum 1987, 1992, 2004). Consequently, parents are relevant to the study of these educational spaces. in this study, girls and parents were given an opportunity to

read and approve or refute interview transcriptions throughout the study, as well as the full narratives once the study was complete.

Each girl participating in the study was asked to share her own educational experience navigating high school in a predominantly White suburban educational setting, and to reflect on those experiences as part of her story or testimony. Testimony or *testimonio* privileges the oral narrative of native cultures and uses critical reflection on their personal experiences as a source of knowledge, with particular attention paid to sociopolitical realities (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona, 2012). In this way, testimony pushes against traditional notions of research objectivity by "situating the individual in communion with a collective experience marked by marginalization, oppression, or resistance" (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona, 2012, p. 363).

This mode of delivering information about one's own experience speaks to the Black feminist call for self-definition and autonomy (Combahee River Collective, 1977). In a response to this call for self-definition, and in honor of the cultural tradition of "testifying" or testimony, the girls gave their first-hand accounts of their experiences in school in their own "I am" statements, which I will present (in Chapter 4) to serve as an introduction to who they are. These accounts and statements are also a testament to the girls' agency over themselves, their stories, and their education.

"I Am" Statements

Each participating girl was also asked to create an "I am" poem describing themselves. "I am" statements are an autobiographical poem and a practice in self-definition that I felt was critical to this research process. Rather than setting parameters using what I felt adequately described the girls, they were able to demonstrate that they can represent themselves. Though the "I am"

statement offers a structure, the girls were able to offer a portrait of themselves in a creative fashion. The purpose of the "I am" statements was to prompt critical self-identification and self-realization.

Documents

Document analysis was used to support the girls' stories, parent reflections, and researcher intuition as we reread the documents through a critical raced-gendered lens. These documents also served to establish a clear context for the work in terms of school landscape. I conducted a review of documents, including census (demographic) data, student schedules, school yearbooks, school senior books, school websites, and school newspapers to analyze whether patterns indicated by girls' stories and parent reflections were consistent with documents produced directly by the school.

Document analysis supported the girls' storytelling and reclaiming of their own lives through a rereading of documents. This allowed the girls to apply their own perspective and give their individual versions of the story behind the document. While I as the researcher or another adult might interpret a grade report or school schedule in one way, a rereading of the document might offer a new meaning in relation to the participant. In terms of establishing context, documents such as current and historical census and demographic information were critical to illustrating the ways race, class, and gender have historically interacted in this environment to currently affect the girls' lives. Further, because CRT requires an understanding of how race and racism are embedded in systems, documents detailing a history of the school as well as the larger community were used to further explore the racial climate. School documents like the yearbooks, senior books, and newspapers provided by participants worked in two ways. First, they worked to support the girls' stories. In fact, a rereading of the documents with particular attention to race,

class, and gender issues noted by the girls is part of the work of Black feminism and Womanism, as the girls are taking back the narrative and reframing the implications of the documents (Maparyan, 2012). Second, centering the girls' voices and thus their perspectives allows for a new understanding of the documents representative of the girls' stories and everyday lived experiences.

To enable me to construct their stories, I interviewed each girl five times over the course of three months for one to two hours each time. Four interviews with the girls were semi-structured, and one interview was both semi-structured and used photo-elicitation. One semi-structured interview was conducted with at least one parent of each girl. Parents were notified when signing consent forms that they were required to participate in the study along with their daughters. Since only one parent was required, I interviewed parents based on convenience and their availability. The students committed a total of five to 10 hours to the study, and the parents one to two hours total. All interviews were audio recorded. Those recordings were then transcribed verbatim using the grounded theory data analysis method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Grounded Theory Data Analysis

I used the constructivist approach to grounded theory, understanding that meaning emerges from both the participants and myself as the researcher, and is influenced by my relationship to the participants (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2002). Constructivists study how participants construct meanings and actions, and they do so from positionalities as close to the inside of the experience as possible. Constructivists also view data analysis as a construction that not only locates the data in time, place, culture, and context, but that also reflects the researcher's thinking (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2002).

I developed the coding system described below (See Chapter 4) from the collected data, and all data were coded accordingly. In this analysis, I initially used open coding, reviewing transcripts line-by-line and breaking down data into parts, comparing the similarities and differences in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). During the open-coding portion, I used a word-based technique called the key-words-in-context (KWIC) method, which involved reading the text and noting words that were used frequently (key words). I then analyzed the context in which the word was used to begin identifying broad themes. Ryan and Bernard (2003) have noted that "in this technique, researchers identify key words and then systematically search the corpus of the text to find all instances of that word or phrase" (p. 88).

Next, I conducted focused coding: I took themes that emerged in the initial coding phase and used them to synthesize and conceptualize the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As noted by Goulding (1998), conceptualizing is the process of grouping similar items according to some defined properties and giving the items a name that stands for that common link. In conceptualizing, "we reduce large amounts of data to smaller, more manageable pieces of data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 121). In conceptualizing, I reduced the size of data and developed themes that reflect both the uniqueness and commonalities among stories. Below is an illustration of how the data sources and grounded theory data analysis combine to produce the representations of the data in the form of a story, parent reflection, and researcher observation.

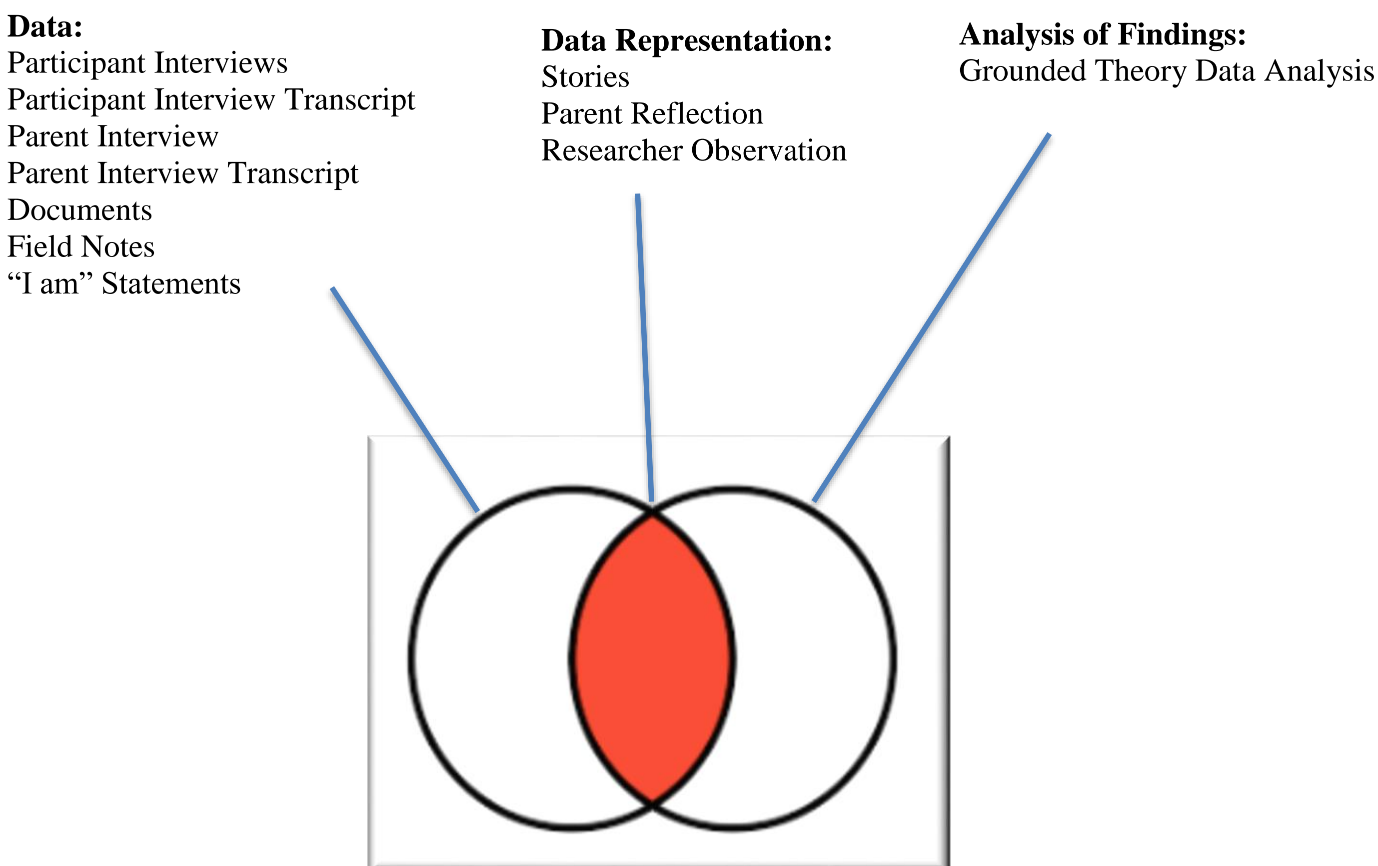

Figure 3.

Data Representation

Cultural Intuition as Methodology

As a part of the grounded theory protocol, I attended to cultural intuition as it supports my ability to make meaning of the data. Cultural intuition is a tool for research methodology that challenges dominant Western colonial foundations of knowledge and questions whose experiences and realities are accepted (Delgado Bernal, 1998). This approach is particularly important in drawing from a Black feminism/Womanism framework; the concept of cultural intuition, which was heavily influenced by the work of Anzaldúa (1987), promotes the inclusion of spirituality in the research, writing, and teaching process in an effort to decolonize each practice. This

spirituality, which is evident in cultural intuition, is essential to Black feminists'/Womanists' ways of knowing; it has been historically integral in the traditions and survival of the Black community. Womanists specifically maintain a sense of spirituality to guard against the complete loss of cultural traditions, or to maintain and reclaim cultural traditions in the face of Western domination (Phillips, 2006).

Similar to Strauss and Corbin's (1990) concept of theoretical sensitivity, cultural intuition is the researcher's personal ability to give meaning to the data. Delgado Bernal (1998) noted four sources of cultural intuition, including personal experience, existing literature, professional experience, and the analytic research process itself. Additionally, he extends personal experience to include collective experience and community memory, and points to the importance of participants' engagement in an analysis of the data. Delgado Bernal (1998) has also argued to extend the definition of personal history because it does not happen in a vacuum; there are lateral ties to family and reverse ties to history/the past. In this way, personal history is intertwined with storytelling: it is knowledge passed from generation to generation that can support survival of everyday life and the challenges of people of color by providing an understanding of certain situations and an explanation about why those situations happen under certain conditions.

Existing literature includes both technical literature and non-technical literature. Technical literature includes research studies and theoretical or philosophical writings, while nontechnical writing refers to biographies, public documents, personal documents, and cultural studies writings (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Technical literature provides concepts and relationships that are checked against actual data. Descriptive literature provides support for inquiries into the data and helps to generate interview questions. Both technical and nontechnical literature are used in this work to provide an understanding of the state of the Black girl in education and research.

Professional experience is defined as an involvement in a particular field that provides an insider view on the inner workings of that field (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Delgado Bernal (1998) has argued that, due to professional experience, a researcher could enter into an educational setting and more quickly gain insight on the lives of particular students than those who have never had any experience. In this study, I have a particular insight on the educational experiences of Black girls in predominantly White spaces because of my own journey through the educational system. Tillman (2002), who supports the use of cultural intuition and speaking to the importance of a culturally sensitive research approach, is worth quoting at length here:

> The discussion here is not intended to suggest that a researcher must be African American to use culturally sensitive research approaches in qualitative research. Rather, it is important to consider whether the researcher has the cultural knowledge to accurately interpret and validate the experiences of African Americans within the context of the phenomenon under study. Culturally sensitive research approaches for African Americans can facilitate the cultural knowledge of both the researched and the researcher. (p. 4)

Additionally, my cultural intuition strengthens as I engage in an analytical research process, and my insight and understanding increase as I interact with the data. Delgado Bernal (1998) similarly maintained that insight is enhanced as the researcher studies the data and includes the subjects' or participants' analysis in it. In this storytelling process, I not only studied the life stories written, but the participants who wrote them as well. Participants were included in the analysis and thus contributed to a dialectic process by which I continue to learn and gain insight.

Cultural intuition (Delgado Bernal, 1998) was critical in each phase of the analysis process, as my own experience has equipped me with the experiential knowledge to more accurately interpret data. As a Black woman, my cultural intuition has been engendered by personal experiences, the history of my family, and research on Black girls. Delgado Bernal (1998) notes “the way research questions are selected, methodology is designed, data is collected, and conclusions are arrived at are all greatly influenced by cultural intuition” (p. 568). While I recognize that there are generational differences between my experiences, the participants’, as well as in heterogeneity among girls, in interpreting this data, culture and experience were essential elements that gave me a certain sensitivity that enabled me to identify the most pertinent aspects. My critical raced-gendered epistemology and cultural intuition enabled me to address the distorted and omitted perspectives of Black girls.

Subjectivity and the Researcher Role

This research has been engendered by my own experience coming of age in predominately White neighborhoods and schools. The neighborhood that this research is conducted in was the same neighborhood I lived in during my high school years. This research also addresses some key opportunities I feel were missed in my adolescence, including the opportunity to engage in discussions and express my thoughts on my experiences in school. I was also not given the chance to be an active participant in my academic decision-making process. In the passage that follows, I share some of my experiences illustrating this point:

> In both elementary and middle school I experienced both macro- and micro-racial aggressions. For example, while I performed above average in both math and English courses, my teachers did not refer me to be tested for the academically gifted program. However, teachers referred White and Asian students with similar

academic performance. Sensitive to the possible oversights I may have experienced as one of the only Black students in my classroom, my mother fought for an opportunity for me to take the test and have access to additional academic resources and opportunities provided to students in the academically gifted program. There was no structure in place that ensured students an equal opportunity to participate in the program. Teachers served as gatekeepers, thus their perceptions of students heavily influenced the school experience for me.

On a micro level, I experienced several instances of marginalization by White students who excluded me from social activities both in and out of school. My elementary school matriculation was also gendered, as specific ideas of beauty were validated by attention from peers as well as school staff. These beauty standards included long straight hair, light-colored eyes, and White or tan skin. Beauty ideals were further exaggerated in middle school when my Black and White peers separated themselves into different communities within the school. Though there was a distinct sect of Black boys in the community for myself and other Black girls to befriend or date, Black girls who more closely aligned with these standards of beauty received the bulk of the attention. Also, because Black boy masculinity and White girl beauty were privileged, interracial relationships—though scant in this Southern setting—were only acceptable between Black boys and White girls when they occurred.

In middle school, my isolation was furthered by my participation in honors courses, which were comprised of mainly White students and excluded the small Black student population. Thus, my participation created a slight rift between the

Black population and myself because we spent only limited time together in leisure spaces like the cafeteria and hallways. However, my Black peers always encouraged my designation as an honors student, recognizing me as one of the few "smart Black students." My closest friends consisted of other students who felt seemingly uncomfortable or oppressed in school because they were either not White or did not fit the normal ideals of Whiteness. These friends were from a myriad of races/ethnicities, including Black, White, Asian, and Latino. I jokingly referred to us as the United Nations.

During middle school, my academic performance was generally consistent, thanks to my mother's iron fist; however, I had a few disciplinary infractions. One situation in particular stands out to me because it took weeks to unfold. My band teacher, who was a young White male new to the teaching force, strongly scolded me in front of the class for perceived misbehavior. I believe the misconduct alleged was my talking during class. When I tried to explain that I was helping another student and not doing anything wrong, he wrote me a referral for in-school suspension. I informed the band teacher as well as the disciplinary administration that I would not be attending and that they needed to contact my mother. This situation led to a phone call with my mother, where the band teacher informed her that I, a twelve year-old, had emasculated and belittled him by correcting him during class. There was also a meeting with the school counselor, where she attempted to get to the "psychological root" of my issues. Eventually, the counseling team and my mother negotiated one class period of in-school sus-

pension, as opposed to the originally proposed two days. I believe that my persistence in this issue was driven not only by my belief that I did nothing wrong, but also by the fact that I was being mistreated in comparison to other students. In this case, I had experienced White students, specifically girls, disrespect the band teacher with minimal or no consequences, whereas I received fast and hard punishment for a misunderstanding. In this instance, my mother played a large role by serving as my advocate and voice, basing her argument on my recollection of the situation, one wherein my voice and perspective as a Black girl had been dismissed.

I also internalized many of the experiences of the other Black students in my middle school. Of our small population, most had been bussed in from another part of the city in an effort to desegregate suburban schools. These students were rarely if ever in advanced courses with me. I still remember one of the rare instances when I actually had class with other Black students. On this occasion, a teacher who was a regular in the school building, though not the course's instructor, was substituting for our class. Some of the students were interrupting the class plans in an attempt to avoid having to complete classwork. One Black male student who was a friend of mine jokingly explained why we should not have to complete the work. The teacher casually responded that he would be in prison soon anyway, so it did not matter to her whether he completed the work or not. The entire class fell silenced for a few seconds. The student she addressed had no response, but I remember thinking that he looked shocked, saddened, and defeated. I was confused by her reaction. This student had done nothing criminal,

and was not facing any type of school discipline. Apparently, there was simply something about him that made her feel that he belonged in prison. I felt helpless, but I recall confiding in my mother about the situation, and her reaction of disgust. I am not sure if there was any retribution for the teacher's actions. If so, the students were not informed of it. However, I do know that by the time we were in the tenth grade, this student was in and out of the criminal justice system. I always wondered if the teacher had simply predicted my friend's future, or determined it.

High school was the place where I first felt real comfort in a school setting. Although I contested my parents' decision to bus me to a magnet school instead of allowing me to attend the local high school with my friends, I had won the "lottery" and was transferred out of the suburbs to an International Baccalaureate math, science, and technology high school in the inner city. Comprised of predominately Black students, this school offered me the chance to participate in both an intensive academic program and develop relationships with other Black students both within and outside the classroom. Though the upper-track classes were still largely White, there were many more Black students in the classes than I had ever experienced. High school marked the first time where I was one of many Black achievers in the school setting, and not the sole representative. Also, rather than having to cling to one of the few Black teachers in the school building for a sense of belonging and support, I felt comfortable with almost all of my teachers, both Black and White. While I endured teenage drama and ridicule, it was a completely different feeling knowing that this treatment was not racially charged.

> Though structural and social barriers were present, I persisted both academically and socially throughout my K-12 matriculation, maintaining an A/B average and participating in sports and school clubs. However, there were psychological repercussions to my time in those spaces. I feel that my parents were not aware of my need for Black peer support in order to help me navigate the predominately White environment. While my mother modeled certain behaviors that I emulated in order to challenge oppression, there were various incidents when I feel I would have been better served by a peer support system. Moreover, I was never given the opportunity to reflect on my experience and inform academic decisions such as school placement or course selection.
>
> As a child, I did not have my current language for expressing my feelings about my early educational experience, and I was left with anger and a mistrust of educators. I do feel that my mother had the intuition from her experiences in corporate America and the world in general to know that she needed to support me as well as help mitigate my battles. It is this same intuition that I have gained from my childhood educational experiences that I used to support the girls in the telling and analysis of their stories. This experience, along with the research literature on Black girls, has influenced me to further research Black girls in predominately White contexts.

My personal experience navigating intersecting oppressions in the education system has equipped me with both the theoretical sensitivity and cultural intuition needed to interpret and analyze the experience of similar students (Delgado Bernal, 1998, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) explained *theoretical sensitivity* as a

critical insight developed from experiences relevant to the research, experiences that allow the researcher to give meaning to data. Delgado Bernal (2001) went further with the notion of *cultural intuition*, highlighting the importance of the researcher's ability to interpret the research with particular sensitivities. The author adds that personal experience includes both historical and ancestral wisdom; thus, cultural intuition includes collective and personal experience as well as community memory. This writing process has been therapeutic for me. In the same way, reading research studies on Black undergraduate students with similar experiences (Tatum, 2003) and having discussions with colleagues has confirmed the consistency of these experiences for other Black girls in my demographic.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are the time period in which I capture identity development, my positionality as a researcher, a limited number of school sites, and sibling participation. Because I am only focusing on Black girls in high school, this research does not represent a complete view of the girls' identity development process, and strategies and tools of resistance will be limited to this particular stage. Consequently, this study does not reflect elementary or middle school strategies or tools of resistance. However, although these characteristics of the research might be perceived as limitations, Black girls in elementary or middle school are not my intended scope. In addition, as a researcher with a similar educational experience, my history could have an influence on the interview discussions and the ways girls tell their stories. While I note this as an advantage in terms of cultural intuition, I understand that researchers from different paradigms may view this as a limitation. Additionally, this study was limited to one school site. This feature of the study serves as a limitation because it inhibits the ability to broadly apply the findings of the work. The final limitation of this work is that the sample includes two participants

who are siblings. Sibling participation could possibly serve to limit the study results, as a similar household could influence both the school experience of the girls as well as the strategies used for resistance.

4 RESULTS

Introduction

Using the methodology and data sources described in Chapter 3, I was able to generate insights on Black girls' experiences with intersecting oppressions within a predominantly White environment. This methodology permitted the use of multiple methods and data sources to give context to the work of creating visibility around the experiences of Black girls in these public educational spaces. Their stories of resistance and persistence not only stress their voice and experiences, but they also suggest ways parents and educators can support this demographic group as well. In this chapter, the findings presented begin with "I am" statements written by each participant, followed by a brief participant description written by the researcher. After concluding the interview process, I gave every girl participating in the study an "I am" statement template along with some examples, and I asked them to take some time to complete them. During my last visit to the research site, I collected statements from each girl. The statements are not edited and delivered exactly as they were given by girls. Next, I present a summary of each girl's interviews, followed by each girl's story. Lastly, I present each participant's parent reflection, and my overall analysis of the data.

Introduction of Stories

Following the presentation of the data collected for each girl, I critically analyze each participant's story of her educational experience (This presentation of the data, however, reflects my own engagement with each girl and her story). Using the codes I generated, informed by my cultural intuition, my analysis centers on: 1) the racialized, gendered and classed educational experiences of the girls; and 2) the resistance strategies used to persist in this high school context.

Dialogic interview conversations with participants were guided using the questions in Appendix A. Discussions were not limited to these questions; however, they assisted in prompting the girls to detail their experiences. During the five interviews I conducted with participants, over a three-month period, they were asked to give examples and further details of the events or experiences they described. This included discussing photos (see Appendix I). Interview questions for girls generally focused on: 1) racialized school experiences; 2) social life; 3) dating; 4) teacher interaction and 5) resistance. I also conducted one interview with a parent of each girl that focused on their views of their daughter's school experience, their own relationship with the school, and how they supported their child. See Appendix B for parent interview questions. The following participant and parent stories are a reflection of my interpretation and analysis of the data from participants, and not the direct voice of the participants or parents.

Stories

This section includes the stories of Kendall, Dion, Alaina, Laila, and Michelle as they navigate intersectional oppressions in their predominantly White suburban high school.

Kendall

I am smart and beautiful

I wonder what my future holds

I hear birds chirping

I see a beautiful sun rising

I want to be successful

I pretend to be a superhero on Halloween

I feel content with life

I touch the success in the air

I worry about my sick grandmother

I cry when I see others in pain

I am smart and beautiful

I understand education comes first

I say everybody is equal

I dream about the future

I try to work hard in everything

I hope to be successful

I am smart and beautiful

Kendall

Introducing Kendall

Kendall is a darker skinned daughter of Caribbean immigrants with medium length hair that she keeps straightened or braided under extensions. As a participant, she was extremely professional, displaying the demeanor of someone being interviewed for employment rather than a teenager participating in a volunteer study. By the second interview she was very candid about incidents in her school and her feelings on race, class, and gender relations. Her voice was powerful and she was very direct, seeming purposeful about being heard and taken seriously.

Kendall's Interview

Kendall described her school experience as one with consistent incidents of racism from both teachers and students. Kendall has learned to navigate these continuous incidents, but would rather escape. As a student in the classroom, she was quiet and reserved for many reasons. She described the classroom setting as hostile, and thus explained it caused her to be more reserved

than she naturally is, that is, outside of the classroom around friends or family. Kendall noted that she would rather not participate in class any more than is required for a good grade:

> *"Umm, in class I'm kind of quiet. I talk to my partner when we're doing partner work. I'm not umm, I don't participate as much when the teacher asks questions. I don't raise my hand as much, but I know the work but I just choose not to raise my hand."* (Kendall Interview 2)

She recalled various classroom incidents with teachers and herself or other Black students, specifically Black girls, which caused her to limit interaction. These incidents included racially insensitive comments or racial spotlighting, inequitable treatment of Black girls as opposed to White girls, and student invisibility. Kendall stated:

> *"I know one time this oh umm—there was a teacher—like this girl came back from vacation with braids and the teacher was like, 'Oh you changed your hair.' And we were like in the class in front of everyone and he's like, 'I used to work at a hair extension place.' and stuff like that and she didn't really say anything but she was kind of embarrassed. She didn't really know what to say. I thought that was weird to say."* (Kendall Interview 3)

In general, she described the school atmosphere as one in which she felt Black students were racially profiled by the teachers and administrators. She believed teachers excessively regulated the behavior of Black students, calling on them more in class and correcting them more than White students for the same behaviors. She described one incident when her teacher, Mr. Kraft, continuously called her out although other students in her class were exhibiting the same behavior. She said:

> *"Like they'll watch Black kids harder—like they'll call them out more in class. Like if a White kid is doing things and a Black kid is doing the same thing, they'll say something to the Black kid but not the White kid."* (Kendall Interview 2)

In one culminating incident the teacher moved her seat in class, citing her for excessive conversation with a classmate. However, Kendall felt this incident was just another example of inequitable treatment she had received from this teacher, because the White female classmate that she was punished for talking to was not also moved or subject to any consequences. While Kendall usually tried to avoid interaction with teachers, to circumvent what she referred to as embarrassing situations, she felt this incident was her breaking point. She decided to ask for a private conversation with the teacher. In order to deal with the incident appropriately, she spoke with an older sibling and one of her parents about how she should request the meeting and represent her feelings about the situation. She decided to email the teacher to request a conference. At that time she explained she felt he was not treating her fairly in class and that it was affecting her ability to learn from and respect him. Kendall explained that the teacher apologized for the treatment noting that he had not noticed it was inequitable, and never called her out in class again.

Kendall revealed that incidents that she described as racial profiling happened often in class as Black students were often singled out. While these incidents have caused her to distance herself from the almost completely White teaching staff and administration, other incidents that she has experienced or observed, more related to gender, have caused a distancing as well. For example, Kendall described what she felt were rude comments from female teachers toward Black female students mainly related to the dress code. Kendall explained that although the dress code policy had changed drastically and many rules or restrictions were eliminated, many female teachers still commented on girls' dress, making statements like: "That's not a good look" or

"That's not cute," which she felt was inappropriate or embarrassing for students like herself. Also, she felt this was out of line because the dress code has been eliminated. Essentially, Kendall felt these comments towards Black female students on the basis of their body or looks in general was a form of harassment. She noted:

> *"Like the White girls—she doesn't do it to them, I guess 'cause the White girls don't have as much body-ish, but she'll do it to us."* (Kendall Interview 4)

Kendall, who has a very athletic and full figured body, felt she was more likely to be noticed by teachers than thin White girls. Similarly, Kendall felt overtly racist tension from peers or classmates in her school, which has influenced her to choose to socialize with only a small group of same-race peers, whom she described as her "real friends." She noted that this is a small group of friends with similar interests and similar school experiences. Kendall went on to explain that these students have similar reactions to racist comments and actions from White students in her school. In one example of peer racism, Kendall described a social media post by a White female sophomore in her school. This White student noted her disapproval of the Black emojis[1] created by the Apple Company; she commented that she did not feel "Black people needed emojis when they already had their rights." While Kendall explained that there haven't been many instances of racism this bold or overt from students, she acknowledged that it wasn't that far from the general culture of the school that she experienced. Kendall noted that most other instances of racism demonstrated by White peers were disguised as a joke. White students made consistent comments about Black students' skin color. For example, a White students only referred to another student as "midnight" because of his dark complexion. Students also made negative comments

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1. [1]Emoji is a small digital image or icon used to express an idea, emotion, etc. generally used in social media or electronic communication. Emoji. (2015). In *Oxford Dictionary* online. Retrieved from http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/emoji

about their hair when the styles are perceived as particularly ethnic or cultural such as braids or afros.

As a result, Kendall generally avoided communicating with students outside of her close group of friends, as she did not feel or want to pretend these type of jokes were okay. Kendall also noted that Black girls have a particular experience among peers because of prevalent ideas of beauty. According to Kendall, the dominant view of beauty in the school was White, long blonde hair, and blue-eyes. This eliminated the possibility of Black girls being seen as beautiful, and further participating in school activities associated with beauty or popularity that comes with beauty such as pageants, homecoming, and prom competitions. However, she explained that Black boys, mainly because of sports popularity and because their looks are more accepted, had a little more leverage for participation. For the same reasons, Kendall felt that Black boys have more dating options because in her experience Black girls are not seen as appealing to White boys, but she explained Black boys can access and date White girls. This creates a very limited dating pool for Black girls at the school with an already small Black student population. In the excerpt of our conversation below, my cultural intuition helped me to probe deeper as Kendall mentions views of beauty that do not necessarily include herself or other Black girls. My own experience with colorism (skin-color preference) and dating preferences among Black men push me to inquire further about how dating is affected by these standards of beauty and popularity. Figure 1 illustrates a conversation in which Kendall explained the type of behavior required to be a part of the popular group at her school.

Kendall	"Umm, there's a couple people that have more White friends than Black friends and would be able to be on homecoming court and prom queen and stuff like that."
Researcher	"What allows them to cross over?"
Kendall	"Umm, they match their personality to the White people, they act like them, their looks too, they are like mixed or have like long hair.
	"When you said they match their personalities, you feel like they are
Researcher	faking their personalities?"
	"Yeah, a little."
Kendall	"And you're not willing to do that?"
Researcher	"NO!"
Kendall	"Why not?"
Researcher	"Cause there is not really a need to fake my personality to be friends
Kendall	with the people in the school when I can be myself and be friends with the people I can be myself around."

Figure 4.

Interview Excerpt: Kendall Interview 3

Ultimately; however, Kendall is adamant that while the inequitable treatment from teachers and students affected how she operated in the school, she said her academics were not affected. She noted that if she wanted to make good grades, she would make good grades, which she did. Kendall participated in honors classes and consistently made A's and B's. Kendall did

believe a more diverse school would allow her to develop better relationships with teachers possibly leading to a better learning experience, and also allow her to be a better-rounded student participating in extra-curricular activities she currently feels are reserved for the majority students in the school. Kendall explained:

> *"Like if I want to get straight A's I'll get straight A's regardless of the teacher that I have…but maybe in class like I won't raise my hand and answer questions cause… I don't really want to."* (Kendall Interview 4)

Kendall is currently seeking options outside of her home neighborhood school where she feels more a part of the school community, and is able to comfortably participate in extra-curricular activities or do things as simple as wear her natural hair or braids without harassment from students or teachers.

Kendall's Story

> I really don't like my school that much, because I feel like I am profiled and get called out for things that other students don't. Other Black students in the school have told me the same thing. We mainly talk about how they don't like the teachers that much, because they call them out all the time and are rude. They'll call Black students out for talking in class, but then not call out White students doing the same thing. And for girls, they are always making rude comments about the way we dress. The school doesn't have an official dress code, but teachers still make comments. Like my French teacher always asks me to pull down my shorts or put on a jacket, but then a White girl with less body will wear the same thing and she doesn't say anything. The administration does the same thing, like the principal says rude stuff about other Black high schools trying to say that Black

students are being ghetto or are ghetto and don't fit in at the school. I don't have a good relationship with any of the teachers or administrators at the school. I still make good grades because I do my work, but I don't really talk that much in class and I don't like any of the classes.

Most of the students are like the teachers and administrators, like they say racist things in school or on social media. Most of the time I just ignore it and talk about it with friends. Sometimes they get called out by other students. I don't really say much, because I figure that's their ignorance. I just separate myself from them and really just talk to my friends. So I am not that interested in participating in a lot of things in school like sports or even in class because interacting with the other students and even the teachers won't be fun. If you are Black and you want to do school activities you have to deal with racism, like other students either not talking to you or making racist comments or jokes. Some Black students do and they just laugh it off, but I don't think any of those jokes are funny. Neither do my friends, so we just kind of hang with each other.

Even when you aren't really involved in anything or friends with them, White students at my school make rude remarks to Black students and the teachers don't really do anything. They hear comments from White students but they ignore them. I feel like I can't really do anything at this school, like I have to wear certain clothes and wear my hair the same way all the time. If I don't then other students will make comments to me or talk about me, and I don't feel like dealing with that. Like one time I got braids and this White girl was like "oh you have

dreads today?" Or they might make comments about weave and especially natural hair. They just make a lot of unnecessary comments.

I really hope to transfer to a school with more Black students. I feel like I would have a better high school experience there, because I would look forward to doing more things. I want to feel more comfortable in school and not feel pressured to look a certain way. I think being around more Black students would be freeing, because we would look similar. I wouldn't have to feel forced to look and act like White girls if there were more Black students. I also want to do stuff like prom and homecoming, but I don't look forward to that as much at this school. I think everything would be better at another school. My parents don't really like this school that much either. They know about all the things that have happened and they are looking at helping me transfer to a few different schools for my 10th grade year. They signed me up for a school lottery that might help me get into another school. I have close friends at this school, but we all pretty much feel the same and would rather transfer, but some of my friends' parents won't let them.

Kendall's Mother's (Mrs. Wilson's) Reflection

Mrs. Wilson felt that Kendall's high school experience could be improved both socially and academically. Though she described Kendall as a top student with good academic outcomes, she felt she could excel more academically and build more of a robust high school resume if she did not have to put so much energy into the social aspects of high school. While Mrs. Wilson felt some of the concentration on socializing could be because of age, she doesn't discourage it, because she understands the lack of opportunities for involvement available to her daughter. Mrs.

Wilson felt Kendall's biggest obstacle academically has been a lack of attention or overwhelmingly negative attention from teachers. Mrs. Wilson noted that her daughter has complained about teacher treatment consistently, and although she is an honors student, Kendall has not received due recognition. Mrs. Wilson has had to address Kendall being overlooked with teachers and administration. She felt the culture in the school is one where Black children are overlooked for positive accolades and treated more harshly for negatives including in grading. Mrs. Wilson felt that the almost entirely White teaching staff lacked awareness of their own behavior, and how it affected students in school. She believed that perceptions of Black students may be a result of teachers' perceptions of the Black population in general. She noted that the largest issue the school has with behavior is a drug issue with which the Black students have seldom been associated. Thus, a negative perception of them cannot be a direct result of their own behavior, because the student body is known as being generally well-behaved with fewer problems than other area high schools. Mrs. Wilson believed the perceptions held by teachers and teacher treatment of her daughter have had a very negative affect, because Kendall is very aware of racism and people's view of her as a Black girl. Mrs. Wilson suspected Kendall is less confident because of her awareness, and that negative attention or treatment has undermined some of her development in terms of extracurricular talents.

Additionally, Mrs. Wilson stated that social class issues in the school are extreme compared to her first child's experience in another high school. She's observed students in Kendall's school separating along class as well as race lines. She felt this was very odd because the entire area is well known for being an upper-tier community. However, she explained that students are aware of home locations and home values and treat each other differently according to neighbor-

hood and type of home they live in. She has also heard students make reference to specific communities in the area as poor because the residents are not as wealthy as those in other communities. Mrs. Wilson also noted the price to "keep up" in this school has been extreme with new clothes from very specific and expensive stores needed weekly. She did not remember these types of social class issues when her first child attended another high school, because integration in the school meant that varying socio-economic classes were present, so that one class was not dominant.

Mrs. Wilson explained that as a high school student growing up in the Caribbean where race was not an issue, her own experience was very different. Though she felt class was an issue, she was able to transcend boundaries by being a high achieving student. Thus, her experience influenced her to focus on academic achievement for her daughter. However, she felt the decision between a highly-resourced school with a very limited social experience and a less well-resourced but more socially accepting school was very difficult. Because race and the social atmosphere were not issues for her as a student, she is not sure of the long-term impacts this may have on her daughter. Mrs. Wilson felt her choice as a parent was virtually eliminated when the system made the move to neighborhood schools. Before that time, the robust magnet system and the area choice plan allowed her to choose among numerous schools with more racial balance as well as resources. She believed all Black children were negatively affected by this change and the resulting resegregation. As a result, she felt Black children from lower socio-economic backgrounds were being denied well-resourced schools and Black children from higher socio-economic backgrounds are being isolated.

> *"That's the difficulty. I know I can help Kendall, but I am not helping any of the other kids."* (Mrs. Wilson Interview)

The advice she has given her daughter to survive the space has been to concentrate on academics, confront issues of race herself, be aware of racism or when people are being racist, and to speak up for herself. Mrs. Wilson has told her daughter that she should feel as comfortable as any other student in the school. In order to combat the lack of diversity, Mrs. Wilson has tried to keep Kendall involved in youth activities in their predominantly Black church, and summer activities provided by Historically Black Colleges and Universities. She soon hopes to start a youth group for Black students from all over the district. Mrs. Wilson has tried to be more involved in school but she has not felt very welcomed: she was passed up for various volunteer opportunities. Thus, she felt that ultimately her support and interventions have helped her child, but not the system. She is not sure how to affect greater change for all students. However, she has noticed an increased amount of bravery with her daughter stepping outside of the lines set by peers at her school regarding hair and dress, and thus she felt Kendall was getting more comfortable embracing herself as a Black girl.

Overall Analysis

The field note below is one example of how I used my time in the field to create this observation on Kendall.

Field Note #3
Subject: Kendall
Date: June 20, 2015
Location: Kendall's Home
Time: 4 p.m. -5:45 p.m.
Note recorded: June 20, 2015

Memo:
Kendall seems completely disillusioned discussing upcoming activities at her school. She rolled her eyes, gazed out of the window and seemed completely disinterested. She perked up and became engaged, even smiling and laughing, when discussing other possible school options.

Figure 5.

Field Note: Kendall

Kendall's story illuminates the nature of the terrain she navigated at her predominantly White suburban public high school, and the effects on her educational experience as an upper-middle-class Black girl. Kendall, as well as Mrs. Wilson, described an extremely isolating educational experience for students outside the majority White school population. Kendall's high school experience was one marred by marginalization on the basis of race, class, and gender. Her story revealed that exclusion, not just on the part of students but mainly teachers and administrators significantly affected the way she operated in school. While she described racist incidents with students as well as gender and class difficulties within the student body, she noted that the school and classroom climate is mainly affected by her teacher's and administrator's behavior.

She indicated that being a Black girl in the school is difficult because of racism from other students, specific difficulties dealing with hair and dress for girls, and exclusion based on class status, her academics, and classroom behavior are largely affected by teachers. Kendall described a hostile classroom environment characterized by teacher harassment or bullying, public ridicule, and cultural insensitivity. Further, outside the classroom she has described administrative public stereotyping of Black and lower-income communities and observed and experienced exclusion of minority students from various parts of the school fabric. This atmosphere caused Kendall to be more of a reclusive or introverted student. She does not participate in school extracurricular activities or sports and limits her participation and classroom interactions with both teacher and students.

However, Kendall remained a high achieving student who participates in mainly honors classes, as she did not view academic achievement as an option. While she did indicate that her overall school participation and class participation would increase if she was more comfortable in school, her persistence is illustrated in efforts to carve out a space for herself in the school and

willingness to confront teachers for unfair treatment as well as report them to her parents. In my interactions with Kendall, my cultural intuition led me to ask what turned out to be very important questions about her course choice. From my own experience being one of the only Black students in honors courses, I know the isolation that can happen in those classrooms, thus I know a particular strategy is needed to be able to survive and thrive in those classes. Kendall being a high achiever despite being in those courses led me to believe there had to be a particular reason she was able to have those outcomes. The interview process revealed that Kendall utilizes several supports to navigate the high school terrain. Specifically in her honors courses she saw her achievement as something that has to happen. She saw no other option than achieving in school, because of her future aspirations and her parents. She described her friends as a support system that she depended on for all her socialization needs. Kendall also indicated that they are a group of Black girls and boys who are like-minded and having similar experiences at the school, thus she could talk to them about school incidents and relate to their perspectives. Kendall also used her own strength to both identify and address instances of racial, gender or class aggression towards her, as illustrated in the incident where she emailed and arranged a meeting with her teacher. Lastly, Kendall depended on the advice and support of her parents, mainly her mother to help her navigate and confront situations with teachers and other students, specifically when issues concern academics and relationships. Further, her mother utilized certain activities and organizations to support her daughter's social development including church, youth groups, and HBCU academic programs for high school students.

Resistance and persistence are evidenced in how Kendall:

1. Continued to participate in honors classes despite additional discomfort because of social class segregation;

2. Continued to be a high achiever in school despite racialized treatment by teachers and lack of recognition for achievement;
3. Saw herself as a high achiever and college bound student; and
4. Determined ideas or definitions of beauty for herself.

Kendall's story can provide educators and researchers with an understanding of the educational experiences of upper class Black girls in a predominantly White suburban high school. Her story conveys the need for school officials and parents to address the lack of attention given to including these students in the school and the lack of cultural sensitivity among teachers and administrators. On a system level, this story calls attention to the negative aspects of the neighborhood schooling concept and highlights issues with school choice for Black parents in the district. Her story also indicated a specific need for extracurricular opportunities specifically geared toward the Black student body. Kendall's academic performance may also attribute to many of these factors going undetected, as she is performing well.

Dion

I am confident and smart

I wonder about the future

I hear constant negativity

I see my future

I want success

I am confident and smart

I pretend I am a successful woman

I feel doubtful

I touch with reality way too often

I worry about my future

I cry about my future

I am confident and smart

I understand life is what you make it

I say anything is possible

I dream of being successful

I try my hardest

I hope to be successful

I try my hardest

I hope to be successful

I am confident and smart

Dion

Introducing Dion

Dion is a lighter skinned daughter of African immigrants who both attended school in the United States. Her head revealed a huge mane of curly natural hair that looked even larger because of her petite frame. Often she wore her hair blown out and straightened, and she was attempting to grow out a patch of hair she shaved for a trendy hair style. Dion was the oldest and most stylish of all the participants. She seemed fearless and very comfortable with herself in terms of looks. In our conversations, she was very casual and matter-of-fact with what I considered very disturbing experiences. While she was able to name various instances of injustice and inequity, they did not seem to unsettle her. She seemed to reason oppression to be a simple fact of life.

Dion's Interview

As a rising senior in her school, Dion's school story is one of change and transition. Dion's changes mainly centered around her newfound focus on college. Her self-actualization prompted increased academic outcomes with her moving from taking standard courses in 9th and 10th grade to a mix of standard and honors courses in 11th grade. Her grades had also improved from a B/C average to an A/B average, because she believed it was critical to her acceptance to a college or university.

Dion	"Well I think I developed a lot from my freshman year to being a rising senior, just cause I think I've been more serious about school and stuff like that, getting my GPA up and stuff and like being more focused in the classroom and stuff like that and evolving myself in school."
Researcher	"And what motivated you to do that?"
Dion	"Oh just cause of college requirements and stuff like that."

Figure 6.

Interview Excerpt: Dion Interview 2

Dion explained she just decided she would do better in school and began to challenge herself. Her success is fueled by what she describes as fun competition with classmates and surrounding herself with a network of peers who also do well. She acknowledged that although she still experiences some of the same issues in school that she did in 9th and 10th grade, her college focus has changed the strategies she used to navigate in school. The excerpt from our conversation in Figure 7 below illustrates her feelings on her progression and how she now handled unfair administration practices.

Dion	"I just like try to stay away because I don't want to like constantly be in the office for like dress code or constantly just be seen and be a target, so I just like try to go to class, wear appropriate things to school."
Researcher	"So you know it's unfair but you're not trying to continue to be punished for it over and over again?"
Dion	"Yeah."

Figure 7.

Interview Excerpt: Dion Interview 3

Dion's main obstacle in school came from issues with administration regarding dress code or general appearance. She noted that she experienced what she refers to as bullying, characterized by unfair treatment on the part of the school administrators toward very specific students in the school including herself. She explained that in her case she was constantly receiving citations for being in violation of the dress code for wearing headbands. Dion's contention with these citations is that the same consequences were not given to her White peers wearing very similar headbands. She felt that the main reasons why she was constantly in violation of dress code was because of her status in school. She felt her position was as a less powerful student or student who has reduced influence and status in the school because her parents have limited visibility, and her actual hair.

Thus, Dion described issues that were a culmination of race, class, and gender. She explained that her school is one where the majority of students, or students most seen and heard

from, are very preppy [2] and well-off. She noted that they live in a few select neighborhoods in the area, of which she is not a resident. She also described the parents of these students as mostly stay-at-home mothers or individuals with free schedules who are able to be very involved in the school. Dion said:

> *"It's like if you don't have money or you don't support the school like through PTA and if your parents are not at the school like every day then your opinion or anything that you say doesn't matter."*(Dion Interview 3)

Consequently, Dion felt that she was less powerful as a student, and other students are able to ignore rules or have privileges unlike herself. For example, she described an incident where school athletes had been accused of actions as serious as vandalism and received no consequences, because of their status in the school. However, dealing with her headband dress code violations, Dion was specifically told that her headband was a distraction, she believed because her headband is worn as an accessory in her very large natural hair. Her headbands were usually worn with her very large bushy buns or holding back her massive curly hair. Consequently, she was only cited as in violation of dress code when her natural hair was worn. These dress code violations resulted in her missing class while she sits in administrative offices, so that her mother could be called to come to school to bring her a replacement headpiece. Dion stated:

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[2] Participants define "preppy" as a formal way of dressing in which students wear blazers, sweaters, slacks, ties, button-down shirts, and other business or clothing appropriate for private school from more expensive stores and boutiques. A "prep" is described as a student who dresses and styles him or herself in preppy attire and is from an upper-class or rich family. The formal definition of a prep is a student or graduate of an expensive prep school or a person resembling such a student in style of dress or appearance Preppy. (n.d.) In *Merriam-Webster* online. Retrieved August 23, 2015 from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/preppy

> *"Yeah, they'll like sit me in the office and tell me to call my mom so she can like bring me a different headband or something like that, like it's the same exact thing every day, they'll literally pull me out of class and stuff and actually put me in the office, and my mom will tell them like, 'She's not taking her headband off, so you might as well just send her back to class'."* (Dion Interview 2)

While she was encouraged by her mother to continue to wear her hair and headbands as she had been, in her junior year she decided to begin wearing her hair straightened without headbands more to avoid any interaction with administration that would cause her to miss class. Dion felt that the actions of the administration were unjust; however, she did not want to sacrifice her grades via missed class time to continue to protest their actions. Through her focus on academics, she has removed herself from being a target of administration, and thus no longer suffers from unfair consequences.

Socially, Dion found a niche or a space and group of friends that she felt comfortable with in a school. She described herself as somewhat of an outcast, or very different from the norm. Dion explained that students in her school were relegated to certain spaces, physically and mentally, by the type of student they are seen to be in the school. She noted that most of the students in the school are classified as preppy, fitting a very specific class or definition of White, upper-class distinction, while she is neither White nor preppy, and does not live in one of the prescribed neighborhoods of this dominant group. Thus, she and her group of similar friends have chosen to frequent certain spaces in the school as well as participate in various school activities in a group to create a space for themselves in the larger school context.

While Dion has been interested in attending another high school in the past, mainly because of the social atmosphere for minority students and lack of diverse course and extracurricular offerings, her inability to transfer caused her to make the best of her current space. She accepted that high school may not be enjoyable, but looks forward to participating in activities in college that she felt excluded from or unable to access in high school. (Dion and Alaina are sisters. Their Parent Reflection is presented after Alaina's story, which follows Dion's.)

Dion's Story

> I've changed a lot from 9th and 10th grade to now. I make better grades and I am in honors classes, because I am really just concentrating on graduating and getting into college. To make better grades I have had to fly under the radar a little, and not worry about administration as much. I am trying not to be such a target anymore. In 9th and 10th grade, I was in the office a lot and missed class because the administrators were always calling me in the office and giving me warnings for my headscarves. It was totally unfair because White girls could wear whatever headbands or scarves they want, but when I wear mine it's a big deal. I think the problem was a mix of my headband and my hair, because I had to wear my headband when my hair was natural and it was really big, like a huge puff. So they always have a problem when my hair is like that because they think it's dramatic or a distraction, but I have to wear them because my hair would look crazy without them. Now I have less issues with that because this year I started to wear my hair straight more, so I don't need the headbands. This year I didn't have to spend as much time in the office and miss class waiting for them to call my mom about my headbands, so I think that helped out with my grades.

I think my school is just too strict in a lot of ways, and the whole school caters to the preps and their parents. The preps run the school and they get anything they want, because their parents are always at the school. My mom works, she can't always be at school, so I get treated differently. I think this school is very limited because my friends who have transferred out to other schools have more activities, classes, and clubs. At this school Black students aren't really involved in anything, but a few sports. My friends who transferred to other schools are in clubs and activities focused on Black students. They also have more diverse classes that seem more interesting. I've only had one teacher who made class interesting. Mr. Cheeks, he is black and incorporated things from real life and didn't just use the book and a power point presentation.

I don't really like most of the students at my school either. I have a few friends and that's it. The students are mostly "preps" and they have a very strict code too. All the students hang in cliques and the preps are the main one. If you don't dress like them, talk like them, or live in certain neighborhoods, then they talk about you. I don't like the way they dress or act, and I don't live in the same neighborhoods, so I am not in that group and I am really not interested. I just think it's unfair because the teachers support the way they act. Some of them have been involved in vandalism, drugs, and other big issues and nothing happens to them. They don't face any consequences, because their parents are really involved in PTA and give a lot of money to the school. So the teachers and administrators just pick on the same students, non-preps like me, all the time.

I've always wanted to go to another school because I think it would be - more of a high school experience, but my mom thinks academics here are better at my current school. I don't really look forward to anything here as far as high school experience, so I am just concentrating on enjoying college. I did run track, but once all the Black students left I quit, because I didn't want to be on the team alone. I also did prom this year with a couple of my friends at the school, but I am not interested in going again. I don't really have fun doing anything at this school and I don't see myself having fun at another prom. Black students don't really get involved in that much at the school, and as far as prom the whole dating pool for guys is really limited. There are definitely not a lot of Black guys. Last year we all just kind of went to prom in a big group since there weren't really enough dates to go around. And some Black guys date the White girls, but no Black girls really date any White guys. So there are just not enough.

Overall Analysis

The field note below illustrates how I used my time in the field to create the observation that follows on Dion.

Field Note #1
Subject: Dion
Date: May 28, 2015
Location: Dion's Home
Time: 2:30 p.m. -4:30 p.m.
Note recorded: May 28, 2015

Memo:
Dion comes across very confident. Commands attention because of this confidence. Wears stylish clothes different than typical suburban wear and unique hair. Looks like a stylish New Yorker.

Figure 8.

Field Note: Dion

Dion's story indicated a range of issues in the school building dealing with race, gender, and class inequity issues. Though issues are created by both the student body, teachers and administration, the nature of her relationship of with faculty and administration has most affected her academic experience. Dion emphasized the bullying or harassment that she felt was directed at Black girls from the adults in the school. Various incidents, which Dion felt were directly related to her positionality as a Black girl and a "non-prep" or lower class student have resulted in consistent negative involvement with the school discipline regime. She noted that students like herself, Black students who reject the clothing and hair norms of the majority, are continuously targeted by school administration. As a result, they populate only specific spaces in the school and rarely attend or involve themselves in school activities. She also noted a significant number of her Black friends have transferred out to other high schools. Dion explained that her friends felt they were not having a good high school experience and wanted to attend a school that offered more diversity socially and academically. Thus, her in-school friendship circle has become even more limited. Similarly, Dion has resigned herself from participating in school sports activities as she felt they were also isolating.

Dion has resisted what she described as inequitable treatment in numerous ways. As she has matriculated through high school she has developed and changed her strategies of resistance. Initially, she resisted by distancing herself from teachers in class and rejecting unfair regulations or rule enforcement by continuing to wear her natural hair and headbands. However, because continuous involvement with the school discipline system was interfering with her academics, she thought she would be better served by reducing her communication with administration and by making better grades. Her change in resistance strategies was mainly fueled by her increased focus on life after high school and her goals of attending a good college. It is this personal goal

that served as her main motivation in navigating high school and the myriad of issues presented in the space. Additionally, Dion depended on her small group of friends in her schools as well as other high schools to support her social needs.

Resistance and persistence are evidenced how Dion:

1. Worked to improve grades and participate in more rigorous courses;
2. Viewed of herself as a high achiever and college bound student;
3. Rejected popularity standards dictated by the majority students at her school;
4. Recognized and rejects inequitable treatment by administrators; and
5. Maintained pride in physical appearance despite views of school faculty and administrators as well as students.

Dion's story provides the education community with picture of the evolution of a Black girl in a predominantly White suburban high school. Her story indicated a need for school officials and further district personnel to examine the execution of their disciplinary policy. Her story also highlighted particular issues with opportunities for Black students to participate in the offered school activities and their experiences while participating. Since Dion noted a Black student exodus from the school, an examination of the phenomenon may prove beneficial to understanding their experiences and addressing their issues in the school.

Alaina

I am intelligent and a believer

I wonder if global warming actually exists

I hear waves crashing

I see flamingos at the zoo

I want more freedom

I am intelligent and a believer

I pretend that I can sing

I feel like a panda

I touch the cardboard heart

I worry about the future

I cry when I won't see someone again

I am intelligent and a believer

I understand fear

I say what is true

I dream about freedom

I try making peace

I hope for an equal world

I am intelligent and a believer

Alaina

Introducing Alaina

In terms of looks, Alaina and her sister Dion appear to be twins. Their skin, hair and facial features are identical, yet presented completely different. Alaina is extremely laid back and least concerned with fashion and looks. While she is a beautiful girl, she rarely sports her hair in anything more than a ponytail and usually wears workout clothes. Alaina was the most difficult participant for me to understand and interpret, as she generally spoke around issues, but from time to time would surprise me by simply naming instances of racism. She also seemed to understand issues of injustice as a fact of life and resolved herself to not caring about or interacting

with anyone who displayed adverse characteristics, which generally meant the White students, and often the teachers and administrators at her school.

Alaina's Interview

Alaina described herself as somewhat of a reserved student who, because of her own morals and interests, resigned herself to associating only with a close group of friends she has for the most part maintained since middle school. She explained that she and her friends are relegated to the outskirts or margins of the school community for a variety of reasons regarding their "fit" into the larger student body. In the dialogic conversation with Alaina in Figure 9, I ask Alaina probing questions to understand what differences she saw between her friends and the larger student body.

Alaina	"I guess we are different we kind of stand out how we dress and stuff and I guess like how we are different and other groups look at us differently."
Researcher	"Different how?"
Alaina	"Umm, like how we seem to them."
Researcher	"What do you think they think about you?"
Alaina	"I guess they think we are like loud and obnoxious and stuff."

Figure 9.

Interview Excerpt: Alaina Interview 2

Alaina noted that she and her friends did not fit the description of "preps" that dominate the school, because they did not live in the required neighborhoods nor wear the obligatory clothing. She also expounded about the separate interests of her group versus the majority student

body noting that her group is Black with similar interests as it pertains to race and a reluctance to participate in illicit activities that are popular in her school including drinking and smoking.

Alaina	"I think we are just different from other kids like we don't do stuff they usually do and … I think like we just talk to each other like that's all we do. Talk."
Researcher	"When you say you don't do stuff they usually do, what do you mean? What are you not into?"
Alaina	"They like, like drinking and stuff and like smoking and that's just disgusting."

Figure 10.

Interview Excerpt: Alaina Interview 2

While Alaina is outgoing and talkative in her small group, she described herself as a very quiet person in class that participates for grading purposes, but not much beyond that because her lack of interest in course material and lack of associations with classmates. Going more in detail on her feelings about curriculum, Alaina explained that she didn't feel her courses related to or taught her enough about real life issues. In describing her favorite teacher, and favorite classroom experience thus far she explained that her English teacher, Mr. Smith, taught in a fun, interactive, and critical way. Alaina said that Mr. Smith incorporated more political issues dealing with diversity and activism, and had students work in assigned groups that eliminated the awkward student partnering that usually happened in class. Alaina said:

> *"He always brought up like diversity and stuff, and taught us like what's wrong and what's right."* (Alaina Interview 3)

The student partnering is described as awkward because of the difficulty of being chosen by peers that do not normally associate with her. Often partnering proves to be a further marginalizing experience. In discussing the difference in her behavior in school versus outside of school with friends and family, Alaina explained that she believes there is a certain way she should act in school under the eye of teachers and her peers that is more acceptable, but that is not necessary around friends and family where she can be free. This adjusted behavior included the way she socialized and what she said in conversation. Alaina stated:

> *"I think I'm different because like there is a way you are supposed to act in school that's like acceptable and then a way you act outside because it's just you and your friends like no one else is watching you."* (Alaina Interview 2)

Although Alaina was a member of the lacrosse team this year, she does not look forward to participating in any other school activities throughout her time in high school because of her disinterest in socializing with students outside of her group. High school experiences including prom, homecoming, school dances, and similar activities do not interest Alaina. She more so looks forward to college and the diverse experiences and choice of curriculum it has to offer. She also explained that the popularity required to be an integral part of the school and participant in such activities is not something she was interested in having, because she didn't believe in the basis for which popularity is awarded. She further clarified the basis of popularity, which included one's looks based on a hierarchy of Whiteness celebrating long blonde hair and White skin, clothing or wearing the appropriate or most popular brands worn by the majority students who attend the school, and a student's neighborhood or their families' presumed class status. In some cases this also included sports involvement. Alaina was unaffected by these parameters for popularity and beauty. She concerned herself more with her own definitions of beauty and those

of her group of close friends. In Figure 11 below, I engage in an exchange with Alaina to further understand her thoughts on friendship and support.

Alaina	"I think it's just knowing that no matter what you will always have friends; you won't be alone like it's just not possible like everyone has a friend."
Researcher	"So you use your friends as a support system, you don't worry about making others like you outside of that?"
Alaina	"Yeah."

Figure 11.

Interview Excerpt: Alaina Interview 3

Her own definition of beauty included more than outward appearance as she noted that you can appear very pretty but the way someone acts and presents themselves is equally as important to general beauty as appearance. Her close group of friends helped her maintain these beliefs as they have similar insights, their support also helps her avoid a preoccupation with popularity or attempts to integrate herself into the fabric of the school as she is assured that no matter what she will not be alone, so while she did not have a large group of friends and is not well-known in the school she is an important part of her network.

Alaina's Story

> My friends and I are just different from the other students in my school. Like everyone else dresses the same and does the same types of things, and we aren't like them. We don't dress preppy and like live in the country club or anything. Plus as a group of Black girls, I think people look at us differently, like they think we are loud and obnoxious. But I think we are different because we just

don't follow what everyone else does. We are not very cliquish, we are willing to hang out with a lot of different types of people, but most of the other students aren't. Everyone just stays in their groups.

Only preps are popular in school and they don't treat other students very good. I was in class with a few and I was friends with them in class and then they acted like they didn't know me outside of class. So, I decided to just never talk to them at all. So everything in terms of friendships is kind of restricted. I am not really worried about being friends with everyone or being popular or anything though, because I like my group of friends. We have a lot in common, like we are all Black, and see eye to eye on a lot of things. All of the other kids are White and think you have to be White, blonde, have long hair, and blue eyes to even be normal. Plus, some of the popular preps are just not good people, like they treat people differently according to how they dress and where they live and stuff, and they do things we aren't into like drinking and smoking.

I think if the school was more diverse a lot could be improved. There wouldn't be a big group of students dominating the school restricting everyone else. And more things in the school would be diverse, like our classes. Right now everything caters to one group. So right now I do lacrosse, but other than that I am not really involved in the school or class like that. In class I am very quiet, but outside around my friends and people I am comfortable with I am a lot more outgoing. There is one class I had where the teacher made it more of a comfortable situation, so I participated more. He had great topics because he talked about real world issues and injustices, and it was easier to participate because he put us in

> different learning groups and switched us a few times that semester, so we didn't have to pair up ourselves. It is usually awkward picking partners or group members in class because I don't talk to any of the students. In the future, I don't really look forward to prom or any other school activities. I do look forward to college though, I am ready to take classes I am interested in and focus on my future career.

Dion and Alaina's Mother's (Ms. Wright's) Reflection

Ms. Wright felt that both of her daughters, Dion and Alaina, have been limited in their ability to make friends and relate to people in their current school because of the racial makeup. She added that she felt it affected Dion more because she is older, had significant experience in more diverse schools in a northern state, and as a result recognizes discrimination more readily than Alaina. Ms. Wright explained that this inability to connect with the majority of students as well as teachers has been a consistent complaint of her daughters since attending the neighborhood elementary school, but since entering high school their concerns have become more specific and their needs more pronounced. She noted that the girls talked to her about a variety of issues related to lack of diversity at their school including a curriculum that is not inclusive of Black people or Black history, preferential treatment of White upper-class students by teachers, conflict with teachers based on appearance and discrimination in extracurricular activities. She explained that Alaina's most recent issue was that the school added an African-American history course that is being taught by a White teacher, who she did not feel like could adequately teach the course.

> *"They finally added a course for these students, but the teacher is white. They do things like that."* (Ms. Wright Interview)

In addition to her daughters' complaints about these issues, Ms. Wright also observed many of the issues her daughters experience in the school. She noted that she has had a lot of issues with teachers whom she felt showed preference toward students whose parents are more privileged and are able to spend a lot of time in the school building assisting the teacher and organizing various teacher appreciation activities. She added that as a full-time pharmacist she is not able to garner the same type of treatment for her daughters. Ms. Wright also felt that the mostly White and young teacher base is not receptive to her addressing inequitable treatment on behalf of her daughters. In one instance, Ms. Wright noticed that a teacher had been grading Dion incorrectly and she contacted the teacher about the issue. She noticed that although the grades were changed the teacher was resistant and became more hostile toward Dion for the remainder of the semester. With Dion she has also observed a reticence to participate in sports noting that she once participated in track, but complained about the coach as well as other students and opted out of the sport.

Ms. Wright explained that upon relocating to the city she chose her home location based on school ratings and information about school resources. In her own high school experience in Harlem, resources were a huge issue, but she never had to worry about relating to other students, making friends, or teacher treatment. Thus, her main concern for her daughters was that they attend a well-resourced school. She also felt limited in her choice of school in the city because so many schools were noted as failing or underperforming. The high school the girls attend was not necessarily a choice, but part of the progression from elementary school in the system's neighborhood school system. Ms. Wright felt that increased school integration could help the school experience for not only her daughters, but students in under-resourced schools as well. She felt

that a more diverse range of students both in terms of race and class would increase her daughters' participation in extracurricular activities and sports in the school. She also believed that a diverse teaching staff would improve her daughters' class experience, as it would likely bring a more inclusive curriculum and less preferential treatment for certain students in the school.

Her advice to her daughters in terms of how to conduct themselves in school and deal with issues that they face has been to attempt to get on the better sides of their teachers and avoid negative interactions. She emphasized that her daughters should try to avoid being targets for the school administration and teachers, because she was aware of how inequitable the treatment can be and did not want her daughters to suffer. However, she did interject on her daughters' behalf, especially if the situation involved grading.

Overall Analysis

The field note below illustrates how I used my time in the field to create this observation on Alaina.

Field Note #4
Subject: Alaina
Date: July 14, 2015
Location: Alaina's Home
Time: Noon -1:00 p.m.
Note recorded: July 14, 2015

Memo:
Alaina has a calm demeanor even when discussing racism or classes she doesn't enjoy. She delivers information with very little emotion, often shrugging or giving a "who cares" facial expression.

Figure 12.

Field Note: Alaina

Alaina's story details the issues with fitting into the majority class structure at the school as well as cultural issues imbedded in the curriculum and class structure. Though Alaina is from

an upper-middle-class household, she indicated that her neighborhood eliminated her participation in the majority prep culture at her school, as those students lived in more expensive neighborhoods or homes in the area. The majority students at the school excluded other minority students accordingly. Students at the school additionally segregated themselves on the basis of race as student groups also require a specific look that marginalized Black girls as well. In class, Alaina experienced not only a distancing from the other students, but the class subject matter and structure as well. Because of the difficulties communicating with other students, group or partner work is difficult. A teacher who not only offered more engaging and critical subject matter, but a more community focused classroom structure ensured a better classroom experience.

Alaina rejected not only the behaviors of her majority peers but their conceptions of popularity and friendship as well, creating her own standards more so focused on morality and character than the given standards of beauty and class. Also, her small group of Black friends served as a support system that allowed her to ignore the marginalization in her school concentrating instead on quality of friends versus quantity. Similarly, while the lack of diversity in course offerings as well as class structure is not conducive to a good classroom experience for Alaina, she maintained a view of herself as a college bound student who has no option but to achieve in school. Her main technique for resistance is code switching[3]. Alaina noted that though she felt her and her friends' behavior and choices were acceptable, in school and more specifically class, she understands that a certain behavior is expected from teachers. Thus, she minimizes her con-

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[3] Payne and Suddler (2014) define code switching as "how Black Americans 'switch' their interactional style to better accommodate new or different environments or persons in positions of authority" (p. 385).

tact with teachers and the school discipline system, while simultaneously maintaining her appreciation for her own culture. My cultural intuition was key in dialoguing with Alaina. Often she avoided using the term Black or race, in our initial interviews. However, when she explained that she and her friends were "different" or she wasn't engaged in class, my probing questions illuminated that it was that she and her friends were Black and the course material was not inclusive of Black history and people.

Resistance and persistence are evidenced in how Alaina:

1. Viewed herself as a college-bound student;
2. Rejected behaviors and standards for majority students in favor of personal standards;
3. Recognized standards of beauty set by majority students; and
4. Employed code switching to maintain cultural ties and group friendships while avoiding any issues with teachers or administration.

Alaina's story highlighted the need for the school administration to consider diversifying the curriculum offered to include the needs of all students in the school. Additionally, her story indicated a need for school officials to address the need for culturally relevant and appropriate pedagogy in designing classroom structure and course subject matter. Alaina's story also illuminated the difficulties of class and extracurricular participation for minority students, based on class and race, thus a consideration of how to specifically integrate these students into the fabric of the school is necessary.

Laila

I am outgoing and positive

I wonder what I will do in the future

I hear my thoughts in my head

I see days go by

I want to be successful

I am outgoing and positive

I pretend to be energetic

I feel really good

I touch the hairs of my dog

I worry that my grades won't be good enough

I cry when I get frustrated

I am outgoing and positive

I understand how life goes

I say that you can chase your dreams

I dream of imaginary things

I try to do good in school

I hope to achieve my goals

I am outgoing and positive

Laila

Introducing Laila

Laila is a brown-skinned girl with parents from both the northeast and a small town in the south. She has a model look standing about 5 feet 8 inches tall and extremely slim. She wears her hair in a short, cropped bob hairstyle and is the most sporty or tomboyish of the group. Laila was the most timid in interviews, displaying more reticence to discuss issues than other participants. I felt it was likely the emotions tied to the experiences she was having that caused her to shy away from rehashing incidents.

Laila's Interview

Laila relies heavily on a very tight knit group of friends whom she described as different from the other students at her school, mainly based on their race and perceived social class standing. Laila explained that most of the students at her school are considered preps, who are students that are perceived to be richer and living in very specific communities like the local country club. She noted that these students are all White, with maybe the exception of a few, while she and her friends didn't fit that description. Though the group is mainly upper-middle-class, they are Black and not perceived to be rich. She explained that socially her schoolmates operated in very restrictive cliques[4] and although she felt it was weird, she said she understood and followed the social norms that dictate that students do not socialize or talk to students outside of their cliques. Laila noted:

> *"My school is like split into groups, people just like to hang out with their kind of people, like it's really weird and some people don't like to talk to other people, but it's like mainly White people and that's it."* (Laila Interview 1)

Thus, though the White prep students control or dominate the social structure of their school, Laila knew she had to feel comfortable not participating in that structure and instead hanging out solely with her crew[5]. Because of the consistent presence of her crew, she rarely felt

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[4] A narrow exclusive circle or group of persons; *especially*: one held together by common interests, views, or purposes. Clique. (n.d.) In *Merriam-Webster* online. Retrieved September 21, 2015 from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/clique

[5] "Crew" is formally defined as a group of people who work closely together. Girls use the term crew to define their friendship group. Crew. (n.d.) In *Merriam-Webster* online. Retrieved September 21, 2015 from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/crew

isolated though she has had some instances of isolation or marginalization that her crew could not help her avoid. Laila explained:

> *"If a White person runs for something, then they are not gonna vote for the Black person . . .I think Black people won't do stuff like that because they already know no one is gonna vote for them so why bother."* (Laila Interview 3)

Though Laila is in standard classes where there is a higher percentage of non-White or Black students, she described one elective class experience in which she ended up in an all-White class and did not speak in class the entire semester. She explained that she was placed in an elective Spanish class full of all-White prep students and although they dominate the school, she had never been in that situation previously. In this particular instance she decided, considering the student population and their socialization patterns, that it would be best to avoid all interaction with these students. Laila knew that her classmates felt differently about her than they did about each other and although she didn't mind talking to them, she did not want to risk the impending rejection. She felt so uncomfortable without the support or presence of other Black students, she maintained her silence through the semester. Although she was able to handle herself, she tries to avoid having another experience where she feels that she is the outcast. Her older sister just recently graduated from the same high school and she used her advice on teachers and classes to avoid these situations. Laila said:

> *"Yeah, like one time when I had an elective and there were like none of my friends in there and no one I could talk to, so I didn't really talk to anyone in that class the whole semester."* (Laila Interview 2)

Laila had a similar experience of isolation and what she calls bullying in an experience with a 9th grade teacher. Though Laila has had very few good relationships with teachers, one

that she can remember, she described this teacher as particularly unfair, noting she was called out on a consistent basis in class. Laila explained that she felt the teacher constantly called on her because she was a struggling student creating embarrassing situations in front of other classmates. She noted that the same teacher cited her countless times for dress code violations removing, even after rules were dismissed, resulting in her missing class or numerous occasions. Laila said:

> *"I just felt like she gave me a hard time like every class, like she was just always picking on me and calling on me. It just seemed like she was always coming after me."* (Laila Interview 2)

Laila felt like she was unfairly targeted in class and for dress code violations as she could not remember any other students being called on as much as her and felt that girls with a similar style or outfits were not cited by the same teacher for dress code violations. Laila was not sure of the reason she was targeted in either case she could only guess that it was because she was struggling in that class and had long legs, thus making her look different in clothes.

Consequently, she resolved to be better in school, feeling that if the teacher would not continue to pick on her if she were a more confident and knowledgeable student. She noted that this did help as she felt toward the end of the semester the teacher called on her less. Also, with the elimination of the bulk of the dress code policy, though the teacher made comments about her dress, she was no longer dismissed from class because of it.

For Laila, comfort is the driving force behind her decisions in school in terms of classes, teachers, and social spaces. Her own experience in standard versus honors classes as well as her friends, her sister's high school experience and advice on classes and teachers, and she and her crew's interactions with their peers influence her high school decisions. Though she sees race and further class as factors that influence every part of her school experience, she was confident

that her ability to learn or her intelligence level and further character are not dependent on race. So while race may shape her experience, she did not believe it would shape her outcome. Laila explained:

> *"My intelligence isn't really based on my race; it's based on how I do in school and what I learn."* (Laila Interview 4)

Laila's Story

> I've been hanging out with the same people in school for a while now, really since middle school. We are pretty much all Black and everyone is just easier to talk to and get along with than the rest of the people in school. Most people at my school are snobbish and they don't really feel the need to hang out with or get along with a lot of other people. Everyone is split into these groups. My group of friends is really open and willing to accept everyone, but no one else is really like that. So my group of friends ends up not really talking to anyone else either. I think the other students don't really talk to us, because they think we are different, we are all Black and we don't live in the neighborhoods they live in like the country club and stuff.
>
> The most popular kids in school are the people who have the most money, they are all White and live in the same neighborhood and stuff. Most of the girls that are considered pretty and popular have long hair and the guys dress in that group dress really preppy. A lot of them are cheerleaders and football players too. They don't really treat other people that good, but my crew doesn't really worry about them because we have each other.

In class it is pretty much the same. I usually have at least one friend in a class, so I have someone I can relate to. There were a few times I didn't have any-one and I didn't really like being in those classes. It happened once with my Span-ish class, I was in there by myself and I just didn't really say anything the whole semester. The teachers are kind of the same as the students. I have only had one teacher I really liked. He was my social studies teacher, which is weird because I have never liked social studies before. But he made it really relatable and interest-ing. I felt like I was learning more about myself and learning about historic things that related to current events. He also makes everyone get involved in class with-out calling us out.

On the other hand, I had an English teacher who I felt like just picked on me and called me out the whole semester to embarrass me. She called me out for dress code stuff and for class stuff. Even when I was wearing the same things as a bunch of other girls in class she would just give me a violation and send me to the office. This happened a lot during the semester. In class she would also call me out in front of everyone or up to the board whenever she felt like I was struggling. I am not sure why, but it seemed like she was just focusing on me even though I wasn't really bringing any attention to myself. I guess for dress code she mostly picked on me because I look different in my clothes, like I have longer legs than most the other girls, but I really don't know. The whole thing was not really fair because half way through that semester they got rid of the dress code, but she still would make comments, call me out, and try to send me to the office. I have had to

> tell my parents about some issues in that class though. To make it through the semester I tried to focus on my work and not say anything in class. Other than that I usually feel more comfortable in class because my sister gives me advice on what teachers to avoid and I usually try to have at least one friend in every class. As long as I have that, then I am fine.
>
> As far as sports or like extra-curricular activities, I don't really do any in school. Outside of school I have always done soccer and girls scouts. I tried soccer with the school once, but none of my friends were on the team and I didn't really like how the coach played favorites, so I stopped playing and now I just play for my club again. Most of the Black kids at my school do the same thing as far as extra-curricular activities. We don't really do prom, homecoming, student government or things like that, because we know none of the White students are really going to vote for us anyway. If I went to another school I might do more things like sports and school activities, right now I am fine as long as I have my friends.

Laila's Father's (Mr. Ranson's) Reflection

Mr. Ranson felt that both Laila and her older sisters' self-esteem had been greatly affected by attending the local high school. He explained that both he and Laila's mother are from more humble beginnings, so when they initially chose a school for their children the main consideration was school ratings and resources. Mr. Ranson noted that both he and Laila's mother sacrificed and relocated to more expensive housing in the more prosperous part of the city in order to send Laila and her older sister to schools with the highest ratings. Thus, they initially chose an elementary school for the girls based on that criteria alone and with the neighborhood schooling concept in place the middle and high school were not really selected, but more of a

natural progression. However, he stated that though he feels the academics offered at the school are fine, if he had to choose schools for his daughters again he would consider more criteria including school diversity and social opportunities. These are elements of school life that he did not consider on his own, because his high school experience was in a small town with only one elementary, middle, and high school, with a student body with a much more limited or smaller income range. He explained that Laila's mother had a similar high school experience, consequently neither one considered the negative or detrimental effects of class divisions. Mr. Ranson added that school options in his current city are limited by home location, so to consider new school options for his daughter he would have to relocate his home to another area.

> *"I never considered the issues that the girls would have at this school. I never thought about how big of a deal it was going to be, because these are supposed to be the best schools. My daughters aren't having the best experience though."* (Mr. Ranson Interview)

Mr. Ranson explained that in observing Laila in high school he became aware of some needs that the school did not fulfill and struggles that Laila had directly related to the lack of diversity in both the faculty and administration and student base. He felt that most of the issues for his daughter were directly related to class; however, he noted that race issues may be directly tied to class issues in the school. For example, as students are aware of where other students rent or own homes, his daughter's location in a condominium rather than a larger home in the area caused her to be isolated from a large part of the student base. This isolation has affected not only Laila's social life, but her participation in extracurricular activities as well. Mr. Ranson said that until high school Laila had played soccer as a part of clubs for years, but upon entering high

school she explained to him that she no longer wished to participate in soccer because of exclusion from richer White students on the team as well as the soccer coach. Laila complained to him that she was constantly overlooked by the coach, thus her participation in the sport was limited. He added that his older daughter, who recently graduated from the school, never participated in any extracurricular activities. He felt that this exclusion not only affected Laila's participation, but her self-esteem or self-concept as well. In order to support his daughter he discussed his family history and progression and emphasized the need to be twice as good at all activities in order to continue to move forward. He explained to her that where he was as a child is not where he is today, and the same should be true for her. Thus, the family should continue to advance generationally in terms of economic status. Additionally, he pushed Laila to ignore any negativity she received based on class or race, explaining that it is that person's issue rather than her own.

Mr. Ranson had mixed feelings about his own relationship with the school. While he felt that the education and communication with parents was adequate, as he can log in and view Laila's grades and progress, he also felt that the resources and opportunities that the school has to offer are not equally accessed by all students attending the school. Consequently, he felt his daughter was not benefitting from the main feature of the school, which is its abundant resources. He also added that Laila has complained of the exclusion she experienced in extracurricular activities in classes as well. Laila has lamented that she received excessive negative attention from the teacher along with little communication with other students. He tried to balance the information from Laila with reports from the teacher in order not to be one-sided, but noted the issues as a real concern for his daughter. He explained that Laila's mother has had some more interactions with school administrators that she was not pleased with, but he was not as familiar with those experiences. Mr. Ranson believed that the high school experience could be improved

for his daughter through the school focusing on diversifying faculty, administration, and extra-curricular leadership, so that the exclusion by majority students isn't continued by adults in the school building. In reflecting on all the high school has to offer, he felt that the biggest improvement would come from relocating to a more diverse area and enrolling Laila in a high school where she would have more of a range of types of students and faculty, where Laila would be a part of the majority rather than the minority. This way he felt that he could balance the consideration of resources with the social and extracurricular needs of his daughter.

Overall Analysis

The field note below illustrates how I use my time in the field to create this observation on Laila.

Field Note #3
Subject: Laila
Date: June 30, 2015
Location: Laila's Home
Time: 2:00 p.m. -4:00 p.m.
Note recorded: June 30, 2015

Memo:
Laila visually expressed confusion when discussing the teacher she had issues with during the semester. Does not understand why she was singled out, but strongly believes that she was.

Figure 13.

Field Note: Laila

Unlike the other girls participating in the study, both Laila and her father emphasized issues related to class status above all else. A reasonable explanation for this focus is the fact that Laila is the only girl participating in the study who lived in a condominium community in the area rather than a home in a planned community. Her schooling was affected by this class or economic awareness, because the students in the school are both aware of and concerned about it,

and they segment themselves by their social class status and family income. Laila's story indicated that class is inextricably tied to race in the fabric of the school on the part of the student body and the faculty. Laila highlighted measures of exclusion based on class, but explained that class exclusions were also determined by racial parameters. Thus, her school experience was limited with reduced participation in extracurricular activities and sports as well as the classroom. Majority students in the school created cliques and exclude students like Laila based on class and racial criteria. Her story and her father's reflection also indicated that school leaders overlook minority students, or interactions with those students are largely negative and punitive. As a female student, her negative and inequitable interactions were for the most part directly related to a dress or appearance.

In order to combat the exclusion and negative treatment experienced in class and activities, Laila declined to interact with students who exhibit exclusionary behavior by not participating. In class, her strategy to avoid negative interactions with the teachers is to stay focused on improving her grades and exhibit good behavior, as dictated by White norms. While she noted that this didn't mean she escaped inequitable treatment from teachers, she has had some improvements using these tactics. In order to support her need for peer interaction with like-minded students, Laila spent as much time with her select group of peers, her "crew," as possible. She also used her sister's experience and advice to help her avoid classrooms, teachers, and spaces in the school that have been known for being particularly plagued with race, gender, and class issues.

Resistance and persistence are evidenced how Laila:

1. Viewed achievement as a nonracial characteristic;

2. Rejected participation in activities where she is subject to inequitable treatment; and
3. Developed strategies to deal with inequitable teacher treatment.

Laila's story again underscored the importance of examining cultural sensitivity among school staff and addressing the lack of cultural training. Specifically, her story called attention to the lack of participation among students of color in the school's extracurricular and sporting activities. Likewise, as one of Laila's strategies to avoid the hostile classist and racial climate is to avoid courses with a history of low minority participation, an investigation into classroom culture and structure of honors courses is also required. Lastly, Laila's experience with treatment that she characterized as bullying or harassment by teachers called attention to discipline disparities and the need for a review of disciplinary outcomes with specific attention to race, class, and gender inequities.

Michelle

I am humble and free

I wonder about my future

I hear music in my head

I see hurting people

I want to help

I am humble and free

I pretend to perform in front of a room

I feel confident

I touch the stars

I worry I'll mess up

I cry once I do

I am humble and free

I understand we all have a purpose

I say “you are fearfully and wonderfully made”

I dream to be like my mother

I try to love all

I hope to be wise

I am humble and free

Michelle

Introducing Michelle

Michelle was by far the most talkative of the group. A brown skinned daughter of New Yorkers with a massive afro usually worn in a puff or braids, Michelle stood taller than every participant other than Laila and was the most “full bodied” as well. Michelle clearly stated various instances of inequity that she had experienced in school and seemed to have the most experience discussing these issues outside of the interviews I conducted. She was the most opinionated of the participants and had a clear picture of how she felt the school, and even the world, should be changed or improved.

Michelle’s Interview

Michelle had a significant amount of assistance acclimating to high school because of incredible support and guidance from her three older sisters, two of whom attended the same high school. Michelle insisted her three sisters helped mold and prepare her for what she faced in high school based on their own high school experiences. Michelle said:

> *"Umm I guess just you know I learned a lot from my sisters about having confidence in yourself-- like whatever you do it's just like it just affects you and not everyone. So like everyone else's input really doesn't matter, like its mostly about staying true to yourself because it's very hard if you don't have that like a confidence builder when you're going into high school, because it's really easy for people to like shut you down when you don't have your confidence built."* (Michelle Interview 3)

Michelle described her sisters' experiences in school as somewhat turbulent from issues with students to issues with teachers and administrators. While she was not as familiar with her eldest sister's experience, she described her second oldest sister's issues with developing a social life and friendships in high school, which she found very odd because of her sister's personality and robust social life in college. Her sister immediately preceding herself more so had issues with teachers specifically concerning her participation with the basketball team and her treatment by coaches and others involved with the team. However, her sister's basketball team membership allowed Michelle to have a ready group of friends and a safe haven, as soon as she entered high school. She described her participation with the basketball team and her position as the basketball manager as the best thing that could have happened to her. She noted that it gave her the opportunity to make a lot of friends she wouldn't have otherwise made, make real connections with school staff she felt cared about her well-being and were trustworthy, and gave her a chance to be part of a team without actually playing basketball. She pressed the importance of being able to easily make friends and develop this niche with other Black girls and teachers, because she had some struggles with attempting to get involved in other aspects of school life. Michelle noted:

> *"Oh yeah, like in the student council you'll see more of the White kids getting like president and council, like you don't see, never see the Black person win like homecoming*

queen, like they have this big thing now--they have like homecoming princesses. They nominate some each grade and no Black person has even gotten in the running for those, been all White people." (Michelle Interview 2)

In one instance, she attempted to run for 9th grade student council; however, the process required that she receive recommendations from several teachers and one teacher failed to turn in her recommendation, eliminating her from the race. The recommendations were done anonymously so Michelle had no recourse. Michelle also explained that in her school there are no Black representatives in student activities like homecoming court, student government and chorus, and theater, theater being a very popular activity at her school. She went further to say that though she participates in chorus she's very frustrated that Black students were never cast for lead roles in musicals. She lamented that because the original plays selected to be featured at the school have White leads, like *Annie* or *The Wizard of Oz*, and because the adult chorus leaders prefer a "certain" kind of voice and style of singing not readily associated with Black students, whose voices she believes are too soulful, they do not receive lead roles, though many are highly talented.

In another chorus related incident, when Michelle attempted to encourage another student, a Black male, to challenge the "usual contender" for the lead part in the school musical, that contender accused her of reverse racism. A White student who had played lead in several school productions accused Michelle of being racist and claimed that she was only encouraging the other student to try out because he was Black. Michelle felt that in this situation, as in many others, the White student was attempting to get a certain "Black girl" reaction from her. She also felt that his response highlighted how opposed her White peers are to having a Black student participate, and although she didn't encourage him solely on the basis of race, she explained that she

would have felt justified in doing so, because she felt students were precluded from participating solely on the basis of race.

Michelle has had a few difficulties in school regarding her appearance. Other students make offensive comments or jokes about her natural hair, and she reported that she has been moved to different seats in the classroom to accommodate students who complained that her afro obstructed their vision. Michelle explained:

> *"One time I wore my hair out like natural and I had a huge pony tail, and the guy came up to me and he was like, 'Can you move your afro?' And the whole class just started laughing, and he was like, 'Can you move your afro because I can't even see.' So the whole time at the beginning of the class a different person would ask me, 'Oh can you move your afro, oh can you move your afro?' and take it as a joke."* (Michelle Interview 1)

Similarly, although the school lacked or had eliminated a formal dress code policy, teachers have suggested that they didn't like what Michelle was wearing of that she should refrain from wearing certain outfits that her mother had approved. These outfits did not break any dress code, so there were no actual consequences other than discomfort for Michelle. For example, Michelle described one incident when a teacher noted her disapproval when she was wearing a floor length fitted skirt. Michelle assumed it was the fit of the skirt that the teacher did not like; however, there are no dress code rules related to skirt or clothing fit. Michelle felt the comments are directed towards her and other girls because of their body type—that girls with curves, a larger chest or behind and more weight in general are usually called out, which she felt was unfair. Michelle said:

"Like if you're really more curvy, like you have a lot more curves, a little bit thicker, like they will say more stuff to you; like if you have a larger chest, maybe they'll say something to you more because you are a little more revealing. But you know it's not fair if you say it to someone who has a big chest or a big butt, you have to say it to someone who doesn't have a big chest or big butt, too, because that's just not fair. But they tend to try to talk to people that have more curves and are thick and stuff like that." (Michelle Interview 3)

Accordingly, Michelle also mentioned several incidents that fuel a racist energy or tension in the school among students when Black students, girls to be specific, are prompted or jeered and expected to have loud, obnoxious, ghetto or ratchet[6] reactions. Michelle explained that she knows she's expected to be unsophisticated or lack class because she is a Black girl.

Michelle	"Umm, I think that a lot of Caucasians feel that we are ratchet, ignorant and over the top."
Researcher	"Girls not guys?"
Michelle	"Yeah."

Figure 14.

Interview Excerpt: Michelle Interview 3

However, through the support of her sisters and mother who have encouraged her to be more comfortable and confident in her own skin, she has been able to avoid reacting in ways that

[6] An annoying , very rude person. Normally tries to act ghetto by typing in words or phrases such as " Af' " (as fuck), " Janky ", " Finna", " Cus ", Etc. Most people think of "Rachet" girls or boys as trashy. In other words a "Rachet" person is the most non-classy human-being in presence. They usually have the worst grammar problems and they always try to pick fights with everybody. Ratchet. (n.d.) In *Urban Dictionary* online. Retrieved December 10, 2015 from http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Ratchet

she feels are expected. She described her approach as taking the high road and being a good representative as she believes Black people, women specifically, are better than the stereotypes held about them. Michelle said:

> *"My mom says when they're just ignorant people. . .she had told me just make people feel really small, like make them feel they stooped really low like went to a really shallow point so like not necessarily just ignoring but you shouldn't have to take all your energy to be mad or embarrassed over people saying that stuff to you."* (Michelle Interview 3)

Though she describes herself as an outgoing student who wants to be involved, she notes that in class she is introverted and quiet, explaining that she prefers independent work to any group or partner projects or work. Michelle looks forward to continuing to work with the basketball team and coaches though her sister recently graduated, and continuing to enjoy the friendship and support offered within that group of girls. She mentioned that although she felt the predominantly White student base will not vote for a non-White person, she plans to run for student council again when she is an upperclassman. Before beginning high school her mother considered other school options because of past issues with her siblings, being ushered into high school under her sister's wing and her sibling's guidance has helped Michelle significantly in her effort to navigate the space.

Michelle's Story

> I am really lucky to have had a sister that was already on the basketball team, because it gave me the opportunity to be the basketball team manager which is really the best thing that could've happened to me coming into high school. It gave me a chance to make friends easily, which is difficult in school because everyone is so cliquish and they don't hang out with other people for a lot of different

reasons. It also gave me a chance to be close to a teacher or adult in the building through my relationship with the coach. She is someone I feel I actually have a real relationship with and she has my best interest at heart. For the most part the girls on the basketball team have been my only friends and the coach has been the only teacher I have a relationship with this year.

I feel like it is more difficult to make friends and just be in this school being a Black girl because the school is majority White and there is racism, especially toward Black girls. There have been situations where White kids, because they think we are ghetto, will imitate Black girls and be yelling, stomping, and snapping their neck, because they expect us to react that way when we get angry. They are looking for this stereotypical reaction. I think some Black students get upset and feed into it, but for the most part I don't really know where they get those stereotypes from, I guess television like reality shows and social media. There are social media pages dedicated to ratchet or ghetto Black girls and women, so I guess they think we are all like that. I don't feed into it because I know they are just ignorant, but I will defend myself or other Black students if I think something is wrong.

Like I think it's wrong that all our school plays are based on White people and all have the same White students as leads, so I encourage really talented Black students to try out. I was called racist by a White student for doing this because he said I only want students to try out because of their race. That's not true, I want students to try out for their talent, but I don't think it is racist of me to consider race, because we are kept out of everything. Everything is based on the

White students as the school, chorus, theater, student government, yearbook, all those things only involve White students. So I don't think it's racist to want more diversity when we are the ones being oppressed.

I talk to my family about it because I have older sisters that went to the same school, and my mom tries to make sure we know what is going on and how to react. I know most of the White students think Black students are ratchet and ghetto, and the girls are unclassy, so I just make sure I don't get drawn into what they think of me and actually start acting that way. The basketball team is a positive group of Black girls for me to surround myself with that and stay away from all of that.

I think there is more racism amongst the students than the teachers in the school. However, outside of the basketball coach I don't really have much of a relationship with any of the teachers, and I don't really have any classes that I like that much. I think the classes offered at this school are very limited and all focus is on technology. Even the classes that could be more interesting are not because they only cater to certain students and don't discuss real issues. As far as differences for boys and girls, the dress code is the main one because I have never really seen a boy get dress code, but girls do all the time. Even now that the dress code isn't in place anymore teachers still make comments to girls. Some teachers have made comments to me. I don't know if it is specifically about race, but I know girls with more body like breasts or bigger butts and hips get called out more by teachers and I don't think that is fair. Since the dress code is not in place I don't think it is fair for them to say anything, but they still make rude comments.

> I just think it is hard to be a Black woman in this school because that is like two strikes. I do well because my sisters have told me what to expect and encouraged me to have a lot of confidence in myself. They tell me you can't make it through without confidence because people will continue to attack you and you have to know how to be strong. Like I have had incidents where people talk about my hair, making rude comments about my afro and I just have to ignore it and be confident. For the most part in school, I am quiet and a hard worker. I just want to be a good example, so I look forward to being involved as much as I can be even though I know it is really hard for Black students in this school.

Michelle's Mother's (Mrs. Johnson's) Reflection

Mrs. Johnson felt her daughter's high school experience had been very mediocre thus far. She believed Michelle did not have any connection to the school, similar to her two other daughters that attended. She also felt the curriculum, teachers, leadership, and student body lack diversity, which limits Michelle's experience. In terms of the curriculum, Mrs. Johnson noted that it is very science and technology focused underinvesting or virtually ignoring subjects like literature, history, and the arts. She felt that for students particularly talented in these unrecognized areas the school offered very little development. Because Michelle is a writer and musician, Mrs. Johnson felt her daughter had been stifled by the exclusive focus on other areas of the curriculum. Similarly, she explained that the lack of racial diversity among staff and administration limited perspectives in classrooms.

Mrs. Johnson felt strongly that Michelle has received a very limited Eurocentric focused education. Further, she noted that any students who bring a critical perspective are rebuffed. For example, though Michelle received a very Eurocentric education in school, she supplemented her

education with discussions and information on various issues concerning the Black community. Mrs. Johnson gets supplemental information from numerous personal resources including her own library, art collection, and music collection. An example of this classroom limitation is a research project that was assigned in Michelle's English course. Michelle chose the topic of female circumcision, as it is a prevalent issue in Africa and the African diaspora. However, her teacher advised her against choosing this topic noting that it was too controversial and not an issue that should concern the class. Mrs. Johnson felt this incident was just one of many that highlights how opposed the school is to issues that are not European focused. Thus, she felt that Michelle and other Black students in the school are ignored, in terms of their concerns, needs, and learning styles in classrooms. She believed that this carried over to areas outside the classroom as White students are almost exclusively featured on the website, yearbooks, superlative books (books highlighting student attributes), and honored at award ceremonies. Mrs. Johnson emphasized the extent of the bias when she explained that even in sports, the only area of the school she observed Black students having a strong presence, they were rarely, if ever, recognized or honored for superior achievement. She felt Black students were virtually ignored as an entity in the school. This has been her observation not only during Michelle's tenure, but her older daughters as well.

> *"None of the Black kids even won a sports award. Come on…a sports award?"* (Mrs. Johnson Interview)

Speaking on specific issues related to gender in school, Mrs. Johnson noted sexism issues regarding her daughter's experience as well as herself. Mrs. Johnson explained that in various issues she has had in the school, she's noticed her husband received a different treatment and re-

sponse from the male principal. She felt she often had to go through her husband to get a response from the principal. Similarly, as a parent involved in the school she noticed different treatment of the female teachers in the building as compared to the way male teachers are treated. She thought Michelle's issues with sexism were mainly related to the negative attention she received from male peers and teachers for wearing natural hairstyles and her general appearance. However, Mrs. Johnson noted these interactions also have a raced element as she felt Black girls were particularly unpopular among both White and Black male peers, especially when they do not conform to majority appearance expectations. Mrs. Johnson understood that this is just one part of a school experience that she characterized as largely racist. She felt that racism was present in the structure of the school noting that other than one assistant principal, Black teachers have a very limited presence in the school. However, she explained that Blacks dominate the lower wage jobs in the school including security, custodial work, and transportation. Mrs. Johnson went further to say she communicated with Black teachers who left the school and they recounted the mistreatment they experienced at the hands of administration.

Consequently, Mrs. Johnson expounded on numerous ways the school could be improved to ensure a better experience for Michelle. She advised that the schools needs to be more responsive to the needs of all students and make more of an effort to include Black students and perspectives. She also felt diversity in terms of students, teachers, and courses would allow for a better academic and social experience for Michelle. Social experience was an important factor, because she felt Michelle was missing out on the social experience almost completely. She explained that her daughter was too Afrocentric for the White students, and was also marginalized by some Black students who don't want to face criticism by association.

For Mrs. Johnson the choice of high school for Michelle was very difficult. Based on the experiences of two of her older daughters, she had decided against sending Michelle to the local high school, but because of limited alternatives and her older daughter's presence at the school she allowed her to attend for 9th grade. She felt because her older daughter would be there as a guide, Michelle would have a better experience and an easier transition than her older daughters. Mrs. Johnson explained the alternative school choices are limited, because for her it's a decision about resources, particularly funding, and parental involvement versus equitable treatment and a good social atmosphere. When she originally moved to the city she was advised on the areas with better housing values and better schools with little knowledge of the social atmosphere in these areas. Since living in these areas and after sending her children to neighborhood schools, she has looked into options with less hostile racial climates. However, the predominantly Black schools she looked into lack significant resources, whereas the current high school and similar high schools in the area have abundant resources because of the parent tax base. For Michelle's 10th grade year, Mrs. Johnson was still considering a transfer to other predominantly White schools that offer a little more diversity in student body and administration or a high achieving predominantly Black school. Mrs. Johnson shared that the search for high schools has been so stressful that she has considered relocating in order to have different school options for her daughter.

For now, the advice she gave to her daughter to survive the space is to try to take advantage of what the school does have to offer. At home she tried to instill a love for Black people and culture in Michelle and put her in activities with her Black church family. She also wanted her to be able to fill the social and cultural voids in high school by attending a historically Black college or university. Specifically, concerning womanhood, Mrs. Johnson felt it was important to

celebrate culture as well as femininity and she involved Michelle in groups and activities that do both. Most recently, she submitted an application for Michelle to participate in *Black Girls Rock*, an empowerment camp designed to enrich Black girls' leadership skills, education, and identity development. Mrs. Johnson noted that she did not feel she had to do this much at home teaching with her older daughters because they mainly grew up in New York City, where the atmosphere and cultural exposure is much different. However, she felt the atmosphere in the city is hostile and detrimental to Black self-esteem, so that Michelle needs additional care in that area. While she acknowledged she did not know the correct "formula" in terms of what to do in ensuring her daughters excel in this predominately White educational space, her approach has been to do everything she can in terms of keeping Michelle involved in activities that celebrate her, encouraging strong relationships with her sisters, and demonstrating a strong Black family unit.

In terms of Mrs. Johnson's interactions with the school, she noted that when she goes to the school it is war on behalf of her daughters. She is often there to address an issue where she feels her daughter(s) have been mistreated or overlooked. However, she encouraged her daughters to also address issues themselves and has taught them how to recognize subtle racism and disrespect, and how to appropriately confront teachers. She emphasized the need for her daughters to have their own perspective and to resist the need for validation as well as the need to be accepted or to conform.

Overall Analysis

The field note below illustrates how I used my time in the field to create this observation on Michelle.

Field Note #2
Subject: Michelle
Date: June 3, 2015
Location: Michelle's Home
Time: 6:00 p.m. -7:30 p.m.
Note recorded: June 3, 2015

Memo:
Michelle is super energetic and more optimistic than any of the other girls in terms of her future at her current school. Wants to "fight the power." Seems this example has been set by her mother as she has made numerous comment about "going to battle" at the school during the pre and post interview time.

Figure 15.

Field Note: Michelle

Michelle's story called attention to a wide range of disparities related to race, class, and gender in the high school. Her account pointed to issues with every entity in the school including students, faculty, and administration. Though Michelle had an interest in various activities in the school, her participation in limited by school culture and teacher treatment of minority students, as her experience indicated that school activities are either geared toward White students or dependent on votes by the majority White student body. In terms of academics, the school also offers a very limited curriculum for a student like Michelle who was interested in not only diverse course offerings, but diverse perspectives. These perspectives were limited by lack of diversity among teachers in the school. Michelle's home life offers multiple perspectives, specifically on history and current events, thus her parent teaching and school teaching were in conflict.

Though her older sister's status as a female basketball player and a senior has allowed Michelle to enter into a safe space in the school with other Black girls as well as Black coaches/teachers, she was keenly aware that she is not welcomed in various other spaces in the

school because of her race. She has experienced or viewed a multitude of incidents in the school involving race including student harassment, based on racialized comments or jokes, and inequitable rule enforcement.

Michelle's response to this environment involved a few different approaches. In order to combat the isolation in social and extracurricular activities Michelle integrated into her sister's group of friends and used them as a support system. She also used the basketball coaches as a support and has developed a closer relationship with them than any other teachers. These support systems demonstrate the importance of having both Black girlfriends and Black teachers for Michelle. Additionally, Michelle's mother involved her in various activities outside of school which ensured she was exposed to various forms of Black culture. This supported her identity development and allowed her to get more diverse perspectives that she did not get in her courses. Additionally, in class she minimized communication with students who displayed negative behavior towards her or other students based on race or class, and defended herself if confrontations arouse. Her mother also provided support, reaching out to teachers or administration on her daughter's behalf if needed.

Resistance and persistence are evidenced the way Michelle:

1. Continued to try out for school activities despite marginalization (in order to be a good representative of the Black student population);
2. Maintained positive views of Black girls/women despite stereotypes promulgated amongst peers;
3. Maintained diverse perspectives and critical nature despite limited classroom experiences; and

4. Viewed herself as an achiever and college-bound student, seeking tutoring assistance for various courses.

Michelle's story highlighted several issues in the school that can be addressed to improve the school experience for Black girls. Important issues illuminated that the school can address include a lack of diversity among teachers, the need for culturally relevant pedagogy, and lack of participation of students of color in school extracurricular activities. The importance of teacher diversity is an especially key finding in Michelle's story, because she noted the importance of her relationship with the basketball coach and her desire to have courses that reflected her own life, and were more responsive to her interests. Her experience exemplified the way Black girls go unrecognized in school and their needs unaddressed.

Parent Reflection Summary

Parents noted consistent experiences for their daughters in the school and had diverse responses in what they believed should be done to improve the schooling experience for their daughters' as well as their approach to supporting their daughters' in the current space. Their reflections are summarized in the Table 3 (below).

Table 3

Parent Response

Parents	Mrs. Wilson	Ms. Wright	Mr. Ranson	Mrs. Johnson
Parent High school	• Single-sex • Racially segregated (same race) • Urban prep school	• Low-resourced urban school • Racially diverse	• Low-resourced rural school • Racially diverse	• Low-resourced urban school • Racially segregated (same race)
Parent school issues (individual vs. structural)	• Exclusion (race & gender) • Academic invisibility • School dating/relationship patterns • Negative perceptions held by teachers (structural) • Limited school choice (structural) • Class segregation	• Teacher treatment (of parents and students) • Administration/rule enforcement • Limited/Eurocentric curriculum • Resegregation (structural) • Limited school choice (structural) • Social exclusion	• Class and race exclusion • Inability to access school resources (Structural) • Limited school choice (structural)	• Class, race, gender exclusion • Teacher and Administration treatment • Segregated/exclusionary school activities • Eurocentric curriculum (structural) • Rejection of Black culture in school • Limited school choice (structural)
Proposed improvements	• New school choice plan (increase diverse options) • Cultural training for teachers and administration	• Race and Class Integration	• Race and class integregation	• Affirmative action like policies • Diversify teacher/administration • Extend curriculum
Parent support techniques	• Extracurricular cultural activities • Intervening on daughter's behalf • Cultural training/racial awareness	• Intervening on daughter's behalf • Support with self-response	• Emotional support	• Cultural training/racial awareness • Provides positive same-race activities and role models • Intervening on daughter's behalf • Extracurricular cultural activities (church)

5 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, I will discuss the findings as they pertain to the research questions. The chapter is organized as follows: I begin by using grounded theory analysis to analyze data and revisit the two research questions used to guide the study. Next, I discuss the significance of the research, its implications for theory and methodology, its limitations, and recommendations for future research. Last, I conclude with final thoughts on the work.

Analysis

The research questions used to guide this study are:

1) What are the experiences of Black girls in predominately White suburban educational settings?

2) What are the tools and strategies girls use to resist intersecting oppressions in order to persist in these environments?

The racial, gendered, and classed high school experiences of the girls who participated in this study varied. Each of the participants' stories indicated numerous institutional challenges in navigating high school and the larger educational pipeline. Communally, their stories offer important information for discourse on Black girls as well as for larger discussions of race, gender, and class. Thus, both researchers and practitioners gain a better understanding of how to serve, support, and improve educational outcomes for this particular group.

In order to analyze data and address the research questions, I used grounded theory analysis. The grounded theory approach allowed me to code and analyze data to find patterns and

themes in the five participants' stories and parent reflections. By synthesizing the data and answering the research questions, I was able to present findings that indicate a multitude of intersectional oppressions that affect the educational experiences of Black girls in a predominantly White suburban public school.

This analysis is guided by critical race theory, Black feminism and Womanism frameworks, as well as by my own cultural intuition. These frameworks were used to analyze how the interplay of race, gender, and class oppressions are evidenced in girls' educational experiences, and to highlight the participants' resistance. Their five stories reveal the types of oppressions they experience as well as resistance efforts and persistence strategies. Table 4 (below) presents a short form of these oppressions along with the girls' utilized strategies.

Table 4

Participant Oppression and Resistance

Name	Instances of Oppression	Resistance Strategy
Kendall	Silencing Racial spotlighting Student/Peer racism (racialized comments) Marginalization/isolation (rejection/inequitable treatment) Racial profiling Teacher/administration racism Student/peer racism Inequitable dating practices Teacher/student negative relationship	Parent encouragement/support Lean on peers Self-motivation Positive relationship with teacher Focus on future/persistence Racial pride (role models) Having fun-supportive network/friends
Dion	Marginalization, silencing, racial spotlighting, inappropriate teacher behavior, teacher/student negative relationships, class differences, racial profiling, teacher/administration racism	Focus on future/persistence Parent encouragement Positive friendship groups/supportive network Resist unfair rules/administering of rules Remove self from "line of fire" Code switching
Laila	Marginalization/Isolation Student/peer racism Rule enforcement inaccuracies Black male/female differential treatment Teacher/student negative relationship Class differences/discrimination	Opt out of school social sphere Supportive network of peers Resist unfair rules/administering of rules Having fun-supportive network/friends
Alaina	Curriculum issues Marginalization/isolation via student/Peer Racism	Opt out of school social sphere Supportive network of peers Focus on future/graduation persistence Remove self from "line of fire" Determines/defines achievement and beauty for self Positive relationships with specific teachers Code switching
Michelle	Racial profiling Teacher/administration inequitable treatment/racism Student/Peer Racism Rule enforcement inaccuracies Black male/female differences Teacher/student negative relationships Marginalization/isolation	Racial pride Parent support/encouragement Sibling guidance/support Positive relationships with specific teachers or school administrators Persistence in the face of rejection Involvement in extracurricular activities

My analysis of the girls' stories centers mainly on the race-, class-, and gender-related oppressions they experienced, and the factors that supported their resistance and persistence in this space. The first part of the analysis, identifying oppressions, addresses the first research question: What are the experiences of Black girls in predominately White suburban educational settings?

Open coding of the stories and parent reflections revealed several mentions that generated findings related to this question. From a KWIC scan, I noted that the girls' stories consistently mentioned bullying, harassment, teachers, administration, diversity, parents, friends, siblings, popularity, preps, classes/courses, social media, dress code, being alone, limited choices or options, extracurricular activities, and being "called out."

In order to group these words in a way that would allow me to better answer my initial research question, I used focused coding, which revealed the following themes: a) racial profiling, b) administrator, teacher, peer racism and curriculum bias, c) student isolation, d) inequitable student dating, e) negative student/teacher relationships, f) class differences, g)positive relationships with peers and siblings, h) parental support, i) social activities outside of school, and j) Black identity.

Race, gender, and class are implicated in each of these themes. The focused codes allowed me to reflect on the commonalities among the girls' stories, and overall, these stories consistently revealed that the girls' academic and social experiences in school were greatly affected by instances of marginalization, racism, classism, and gender inequities. These inequities were generally reflected in the participants' interactions with their peers, teachers, and school administrators.

Themes

In this section, I discuss the following 10 themes illustrated by the data: racial profiling; teacher, administration, peer racism, and curriculum bias; student isolation; inequitable student dating; negative student/teacher relationships; class differences; positive relationships with peers and siblings; parental support; social activities outside of school; and Black identity.

Racial Profiling

The participants in this study consistently noted instances of racial profiling from administration, teachers, and other students in their high school. Across stories, the girls explained that White administrators selectively punish Black and less privileged students on a more regular basis. The administrators' comments also indicate stereotypical views of Black students; more than one girl relayed derogatory comments from the principal about Black people's attire. The principal's comments illustrate that he believes that the clothing and behavior he associates with Black culture and Black people are not acceptable in the school. Other administrators have publically made derogatory comments about predominantly Black schools in the district, the students who attend those schools, and urban clothing. The girls believe that these stereotypes are not only held by the principal and other administrators, but are a standard way of thinking among various individuals in the school, including their teachers and White peers.

Teachers also monitor Black students more closely in school, with girls remarking that the same students, both Black and "non-prep," are continuously reprimanded, while White students, preps, and school athletes commit much more egregious acts, but receive no punishment. The girls themselves have been victims of this double standard; at least two recalled multiple issues with dress code violations that they felt were more related to their physical appearance than their actual clothing. Dion has had (the aforementioned) issues with her large afro-hair, and Laila with wearing clothing that reveals her long legs. An encounter between Kendall and her teacher also demonstrates how two racially different students can exhibit the same behavior, but invoke different responses from the same teacher. This racialized monitoring results in student/teacher conflict as well as significant loss of class time for participants. Similarly, the girls note that students in the school harbor stereotypes of Black students, specifically Black girls. Participants explain that actions and comments from their White peers indicate a belief that Black girls are loud, obnoxious, and ghetto. White peers illustrate these beliefs by making racialized jokes and comments both in person and via social media, mimicking perceived ghetto behaviors and even harassing students about clothing.

The girls' stories generally pointed to issues of racial profiling, using the terms "bullying," "diversity," and "called out." Their stories illustrate how a lack of diversity and cultural sensitivity at the school creates an extremely hostile atmosphere for Black students where they, along with their culture, are over-policed by school administrators and teachers, and scrutinized by peers. This racial profiling often results in rule enforcement inaccuracies, wherein Black students are more often found in violation of school rules because of excessive patrolling of the population as well as administrators' and teachers' cultural preferences. For girls, rule enforcement inaccuracies are particularly evident and racialized when pertaining to the dress code.

Teacher, Administrator, and Peer Racism and Curriculum Bias

Supported by parent reflections and document review, the girls' stories show that racism is endemic to the culture of their high school, and is shown in the school curriculum, activities, and behavior of both adults and students. Results of document analysis indicate that Black students are largely invisible, and have limited participation in school activities. School activities and curricula also lack cultural diversity and are Eurocentric. For example, a review of the school yearbook showed that even the small Black student population is underrepresented in school activities, including clubs, organizations, honors, and awards. A review of both the school newspaper and senior school book both indicated similar results, with Black students missing from events such as homecoming, prom, seasonal festivals, plays, musicals, and other spirit-related activities. Additionally, the students who control these school outlets are also overwhelmingly White, including the yearbook and newspaper staffs. The school website and student schedules show that reproductions of musicals and plays are often based on those originally composed by White authors and performed by White casts.

Student schedules also revealed a lack of cultural inclusiveness in school course offerings. In terms of curriculum, both the girls and their parents feel it is largely Eurocentric, with little attention given to Black culture or people. Thus, the curriculum works to exclude non-White students in the classroom. Even attempts to bring issues associated with the Black community into classroom spaces are rejected by teachers and deemed either too controversial or not interesting. Noting these deficiencies in the curriculum, Black parents fought for the introduction of an African American History course in the school, which was granted for the 2015-2016 school year, but is currently being taught by a White teacher. The overwhelmingly White teaching staff (observed in document reviews of the school yearbook and on the school's website)

makes no effort to include Black children in the classroom, and further marginalizes students with their lack of cultural knowledge and sensitivity. Stories indicate that girls have been publicly embarrassed by racial spotlighting in the classroom when White teachers point them out as the Black student in class and attempt to relate on race-specific, often trivial issues. In one case, a teacher referring to a Black girl's new hairstyle noted that he once worked at a weave shop. It is important to note that a culturally inclusive environment and culturally responsive curricula are necessary not only for Black girls in this particular space, but for White children and adults as well. In order to address issues of racism and improve educational prospects for all children, it is necessary for White children to learn to respect other races and cultures.

Accordingly, school activities have also worked to exclude students on the basis of race and racism from both teachers and students. Along with the curriculum, activities in the school also tend to be Eurocentric, exclusively featuring work by White artists and authors. When they are involved in the selection process, teachers also generally include mostly White students in activities. Similarly, majority students in the school, who are either White and upper-class or preppy, marginalize students and prohibit participation on the basis of race. Thus, numerous school activities that require student votes, including student council, homecoming, or prom court, do not include Black students. When Black students do participate in school activities—which are generally sports—they report instances of both exclusion and harassment by White teammates and limited participation by coaches. For girls, incidents of racism range from subtle microaggressions in the form of questions from teachers and peers, to exclusion during group activities or sports, to overt racist comments and peer harassment.

Student Isolation

Black girls also recall being regularly isolated in school, both physically and mentally. Physically, their appearance is isolating because acceptance and validation in the majority White space requires White skin and long straight hair. Ideal body types are mixed: both thin and "thick" or full-bodied girls are accepted. Yet, while their body type is less of an obstacle, ideas of Blackness or Black hair separate them from other students. Because their appearance is not accepted or popular among the majority student population, they are isolated by peers in class, experiencing particular difficulties while partnering for group projects, and in social and extracurricular activities. This also results in spatial isolation, since, in terms of socialization, the majority students dominate the school and restrict other students to certain areas.

Mentally, the girls are isolated, culturally viewing themselves as different from the majority students in their school in terms of activities and preferences. The girls do not prefer to participate in activities that are popular among the majority students at their school. Also, the girls' stories illustrate that, when Black students are accepted or invited to majority groups, they are vulnerable to racialized or classed-based jokes and comments that make them feel uncomfortable. Thus, the girls feel they cannot relate to most of their peers in the school, and further feel that friendship outside of their small, like-minded groups is prohibited because of the various forms of marginalization driven by other students.

Inequitable Student Dating

Also related to physical appearance as well as popularity or group status is dating and relationship patterns in the school. In this study, Black girls and their parents report that Black girls and boys have disparate experiences in regards to dating in the school. Though Black students are marginalized by appearance and racial stereotypes, Black boys are better able to escape their marginalization by participating in sports. Black boys are dominant in football and basketball,

which both carry a significant amount of status in the school. Thus, these activities offer a pathway for Black boys to integrate themselves into the majority student body and maintain a certain standard of popularity.

For girls in the school, the only sport or activity that carries this type of status, and thus making them more attractive to their peers, is cheerleading. However, cheerleading is consistently an all-White activity, and no Black girl has been chosen for the team for the last several years. As a result, Black boys are more often able to socialize, form relationships, and date outside of their racial group than Black girls. Girls note that, while interracial dating is largely unpopular, Black boy/White girl relationship is more acceptable than a relationship between a White boy and Black girl. The girls understand that their appearance, as well as their status in the school, make them unattractive to White males. This poses an issue in terms of developing relationships; because Black males are able to date interracially, there is an even smaller number left in the dating pool for of Black girls, who are limited to dating Black boys. While White boys in the school are more attracted to features that include long, straight hair, White or fair skin, and blue eyes, White girls are not selective in the same way. Consequently, White girls and Black boys in the school have larger dating pools than Black girls.

Negative Student/Teacher Relationships

Negative relationships with teachers also contribute to a hostile environment for Black girls. Each participant explained that they changed their behavior significantly to survive the classroom space, namely because of teacher treatment. Girls complained of being called out, bullied, or harassed by teachers in the school. Indeed, teacher treatment is often raced, gendered, and classed, as teachers make inappropriate comments about student attire or appearance more

consistently to Black girls. Although the comments often do not pertain to school rules, but rather teacher preference, such remarks serve to make Black girls uncomfortable in the school space. Parents also indicate that teachers often overlook Black students for positive academic achievements. Though the students are high achievers, they rarely if ever receive in-class encouragement, and are not selected for academic or extracurricular awards in the school.

This combination of Black girls' being both singled out and overlooked, or hypervisible and invisible to teachers, creates a disconnect between the two groups. Black girls note that they either do not trust the majority of teachers in the school, or feel that they have no relationship with them at all. This results in Black girls' isolation from the students as well as the teacher in classroom settings. The girls explain that they do not participate in class because they feel uncomfortable, but note that the most critical part of the class atmosphere is teacher treatment. Parents specifically point to various issues they have had communicating with teachers on their daughters' behalf. For them, inequitable treatment has come in the form of grading, disciplinary actions, and write-ups. This treatment is inequitable, as White and more privileged students whose parents are consistently involved in the school receive better or preferential treatment, are not cited for equal behaviors, and are chosen for student honors over students of color. The exception to this practice is the Asian student population; a review of the website, yearbook, and student interviews reveal that they are chosen for academic honors as well as academic activities. Because the Black students in the school have not been found to exhibit worse behaviors than the majority students in the school—and in many cases do excel academically—the girls and parents feel that these negative relationships are driven by teachers' own perceptions of Black students or the larger Black community.

Class Differences

Though class and race are often conflated in this space, class issues pose specific challenges for girls in the study. While race is not explicitly stated as a cause for marginalization or isolation, class requirements that ostracize girls are clear. The girls participating in the study are middle- and upper-middle-class, as determined by neighborhood statistics; however, in their school, the majority of the students are from more privileged backgrounds and live in neighborhoods with higher home values. Students are often very aware of these economic differences, and often separate themselves along these class lines. This is a complicated issue, as students are also divided by race. Thus, Black students are simultaneously affected by both race and class discrimination. These differences manifest in students' daily lives, as there are very strict material requirements for social acceptance. Students explain that the majority students in the school marginalize them on the basis of clothing and shoes. The accepted attire is described as "preppy" or "ritzy," with students wearing blazers, ties, and A-line dresses from very expensive stores, including J. Crew and Vineyard Vines. A continuous supply of new clothes and shoes is also important in this school space. Consequently, students who do not meet these requirements—whether it be by choice or circumstance—are socially excluded.

Also, Black students in the school report Black culture being viewed as lower-class in general. Thus, along with shoes and hairstyles, clothes that are associated with Black culture or Blackness are considered lower-class. As such, Black students are inherently viewed as lower-class regardless of actual socio-economic status. Additionally, in four of the five households included in the study, both parents worked outside the home, which meant different lifestyles for these girls compared to many of their peers in the school. In this way, teachers and administrators also exhibited class discrimination, giving preference to students whose parents were present at the school on a daily basis. All the girls and parents in the study reported experiencing some

type of class discrimination. Hence, they were subject to systemic class oppression. In each case, this oppression was connected to race discrimination as well.

Positive Peer and Sibling Relationships

The second research question I addressed in this study was: what are the tools and strategies girls use to resist intersecting oppressions in order to persist in these environments? Open coding revealed that participants mentioned siblings, parents, being different, friends, good teachers, Blackness, commonalities, and social activities. In focused coding, I found that the girls' resistance to various oppressions and persistence in school was supported by positive relationships with peers and siblings, parent support, social activities outside of school, their Black identities, and commonalities with other Black students.

The girls' stories illuminated that relationships with peers and siblings supported their resistance to the multiple oppressions they experienced in school. In navigating marginalization, peer relationships allowed girls to have a support group in which they felt more comfortable and could discuss or have common reflections on the issues they experienced in school. Peers allowed for more comfort both inside and outside of class; the girls relayed that, in class, close friends make partner and group work less awkward. Outside the classroom, close peers support girls in carving out a space in school, considering the special limitations for students outside of the majority group.

Close peer groups are made of students of the same race who share common experiences in school as well as similar interests. The girls explained that these groups allow them to speak with students who understand their own experiences and have similar feelings about occurrences at their school. Culturally, they also feel more comfortable because of various commonalities, including taste in clothes, music, and activities. Girls added that they feel accepted in their group

because they are more similar in terms of physical appearance than they are with the larger student body, where they are not accepted.

Peers have provided similar support, offering girls both a common understanding and navigation strategies. This understanding has been critical for some girls, as older siblings ensure that the girls are introduced to supportive networks that protect them from the marginalization experienced in school. Siblings also offer various strategies to help girls navigate the space, including advice on teachers and courses, situations with other students, extra-curricular activities, and personal appearance. These supportive peer and sibling relationships assisted girls in resisting marginalization by carving out a space for themselves where they can be confident, reject the standards set by the majority population, and persist in spite of multiple oppressions.

Parental Support

Parents also play a significant role in girls' resistance. Not only do parents offer mental and emotional support to help their daughters build the confidence, self-esteem, and independent mentalities to overcome various oppressions, they continuously intervene in school issues on behalf of their children. All of the parents involved in the study—one father and four mothers—acknowledged that they felt their daughters had significant obstacles to overcome in high school, including to racial, gender, and class inequities. Parents revealed that it has also been difficult for them to understand how best to support their daughters; thus, most employ numerous wrap-around methods. Mothers specifically concentrate on gender issues related to beauty and dating, since one of their main concerns is perceptions of beauty and how such perceptions affect their daughters. This support is delivered in the form of conversations about rejecting beauty standards; the inclusion of diverse forms or Black beauty in the household in paintings, magazines and other materials; and introduction to positive Black women role models.

Parents also believe it is critical for their daughters to build independence and independent mentality to navigate their high school space. They encourage daughters to resist the negative perceptions of Black children held by teachers, while simultaneously resisting the stereotypes and perceptions of Black culture—specifically girls—held by the student body. This is achieved through the reinforcement of positive perceptions of Black culture as well as by truthful conversations about racism and classism in America. Parents encourage girls to be independent and strong by addressing inequitable treatment themselves and by seeking support from parents if needed. From this, girls are learning to recognize and confront subtle and overt aggressions.

However, when girls struggle to overcome obstacles in school, parents all report entering the school to address issues with teachers and administrators. Parents have had to address inequitable treatment regarding grades, teacher treatment and behavior, administration behavior, and diversity or inclusiveness. Parents report often being met with resistance from adults in the school building and limited access to some personnel, including the principal. Although parents feel that they are usually successful in addressing issues on behalf of their daughters, they remain vigilant because they feel inequities are engrained in the school culture.

In terms of social inclusion and interaction with peers at the school, parents support the strong relationships their daughters build with their Black peers. Parents reported being more sensitive to their daughters' need to spend a significant amount of time with close friends both within and outside school. Parental responses to social inclusiveness with the majority students at school varied. Some parents have supported material needs that they felt assisted their daughters in avoiding being outcasts or bullied. Other parents reinforced notions of independence. Outside of school, parents have made efforts to include their daughters in various social or extracurricular activities from which they are excluded in school. These include sports, academic programs, and

college programs, among others. These activities allow girls to extend their Black peer networks and enjoy a level of comfort not experienced in school. These various efforts to support girls also aids them in navigating difficulties with administration, teachers, and peers in the school building. They also support the positive identity development of girls.

Parent interviews indicated one consistent feeling among parents: they had very little choice in where and how their daughters were educated. Parents faced a horrific conundrum when they were forced to choose between under-resourced schools or socially exclusive ones. Though all the participating parents chose the more well-resourced home school, all parents felt the school had extreme drawbacks, and some were searching for a new school for their daughter to attend in the upcoming school year. However, few were having any luck with finding what they felt was an adequate school choice because the extreme segregation by class and race in the district means that schools offering more diversity along with culture and social inclusion often have very few of the resources the parents feel their daughters deserve. This conundrum is further reflected in the parents' lives, as they now question the value of living in their upper/middle class neighborhood.

Social Activities

The participants in this study revealed that simply having fun and celebrating with friends attributed to their ability to maintain positive attitudes and survive in the space. Socializing within their peer network is necessary for students to avoid succumbing to the negative pressures induced by marginalization at school. The girls illustrated that socializing with friends both within and outside school offers a reprieve from the multiple oppressions experienced there. Participants noted that knowing they have a group of friends to whom they can relate means they do not have to expose themselves to increased levels of hostility and tension from school peers.

Similarly, participants reported that they have atypical interests, and enjoy different activities from their majority peers. Social activities with their close Black peer network serves as a way for students to enjoy themselves and their interests apart from the more popular school activities. These alternative activities include attending movies, concerts, and group meet-ups at friends' homes, during which the girls are able to discuss issues in school and enjoy forms of culture not accepted at their school. These spaces also offer comfort to the girls, who feel that their homes, families, and clothing are not being scrutinized during these activities. Lastly, girls noted that illicit activities such as drinking, smoking, and using other drugs are popular among the majority students in their school; however, their own social spaces do not carry the same pressures to participate in those activities. Thus, the girls' self-created social activities and spaces allow them to maintain a level of happiness in their hostile school environment.

Black Identity

The girls also expressed a positive association with Black culture that helped them to resist stereotypes as well as marginalization and harassment. The girls all saw themselves as college-bound and capable of achievement even though they were aware of the dominant perception of Black students as non-achievers. These positive perceptions of Blackness are encouraged by each girl's family structure in healthy relationships with parents; positive relationships with siblings; involvement with Black adults outside the family, including extended family, family friends, and mentors; and knowledge of Black history and culture. The girls' garnered knowledge of Black history and culture from parents as well as through activities geared toward Black teenagers, such as Black Greek sorority programs and summer programs at HBCUs.

Parents felt that these positive conceptions of Blackness were critical, and a few noted that they would prefer their daughters attend HBCUs in order to continue to develop their own

identities. Thus, students' perceptions of themselves as Black achievers and positive perceptions of Blackness have aided them in navigating both academic and social atmospheres, and in creating or finding spaces where Black culture is celebrated. Such spaces allow the girls to celebrate themselves, each other, and their families, even as Blackness is ridiculed and demonized elsewhere.

Documents

Documents including census data, student schedules, school yearbooks, school senior books, the school website, and school newspapers revealed the following:

1. The majority student body is White;
2. With the exception of one individual, school administration and department chairs are White;
3. Activities in the school are dominated by White students, with the exception of academic clubs, which have a strong Asian presence;
4. Recognition and awards are overwhelmingly given to White students in the school;
5. Students of color have a limited presence at all school activities, including but not limited to prom, homecoming, student council, and yearbook staff;
6. The neighborhood and surrounding area are predominantly White and middle- and upper-class, as indicated by city and state averages; and
7. Black girls in the school have diverse academic experiences in terms of course level and track. These findings were consistent with stories from girls and parents that revealed a hostile climate for Black students plagued by racism, classism, and sexism.

Implications

The research questions that guided this study are: 1) What are the experiences of Black girls in predominately White suburban educational settings? and 2) What are the tools and strategies girls use to resist intersecting oppressions in order to persist in these environments? This study showed that Black girls in predominately White suburban educational settings are heavily marginalized and both structurally and individually experience various forms of oppression related to race, gender, and class inequity. Girls in these settings employ various strategies related to peer relationships, parental support, social activities, and Black identity as a way to resist oppressions as well as survive in these spaces. Girls display a diverse set of experiences in schools, and use a range of strategies to persist, which illustrates the heterogeneity of the Black girl experience and the need for continued study of their experiences in schools.

Theory

This narrative study contributes to theory in several ways. Generally, studies focus on low-income Black children in low-achieving inner-city schools. This work, however, focuses on students of significant means who are being educated in predominantly White, suburban, high-achieving schools. The findings in this study illuminate the myriad issues Black girls face in such schools, and pushes for further study of those policies and experiences that inhibit integration and diversity requirements. Additionally, this study offers new interdisciplinary scholarship that simultaneously addresses race, gender, and class oppressions in the educational experiences of Black high school girls. Thus, this work contributes to gaps in literature, as Black girls and predominantly White educational spaces are a neglected area of study in both the fields of education policy and women's studies. Finally, this study advances and adds to critical race theory, Womanism, Black feminism, and critical race feminism, as it creates knowledge that centers the

lived experience of Black girls, and positions the girls as knowledge holders. Also, the work advances the importance of perspective, voice, and intersectional experiences as reflected in these three theories.

Additionally, this study is unique; it focuses on the academic and social experiences as well as the resistance and persistence strategies of Black girls in a predominantly White suburban high school. This work is steeped in the traditions of critical race theory, Black feminism, and Womanism, and examines the effects of policy decisions and complex power relations on an understudied group of students who are surviving in both a system and a school building. As a result, this study adds critical knowledge to the disciplines of education, Black studies, and women's studies.

Methodology

Using storytelling as a methodology allowed for the centering of girls' voices, the empowerment of participants, and the creation of a safe space for both girls and parents to share their personal experiences with the education system. Storytelling was empowering because it required positioning Black girls who, as both Black and young, are often overlooked as knowledge holders, the main sources of data. In this way, the research process served numerous purposes:

1. It illustrated that storytelling was a transformative and empowering process that allowed the girls to represent themselves in research and address traumatic or painful experiences;
2. Storytelling provided a way for participants to take action by speaking back to the academy and advocating for change; and

3. Storytelling allowed for the collection of first-hand accounts of the educational experiences of Black girls in predominantly White suburban public schools.

As high school girls, the participants had never been asked about their perspectives on their educational experiences; thus, the research process served as their first moment of critical reflection on their school experience and of sharing that information. Consequently, by using storytelling as a methodology, the research process gives a platform to share the voices of formerly silenced groups.

Storytelling also allows the researcher to participate in research with youth who guide the critical process of reflection and transformation. Girls are transformed in this work as they move from silenced youth to research authorities. Lastly, storytelling acts as a mode for social restorative justice by focusing on girls' continued resistance and persistence, and by supporting their agency and self-definition. Storytelling is also an act of social justice, as it pushes back against dominant frames of knowledge that critique the centering of perspective, voice, and subjectivity by honoring elements of the research process as well as Black women's folk traditions (Phillips, 2006). In critical race studies, Black feminism, and Womanism, storytelling can continue to serve traditions by repositioning Black women and girls as creators of knowledge in the research process.

Additionally, cultural intuition (Delgado Bernal, 1998) was essential in my ability to conduct this research. It enabled greater researcher access to participants, particularly parents, and I built trust, formulated appropriate questions and follow-up questions, sensed trepidation in the participants, and read cultural cues as well as other elements related to cultural knowledge. Cultural intuition influenced my language, behavior, and overall conduct in the research field. As a

Black woman with ties to the community of study, my knowledge and experience fueled my cultural intuition, which facilitated comfortable situations where participants shared their stories. The need for cultural intuition in this type of work was realized in various comments made by participants throughout our discussions, such as "You know how it is" or "You know what that's like," indicating that the participants felt that my position as a Black woman from an upper-class community meant that I should understand their perspective, or that I had similar experiences. This also increased my ability to interpret data, which I found to be integral throughout the entire research process. Cultural intuition enabled me to better situate myself in the field, communicate with participants and parents during the interview process, analyze transcripts and prepare follow-up questions, analyze documents with increased attention to intersectional oppressions, and analyze results of data. To conclude, the use of both storytelling and cultural intuition created a space where both the researcher and participants could openly communicate, critically resist dominant scripts, and be empowered through the research process, all of which advance the strength of Black girls in the face of systemic barriers.

Practice

This work has important implications for the ways practitioners can improve the educational experiences of Black girls in predominantly White suburban public high schools. This research illustrates the issues present for middle- and upper-class Black girls in these educational spaces. For practitioners, this research revealed the following: 1. Black girls educational experiences are affected by teachers' and administrators' lack of cultural knowledge and sensitivity; thus, culturally competent educators are required to improve outcomes; 2. A culturally inclusive curriculum is required for girls to feel comfortable and fully participate in classrooms; 3. Educators must be purposeful about diversifying school activities and including all students in the

school; and 4. Educators need to critically reflect on their own prejudices as well as on how those prejudices manifest themselves in disciplinary actions, educational outcomes, and student and parent participation. Addressing these issues will help support girls as they navigate high school by analyzing the results of systemic racism, gender inequities, and classism among additional oppressions that exist within predominantly White suburban school settings.

For practitioners, it is critical to think about how issues of equity are being addressed. As illustrated in this research, students and parents are most frustrated by the fact that, even when their issues are said to be addressed, they in fact are not, because Black parents and children are not included in the discussions. For example, in the girls' school, Black students felt that the curriculum was limited and not culturally inclusive, and parents complained to the administration regarding these issues. The administration did not directly respond to either group, but instead introduced an African American History course to the curriculum. However, the class is being taught by a novice White teacher who parents feel will not adequately fill the cultural void in the curriculum. Additionally, parents never had the opportunity to actually discuss their grievances with administration before this solution was offered. Thus, a majority-White administration and teaching base decided to solve issues of racism and exclusion for Black children without the inclusion of Black children or their parents. This is just one example of how issues of racial injustice are being either ignored or misaddressed in this particular school. For educators, this illustrates the need to include children and parents in problem-solving strategies.

In order to ensure that educators have access to this data, I plan to share the findings with the school administrators, teachers, and parents directly involved in this study. I will also share the research through conference presentations and publications in various academic and media outlets. In this way, the research will reach beyond the study population to the larger population

of Black girls whose educational experiences are affected by similar oppressions, as well as to practitioners who work in similar educational spaces. Furthermore, I plan to conduct a follow-up study that revisits the girls who participated in this study, one that chronicles their narratives during their senior year of high school and in their early college years. This continued study will further understanding of how intersectional oppressions affect girls over their high school careers and how their resistance strategies change and develop as they matriculate. This work, along with future studies, is vital in understanding and bringing attention to the inequities that exist in predominantly White suburban educational settings. Ultimately, increased data focusing on the experiences of Black girls and illuminating issues in these settings will push educators to create healthier academic climates for Black girls at the high school level.

Policy

The findings from this work provide policymakers with important information to consider while drafting, approving, and reforming district educational policies. Data findings reveal that the parents of Black girls have been extremely limited in their school choices by policies that have eliminated race and class balance in schools, creating school environments that offer either hostile academic climates or limited resources. In districts like the one studied, where schools are becoming increasingly segregated, it is important to consider how these policies affect all Black children, including low-income students as well as middle- and high income students. This consideration is critical to understanding how systemic inequities are connected to educational outcomes and patterns for Black girls (See Appendix H for a short summary that connects the findings in this study to district policies that contribute to the current school demographics and thus to the inequitable and limited academic climate for Black girls. This brief will be available to

district personnel and school board members, thus encouraging a review of school policies and ethical conduct requirements.)

Limitations

The following elements of the study can be considered limitations. First, the study solely focuses on the experiences of Black girls. While this is beneficial in gaining an in-depth understanding of their experience as well as centering their voices, including Black boys' stories would allow for an increased understanding of the similarities and differences related to gender in school experiences. Second, with an increasing non-White student population, it is important to understand the academic climate for all students of color. This study was limited to girls who identify as Black; however, it is equally important to study the experiences of other students of color in order to understand how change can positively affect larger student groups. Finally, this study focuses on a very small sample size and a specific location. It includes five girls who attend the same predominantly White suburban high school in a Southern metropolitan city. A larger study that includes girls from various districts and regions could reveal more information about the educational experiences of middle- and upper-class Black girls in predominantly White suburban schools across the nation. I also understand that, for many, my subjectivity as a researcher could be seen as a limitation; however, it served as a benefit it terms of supporting my cultural intuition as well as allowing me greater access to research participants. Thus, my subjectivity was invaluable in conducting critical and in-depth work on this sensitive subject matter.

Suggestions for Further Research

It is critical to conduct work that focuses on the lived experiences of Black women; they face multiple oppressions in the educational pipeline. Understanding that Black girls are not a

monolith and have diverse experiences in educational spaces, it is imperative to continue research on Black girls from diverse backgrounds who are attending school in various educational spaces; such work could potentially improve educational opportunities and outcomes for this group. Based on both the findings and limitations of this work, the following are recommendations for future research:

1. A follow-up study with the same group of research participants that tracks academic outcomes and the development of resistance strategies as a way to determine the long-term effects of schooling in this predominantly White suburban high school.
2. Conduct a study of Black boys in the same predominantly White suburban school to understand their high school experiences and how gender differences manifest in terms of educational experience and outcomes.
3. Conduct a study with a larger population size, targeting girls from numerous school districts and regions across the United States to find both differences and similarities in the experiences of Black girls in predominantly White educational spaces, further diversifying the literature and increasing the focus on Black girls.

The proposed studies will increase researchers', policy makers', and practitioners' knowledge of the experiences of Black girls and their ongoing resistance strategies in predominantly White environments. These recommendations are also part of an agenda to increase existing data on this understudied population, thus furthering goals of increased educational access, opportunities, and outcomes for Black girls. This study highlights the variation in not only Black girls' experiences, but within the Black middle class. This diversity is important for educators and policymakers as they continue to research and create programs and policies for Black children.

Conclusions

This study is a humanizing and liberating work grounded in theoretical frames, critical race theory, Black feminism, and Womanism, which all help to create a transformative lens through which to situate and conduct the work. Rather than focus on perceived deficits, the purpose of this study was to give Black girls a platform to discuss their own experiences with oppression, and to speak back to research that often speaks for them and not with them. This study also affirms the inherent strength Black girls have developed by navigating the multiple oppressions of their daily lives. Creating this safe space for Black girls allowed me as the researcher the freedom to investigate oppressive, pervasive social conditions in the educational pipeline as well as to address the challenges these girls experience. In this way, the study was transformative for me, the participants, and the scholarly literature itself, by offering a way for both researcher and participants to use the research process to conduct social justice work by addressing wrongs and advocating for change.

This study worked to illuminate societal issues related to race, class, and gender that manifest themselves in the education system and serve to marginalize and oppress Black girls. Through the girls' stories and parent reflections, the work revealed what Ruth Brown (2009) has referred to as the "hypervisible and invisible" nature of the Black girl experience in school. Consequently, and as opposed to a review of cultural deficiencies, this work offers culturally and politically relevant solutions to problems hampering the academic experience of Black girls. This study goes beyond simply identifying the choices Black girls make to explore their experiences and offers reasons for why decisions are made that affect their academic outcomes. The study findings are consistent with research that notes the specific challenges Black girls face in schools, including frequent citations of dress code violations, discipline referrals (NAACP Legal

Defense Fund, 2014), and prominent angry, aggressive, promiscuous, or hypersexualized Black girl stereotypes (Harris-Perry, 2011).

The study findings work against oppositional identity (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986), as girls identify as Black as well as college-bound, and view academic achievement as a positive trait. Accordingly, the findings oppose the "acting White" hypothesis because positive academic outcomes are more often discouraged by systemic inequity and racialized academic experiences, which result in marginalization (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Though two participants did note the use of code switching to survive in the school space, the participants acknowledged that acting White is not beneficial for their academic outcomes because it does not necessarily mean engaging in positive behavior or behavior related to academics. Consequently, though some behaviors were seen as White, they were not necessarily academically positive. Additionally, contrary to the findings of Ogbu and Simons (1998), this study notes positive effects of fictive kinship and/or collective identity, as girls had to act collectively to survive the school space socially and psychologically.

The study findings also show no signs of girls developing a raceless self-concept (Fordham, 1988). In fact, the participants were intensely aware of their race and class positions, and have used race, racial identity, and a communal peer network as support (Carter-Andrews, 2012; Graham & Anderson, 2008; Nasir, 2012). Consistent with their awareness, this study illustrated that race issues were intense even at higher socio-economic levels, supporting the race matters argument (Bonilla-Silva 2010; Feagin, 1991; Feagin & O'Brien, 2010; Feagin & Sikes, 1995; Hughes & Thomas 1998). Furthermore, class issues were still present within this high socio-economic group, and are consistent with Carter-Andrews (2012) findings on racial assaults; the girls

experienced devaluing, positioning as invisible, dehumanization via derogatory comments, and stereotyping by adults as well as peers.

However, the greatest accomplishment of this study was that it countered the silencing of Black girls and the master script. Through a research process focused on voice, perspective, care, and being as elements of humanization, this work included Black girls in their full humanity, revealing that Black girls have critical insights to offer in understanding how schools work to marginalize students based on race, class, and gender. The research also illustrated the complex and heterogeneous nature of Black girls' educational experiences even within a very specific socio-economic context; thus, it calls for continued research that reflects this complexity and avoids a homogenous grouping.

These Black girl stories, grounded in courage, strength, and survival, can be understood as acts of political resistance for participants. Through the sharing of their stories, Black girls have thrust their perspectives into the arena of educational research in spite the field's tendency to exclude those perspectives. As an unapologetic Black woman researcher, I am also pushing myself and my perspectives on educational policy studies research by using cultural intuition and proclaiming the benefits of my own experience in the research process. This study is a result of my commitment to my own humanization as well as to the emancipation of other Black girls and women. As an academic who has and continues to suffer from similar oppressions, I feel it is my responsibility to produce work that illustrates the value of both Black women researchers as well as Black girls' voices. For education and social science researchers, it is my hope that these stories demonstrate the importance and value of actively incorporating Black girls and women in research on the experiences of women of color.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Student Interview Questions

1. What grade are you in?
2. Who are your friends?
3. Can you describe them?
4. Was making friends easy for you? In school? In your neighborhood?
5. Have you always had the same friends or have they changed over the years? Any recent changes?
6. What do you and your friends have in common? What type of music, movies, shows, and clothes do you like?
7. Describe the students in your school.
8. Would you consider your friends similar or different from the students in your school? What are the other student's interests?
9. Are there cliques in school or your neighborhood? How did they form?
10. Tell me about the cafeteria or other places where you socialize. Who sits with who and why?
11. Do you and your friends or family talk about race? Can you give me an example of a conversation or conversations about race?
12. Do students cross color lines? Do White and Black students socialize? What about Latino or Asian students?
13. Why do you think students socialize the way they do?
14. Is socializing the same in the neighborhood and at school? Do the friendship/socialization groups stay the same between the neighborhood and the school? Tell me about the patterns just this year.
15. Can you tell me about dating? Are you or your friends dating?
16. Is there interracial dating?
17. Who are the girls that all the guys like and vice versa? (Popular girls)
18. What types of things do your friends do in school? What classes do you take? What classes do they take?
19. Do you enjoy your school atmosphere? Your classes?
20. How do you feel in class? Are you comfortable?
21. What is your favorite class and why?
22. Who are the smartest students? What makes them smart?
23. Are you smart? How do you know?
24. If you could change things about your classes or school what would you change?
25. How do you feel you are treated-by teachers, administrators, students etc.?
26. Do you ever feel alone in school?

27. If so, tell me about a time when you felt isolated-what did you do about it? What isolated you?
28. What do you do about uncomfortable situations at school? Can you tell me about a situation?
29. Do you ever want to go to a different high school or live in a different area?
30. What do you look forward to in college? Why?
31. Do you think that your race affects your experience in school? Would it be different if you were White? If so, how?
32. If you would change anything about your school to make it better for you, what would it be?

Interview Follow Up Questions:

1. Will ask for clarity or details regarding answers from the previous interview(s) and ask any questions that we may not have gotten to.
2. Tell me more about situations where you felt like an outsider.
3. What do you learn about yourself in school?
4. Do you feel included or excluded in school and why?
5. Do you think being Black plays a role in your experiences?
6. Do you think being a girl plays a role in your experiences?
7. What do you do to deal with being Black and a girl?

Appendix B

Parent Interview Questions

Daughter's school experience:

1. How do you feel your daughter's school experience has been in high school?
2. Any particular issues related to race, gender or class you feel have come up?
3. If so, can you explain?
4. How have your children's experiences compared? Boy vs. girl?
5. How would you say the school experience could be improved for your child? Black girls in the school in general?
6. How do you feel her academic experience has been affected by the atmosphere you describe?
7. How do you feel your daughter has been negatively or positively affected by her time in high school?

Parent relationship with the school:

1. Why did you choose this school for your child?
2. Was choosing a high school a difficult decision?
3. Do you feel the choices for school were limited? By what?
4. What factors did you consider?
5. What was your own high school experience like?
6. What would you describe as the most important elements of high school for your daughter?
7. How has your own experience been communicating with or being involved with the school on your daughter's behalf?
8. Any incidents or issues you have had as a parent?
9. Do you as a parent feel welcomed in the school?
10. What have most of your interactions with teachers and administrations been about?

Supporting a Black girl's school experience-co-resistance:

1. What is your advice to your daughter about how to get through high school?
2. Any advice specific to her being a Black girl?
3. What prompted you to give her this advice?
4. How do you support her in getting through school? Specifically with issues of 1. Beauty 2. Dating 3. Friends 4. Academics 5. Behavior/Teacher relationships
5. What have been the results of this support?

Appendix C

Recruitment Flyer

Georgia State University
Department of Educational Policy Studies
Recruitment Flyer
Title:
Unsilenced: Black Girls' Stories
Student Researcher:
LaToya Russell

Volunteers Needed for Research Study

We need participants for a research study:
Unsilenced: Black Girls' Stories

Description of Project: We are seeking student volunteers to participate in a research study on the experiences of Black high school girls in mostly White areas. Only Black high school girls living in a majority White environment in grades 9-12, ages 13-17, are being invited to participate. There are some benefits for both student and parent participating in this study. Students will have a unique opportunity to be heard and share their thoughts and experiences.

To participate: You must be a Black high school girl living in a predominantly-White area. The student researcher will interview student participants 5 times and a parent participant once. A parent must agree to participate in the study for students to participate. Each talk will last 1-2 hours. All interviews will be taped. The interviews can be done at your home or another private place of your choice. Parents will not be present during interviews.

To learn more: Parents of interested girls should contact the student investigator of the study, LaToya Russell at 704-287-2461 or lrussell11@student.gsu.edu. I will give you details regarding an information and question and answer session where I will discuss the research as well as the consent procedures in more detail.

This research is conducted under the direction of Dr. Joyce E. King, Department of Education Policy Studies, and has been reviewed and approved by the Georgia State University Institutional Review Board.

Appendix D

Participant Consent Form

Georgia State University
Department of Educational Policy Studies
Informed Consent/Parental Permission Form

Title: Unsilenced: Black Girls' Stories

Principal Investigator: Dr. Joyce E. King
Student Investigator: LaToya Russell

I. Purpose:

You and your child are invited to take part in a research study. I will recruit 10 girls and a parent of each girl for a total of 20 participants. The purpose of the study is to look into the school experiences of Black high school girls, ages 13 to 17, in mostly White areas. You and your child are being asked to take part because she is a Black high school girl living in a mostly white neighborhood. Total 10 girls will be asked to do this study. This study will call for 5 to 10 hours of your child's time over 3 months depending on her free time. The study will require 1 to 2 hours of your time.

II. Procedures:

If you let your child do the study, the researcher will talk to her five times. Each talk will last 1-2 hours. All talks will be audio-recorded. The talks can be done at your home, another private place of the girl's choice including a friend's home or the neighborhood clubhouse. Parents will not be in the interview room, but are welcomed to wait in a nearby area. Parents will be interviewed once for 1 to 2 hours in a private place of their choice including at their home or the neighborhood clubhouse.

III. Risks:

In this study, students may risk telling more than they planned on. I will tell the girls they can skip questions or stop taking part at any time. If girls experience emotional issues related to retelling stories, parents can refer to a list of counseling services (listed below). Any abuse revealed will be reported by, LaToya Russell, to the Mecklenburg County Social Services 24-Hour Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline: 704-336-CARE (2273).

IV. Benefits:

This project will let students tell their stories. Overall, we hope to gain information that will allow others to understand how social and school events may affect Black girls' education.

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

This study is voluntary. Your child can only say yes once you have said yes. If you or your child change their mind at any time your child can drop out of the study. Your child can always skip questions or stop answering.

VI. Confidentiality:

Demographic information will be collected from girls. All of the girls' records will be kept private. Your name nor your child's name and other identifying information will not be seen by anyone but the researchers. All girls and parents will be given different names to hide their identity. Student's and parents' real names will be on a code sheet on the researcher's personal privacy protected computer. The code sheet will be destroyed right after the study is done. All other facts will be kept on the researchers' safe work computer. Only the researchers will be able to see all information. The GSU Institutional Review Board and the Office for Human Research Protection may see the study to make sure the study is done right.

VII. Contact Persons:

Contact LaToya Russell at (704) 287-2461or lrussell11@gsu.edu if you have questions, concerns, or complaints about this study. You can also call if you think you have been harmed by the study. Call Susan Vogtner in the Georgia State University Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513 or svogtner1@gsu.edu if you want to talk to someone who is not part of the study team. You can talk about questions, concerns, offer input, obtain information, or suggestions about the study. You can also call Susan Vogtner if you have questions or concerns about your rights in this study.

VIII. Copy of Consent Form to Subject:

Both you (the parent) and your daughter will get a copy of this form. If you are willing for both you and your child to participate in this study and be audio-recorded, please indicate by checking "yes" and sign below.

Yes _____ No _____

X__________________________

Participant (Parent of Participant)
Child's name:
Date

X__________________________

Researcher Obtaining Consent
Date

Appendix E

Participant Assent Form

Georgia State University
Department of Educational Policy Studies
Assent Form

Title: Unsilenced: Black Girls' Stories

Principal Investigator: Dr. Joyce E. King
Student Investigator: LaToya Russell

I. Reason:

You are invited to take part in a research study. The purpose of the study is to look into the experiences of Black high school girls in mostly White areas. You are invited to take part because you are a Black high school girl living in a mostly white environment that is 13 to 17 years old. A total of 10 girls will be asked to do this study. Participation will call for 5 to 10 hours of your time over a 3 month period depending on your free time. To participate a parent must agree to be interviewed for the study as well.

II. Process:

If you do the study you will be interviewed five times by LaToya Russell. Each talk will last 1-2 hours. All interviews will be audio-recorded. The interviews can be done at your home, another private place of your choice including a friend's home or the neighborhood clubhouse. Parents will not be in the interview room, but are welcomed to wait in a nearby area.

III. Risks:

In this study you may risk telling me more information than you meant to. You can skip questions or stop taking part at any time. A list of counseling services are provided on the parent consent form if you experience emotional issues related to retelling stories. Any abuse revealed will be reported by, LaToya Russell, to the Mecklenburg County Social Services 24-Hour Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline: 704-336-CARE (2273).

IV. Benefits:

This study will allow you to tell your stories. Overall, we hope to gain information that will allow others to understand how social and school events may affect Black girls' education.

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

This study is voluntary. You can only say yes once your parent has said yes. If you or your parent change your mind at any time you can drop out of the study. You can always skip questions

or stop answering. No one can force you to be in this study, and no one will be angry with you if you decide that you do not want to be part of this study.

VI. Privacy:

Demographic information will be collected from girls. Your records will be kept private. Your name and other information that will identify you will not be seen by anyone but the researcher. You will be given a different name to keep your real name private. Your real name will be on a code sheet on my private protected laptop. The code sheet will be destroyed immediately after the study is complete .All other facts will be kept on my safe work computer. Only my teacher and I will be able to see your information. The GSU Institutional Review Board and the Office for Human Research Protection may see the study to make sure the study is done well.

VII. Contact Persons:

If you have any questions about this study please at any time contact me, LaToya Russell, at (704) 287-2461 or lrussell11@gsu.edu. You can also contact my professor Dr. Joyce E. King at jking@gsu.edu.

VIII. Copy of Assent Form to Subject:

You will get a copy of this form. If you are willing to be in this study and to be audio-recorded, please indicate by checking "yes" and sign below.

Yes _____ No _____

X ____
Participant
Date

X ____
Researcher Obtaining Consent
Date

Appendix F

Theoretical Framework Chart

Theoretical Framework	Critical Race Theory	Black Feminism	Womanism
Critical Race-Gendered Epistemology 1. Women of colors' experiences, thus perspectives, are different from the experiences of men of color and those of White women; 2. Black women face multiple oppressions; 3. Black women are not a homogenous group but have multiple identities and consciousness; 4. Black women's intersectional oppressions must be studied from a multidisciplinary scope; and 5. Critical race-gendered studies must simultaneously combat gender and racial oppression.	CRT recognizes that racism is engrained in the fabric and system of the American society. With this recognition, CRT analyzes power structures based on White privilege and White supremacy, which perpetuates the marginalization of people of color. Solorzano (1998) notes five elements that define the use of CRT in educational research that will be taken up in this research including: 1. The importance of transdisciplinary approaches; 2. An emphasis on experiential knowledge; 3. A challenge to dominant ideologies; 4. The centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination; and 5. A commitment to social justice.	Pearl Cleage (1993) defines Black Feminism as the belief that woman are full human beings capable of participation and leadership in the full range of human activities – intellectual, political, social, sexual, spiritual, economic" (p. 28). Black feminism argues that sexism, class oppression, and racism are inextricably bound together. The way these relate to each other is called intersectionality. Intersectionality is a critical concept in the work of Black feminists as it moves researchers beyond discussions of experiencing race, gender and class to an analysis of systems that privilege and exclude based on race, gender, class and other social indicators or positionings.	Womanism, is a theoretical position focused on using Black women's subjectivities for social, political, and economic justice. It shifts the focus away from dominant frames of knowing toward an epistemological standpoint centered on valuing Black women's folk traditions (Phillips, 2006). Womanism offers a unique space for Black women to engage in dialogue, investigate their own social condition, name and address challenges and take action to solve their own issues (Phillips, 2006).
Distinctions	Legal origins (Critical Legal Studies)	Political Focus	• Focus on spirituality and community • Method of recovery
Intersections	• Intersectional Analysis • Multi-dimensional approach (interdisciplinary) • Privileges lived experience and subjectivity • Resistance/Challenge to dominant or racist epistemologies • Commitment to community survival	• Intersectional Analysis • Multi-dimensional approach (interdisciplinary) • Privileges lived experience and subjectivity • Resistance/Challenge to dominant or racist epistemologies • Commitment to community survival	• Intersectional Analysis • Multi-dimensional approach (interdisciplinary) • Privileges lived experience and subjectivity • Resistance/Challenge to dominant or racist epistemologies • Commitment to community survival

Appendix G

"I am" poem structure

I am (two special characteristics)

I wonder (something you are actually curious about)

I hear (an imaginary sound)

I see (an imaginary sight)

I want (an actual desire)

I am (the first line of the poem restated)

I pretend (something you pretend to do)

I feel (a feeling about something imaginary)

I touch (an imaginary touch)

I worry (something that really bothers you)

I cry (something that makes you very sad)

I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

I understand (something you know is true)

I say (something you believe in)

I dream (something you actually dream about)

I try (something you make an effort to do)

I hope (something you actually hope for)

I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

Appendix H

Policy Timeline

The policy timeline will be analyzed according to how they contribute to girls' current educational experience and contribute to a policy report that I will produce based on study findings and share in various educational forums.

Narrative:

Parents of girls participating in the study consistently indicated that although they felt their daughters were extremely limited socially in their current school and aware that they had various negative experiences related to race, class and gender, they felt they had limited or no choice in school selection, and thus no way to change or improve the situation for their daughter. Parents felt they had to choose between access to educational resources in predominantly White schools or an improved social and cultural experience in a predominantly Black school. In each case they had chosen to live in a predominantly White area that allowed them access to a well-resourced predominantly White school. However, in realizing the extent of the social experience had searched for high quality Black schools and found they were nonexistent. Through a 30 year review of local, state and federal policies, this paper illustrates how ABC school district came to operate two separate school systems, one for Black children and one for White children, eliminating school choice for parents and study participants and forcing them to choose between inadequate resources and extreme race, class and gender inequities. Pseudonyms are used throughout the timeline to protect the identity of study participants.

Local education policies:

- 1970s-1980s-*Peacock v. ABC Board of Education*: CMS had a constitutional responsibility to eliminate all racially identifiable schools (segregation). "The school busing case"
- 1990s- a dismantling of the mandatory busing plan in favor of a system of magnet schools aimed at maintaining desegregation by putting attractive educational programs in inner-city schools (e.g. IB programs, extensive AP programs, specialized education tracks like STEM or the Arts)
- 1990s- *Hecht and Pappione* vs. ABC Board of Education (seven White families sue over busing/race consideration in magnet school determination)
- 1999- Bricker ruling (Against ABC schoolboard) that it could no longer consider race in pupil assignment-because ABC had accomplished feasible state-mandated segregation.
- 2002-ABC introduced race-neutral pupil assignment largely based on neighborhood schooling
- 2000s-since the introduction of the neighborhood schooling plan schools have resegregated rapidly returning to a level of segregation only seen before 1971

Federal education policies:

- 2001-No Child Left Behind (no desegregation/integration component)
- 2009-Race to the Top (no desegregation/integration component)
- 2011-*Alexandro v. State*: eliminated the cap on charter schools in State
- 2015-report shows White state parents using charters to resegregate (Helen F. Ladd, Charles T. Clotfelter, John B. Holbein, 2015)

Appendix I

Photo-elicitation Interview Photo Description

(Actual photos withheld for anonymity)

1. Yearbook Photo (Basketball Team)
2. Yearbook Photo (Football Team)
3. Yearbook Photo (Cheerleading Squad)
4. Yearbook Photo (Track Team)
5. Yearbook Photo (Soccer Team)
6. Yearbook Photo (Student Government)
7. Yearbook Photo (Homecoming compilation)
8. Yearbook Photo (Yearbook Committee)
9. Yearbook Photo (Prom compilation)
10. Yearbook Photo page (Faculty page- individual photos)
11. Senior book photo (superlative compilation page)
12. Senior book photo (senior activity day page)
13. School newspaper photo (school play article photo)
14. School newspaper photo (sports article photo)
15. School newspaper photo (spirit week article photo)