AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUNG ADOLESCENT GIRLS' NEGOTIATION OF IDENTITIES

IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL

by

LISA M. HARRISON

(Under the Direction of Martha Allexsaht Snider)

ABSTRACT

While there has been much literature focusing on African American identity construction, little research has been conducted on the racial identity construction of African American young adolescents. Adding to the literature of racial identity construction, this study relied on qualitative methods to examine how four African American young adolescent girls construct their racial identity and how does this construction influence their way in the world. Two specific research questions were developed to guide this research: 1) What are the larger socio-cultural discourses at play in the construction of African American young adolescent girls' identities? 2) How do African American young adolescent girls make meaning of their own racial identity?

Four African American sixth grade girls were selected as participants for this study. Data was collected through interviews scheduled with the participants and their mothers, observations in various social contexts, and data collected from four group meetings with the participants. The findings from this study were presented through narrative and poetic representation that illuminates the complexity in which identity construction occurred for the participants. Four themes emerged during data analysis. The themes were: 1) Black girls are discussing and contextualizing Blackness in varying contexts. 2) Race is largely situated in a Black White discourse for the girls within this study. 3) When limited information is provided in home,

school, and community settings, participants make meaning from dominant discourses. 4)

Glimpses of critical thinking about race were occurring with the girls in this study. The themes

show the complexity in which African American young adolescent girls are constructing their

racial identity.

INDEX WORDS: Black identity, narrative analysis, African American young adolescents girls,

cultural deficit model

AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUNG ADOLESCENT GIRLS' NEGOTIATION OF IDENTITIES

IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL

by

LISA M. HARRISON

B.S., Spelman College, 2002

M.S.T., Pace University, 2004

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2010

AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUNG ADOLESCENT GIRLS' NEGOTIATION OF IDENTITIES

IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL

by

LISA M. HARRISON

Major Professor: Martha Allexsaht Snider

Committee: Denise Glynn
Mark Vagle
Dorothy Y. White

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my father Ross Lee Harrison. Thank you for your unconditional

love and support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The journey to earning this doctoral degree began years before I entered this Ph.D. program at UGA. The confidence and perseverance it took to complete this dissertation was instilled in me as a child. With this in mind, I would like to first thank all of my generations before me for creating a strong legacy that truly valued family and education. Particularly, I would like to thank my mom and dad for laying the strong foundation that enabled me to complete my degree. You two have always been supportive of everything that I have done. I thank God for blessing me with such loving, caring, and encouraging parents. And I thank the two of you for the sacrifices that you made to allow my sister and me to be the persons we are today. Mom thanks for your balance of being that kick in the butt when I need it and being that kind, passionate, and understanding soul as well. I will ever be grateful for bringing me through the homestretch. Daddy even though you are no longer here I know you were guiding me from up above. You are definitely the best dad a girl could ever want and I thank you for being such a loving and compassionate man.

Next, I would like to thank my Athens family for being by my side. Particularly, I would like to thank Diana, Hilary, Madinah, Sarah, and Shar. When I came to UGA I just thought I came to get a degree, little did I know that I would meet five dynamic and brillant women who would help shape my life. My time at Georgia would not be the same without you guys and your significant others who have been helpful as well from disposing my Christmas trees to putting up blinds. I will always cherish our numerous eating gatherings, bike rides, walks, trips and conversations. You guys rock and can't wait to see what the future has installed for us.

In discussion of my Athens family, I have to mention my Middle School family. Everyone one in this program has been so supportive of me; both faculty and my fellow doc colleagues. Kathy, Gayle, Denise, Mark, Corey, and Ajay thanks for mentoring me in your own

unique ways. I have learned so much from you guys that I will take with me to Ohio University.

You have encouraged me emotionally and pushed me intellectually. I do not think I could have

chosen a better program. I also want to thank my fellow middle school doc students, particularly

Philip, Janet, Stacie, and honorary middle school member Missy. It has been great getting to

know all four of you outside of classes.

Next, I would like to thank my doctoral committee. I think I had the most chilled out and

drama free committee ever. First, I would like to thank Martha for being low stress and low

maintenance. The fact that we both have similar go with the flow personalities probably shocked

people that I was able to graduate. But we knew what worked for each other.   Thanks for

having such confidence in my work. I think you had more confidence than I did and probably

still do. I also have to thank you for those last minute late night revisions. Next, I have to thank

Dr. Glynn. You are the most encouraging person I have ever met. You really make me feel like

I am a rock star. Every doc student needs to have a Dr. Glynn on their committee. You tell it

like it is but in a very warm way. Next I would like to thank Dr. White and her numerous sticky

tabs. Thanks for pushing me, mentoring me, and not settling for anything but the best from me.

Finally, I would like to thank Mark. I will forever be in your debt for joining my committee

about a week before my prospectus defense. More than anyone other professor, I think you have

molded my approach to scholarship the most. I do not think I have met a more passionate

scholar then yourself. Thanks for pushing me philosophically and intellectually. I think ever

paper that I will publish will have a piece of Mark within it.

Lastly, coming full circle to family, I would like to thank my sister, brother in law, two

handsome and intelligent nephews, and my cutie pie of a niece. Once again I must say I am truly

blessed to have some a loving and supportive family. Tiffany, you are the greatest big sister a

sibling could ever ask for. Even in all of my selfishness and self centeredness, you and your family are continuously there for me. You have always been by my side and I will always look up to you. I love you guys!!!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE: RATIONALE

To Be Young, Gifted and Black

To be young, gifted and black,

Oh what a lovely precious dream

To be young, gifted and black,

Open your heart to what I mean

In the whole world you know

There are billion boys and girls

Who are young, gifted and black,

And that's a fact!

Young, gifted and black

We must begin to tell our young

There's a world waiting for you

This is a quest that's just begun

When you feel really low

Yeah, there's a great truth you should know

When you're young, gifted and black

Your soul's intact

Young, gifted and black

How I long to know the truth

There are times when I look back

And I am haunted by my youth

Oh but my joy of today

Is that we can all be proud to say

To be young, gifted and black

Is where it's at

(1969) Nina Simone, Weldon Irvine Jr.

Originally recorded by Nina Simone as a tribute to her late friend and playwright Lorraine Hansberry, *To Be Young Gifted and Black*, became one of the anthems of the Black Power Movement. This song captured the hope of the era for the next generation of Black youth in spite of the recent assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. (Kernodle, 2008). It was a song that spoke to Black adults and youth alike with a central theme of Black pride and future possibilities. For Black youth the message was to embrace their full potential despite pervasive negative and stereotypical images of Black people. For adults, Nina Simone urged for them to take a vested interest in youth by providing youth with a counter narrative to the dominate ideology of Blackness. Even though Black people were often viewed as being uneducated, Nina Simone's song paints a picture of a world where Black youth realize that they are in fact young, gifted, and black and furthermore it is important for them to embrace a positive Black identity for themselves.

Forty years since the release of Simone's song, two generations of Black youth later, and in relation to the line of research that attributes African American[1] students' failure in school to their own personal choice of academic disengagement (Fordham, 2008; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 2004), one has to pose the question: Has the message of Simone's song reached the youth of today? Or is the view of the apathetic Black student who associates being young, gifted and Black to "acting white" just part of the updated deficit discourses of Blackness taken up by society to help to hide true societal inequalities in order to maintain the status quo. If the latter argument is correct, which I personally believe to be true, there are several questions that need to be explored. These questions include but are not limited to: What are other dominant discourses about Black youth that helps to maintain the status quo? What can be done to combat these dominant discourses? and How pervasive are these dominant discourses in influencing Black youth's own conceptualization of their racial identity?

These larger questions have influenced my dissertation research. Particularly, my study, which broadly focuses on young adolescent African American girls' racial identity, grew out of a conversation that I had with a friend. While reviewing literature on African American students' mathematical achievement, I came across a statement that referenced African American identity. In the context of his work, Martin (2000) stated, "A focus on identity allowed consideration of the participants' definitions of what it means to be African-American in the context of mathematics learning" (p. 20). I was taken aback a bit and really pondered, "What does it mean to be African American to the middle school students that I taught?" I posed this

---

[1] In this study the terms African American and Black are used interchangeably. I do understand that, historical, Black has meant people of the African Diaspora and African American represented a subset of Black people whose descents were enslaved and brought to America.

question to my friend who also was an African American female and at age 26 was a year younger than I. She argued that "each generation asserts the same thing about the generation underneath them." She went on to assert that our parents' generation thought we would turn out horrible but we turned out alright and that is probably going to be true for the next generation. With that response I could not help but to think that maybe our generation was more successful; one can probably assume our generation produced more black professionals than our parents' generation; however, that did not mean that we had a connection to our racial identity. Furthermore, I was still left wondering about how Black youth are conceptualizing their racial identity, what influences this conception, and how does this conceptualization influences their way in the world.

<div align="center">Situating Identity</div>

The study of identity has been taken up by a number of scholars across several disciplines including psychology, philosophy, sociology, and anthropology. Recently, the study of identity has been taken up in the interdisciplinary field of cultural studies (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). A large portion of the discussion of identity has been framed around two different schools of thought (Grossberg, 1994). Some argue that these two stances can be divided into a modern versus postmodern view or an essentialist versus anti-essentialist view (Grossberg, 1994; Bauman, 1994).

The first view of identity, which is often associated with modernity, conceptualizes identity as an individual task centered around creating a fixed, unified and stable core. Grossberg (2008) states that

The first model assumes that there is some intrinsic and essential content to any identity which is defined by either a common origin or a common structure of experience or both. Struggling against existing constructions of a particular identity takes the form of contesting negative images with positive ones, and of trying to discover the 'authentic' and 'original' content of the identity. Basically, the struggle over representations of identity here takes the form of offering one fully constituted, separate and distinct identity in place of another. (p. 89)

The non essentialist perspective of identity takes direct opposition to this notion of a consistent fully constituted identity. Hall (2008) argues that identities are never unified but rather fragmented. Furthermore they are "never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions" (p. 4). My view of identity aligns more so with this second model of identity. It is my belief that identities are always in flux; constantly transforming and interacting with each other. Shields (2008) notes that though identities change over time "they are experienced as stable, giving the self a sense of continuity across time and location" (p. 304). While I do not reject the idea that people might live life trying to reconcile a core stable identity, it is not the way that I theorize about identity. This is an important distinction because Grossberg (1994) argues that "the first view of identity was not and is not simply mistaken; it was and in certain instances continues to be a vital political force" (p.14). The non essentialist view of identity with its individualistic focus often downplays issues of power and society's role in the construction of identities for certain purposes. Therefore, while one might be taught the need to unearth this one "true" core self it is not my belief that this one "true" self exists. Furthermore this focus on the core self is

detrimental because it is often ahistorical and shifts the focus from investigating dominant discourses and ideology to this notion of a fixed self.

Hall (2008) contends that the second view of identity is *strategic* and *positional*. He states that

> Identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. (p. 4)

While the essentialist view of identity is grounded in a notion of stability the non essentialist of identity is rooted in avoidance of such a notion in order to highlight a person's transformative capacities (Bauman, 2008). Hall's view of identity is twofold. On one hand it speaks to the emancipatory powers embedded in identity construction but at the same time it also allows and requires one to see how representation can be used as a controlling and destructive force in shaping a person's way in the world. It is precisely within this political view of identity that I situate this study.

Table 1.1 Identity

Essentialist	Non-essentialist
Unified and Singular	Fragmented
Fixed core	Always in flux, constantly transforming and interacting with each other
Individualistic and Intrinsic	Strategic and Positional
Centered around stability	Transformative

Problem Abstract and Guiding Research Questions

To view identity as a construction is to believe that "individuals are positioned in a larger constellation of social relationships, as well as in the larger social order of hierarchical relationships, which contribute to the creation of particular social identities and related meanings" (Saltman, 2005a, p. 238). It follows, then, that it is through social interactions that adolescents construct their identities. Saltman argues that these relationships are not free of power differentials and therefore these relationships serve as a vehicle in the creation of particular identities often for particular reasons. My study set out to examine the various socio and cultural contexts in which Black young adolescent females construct their identity.

Saltman stresses that to view identity as a construction is crucial because it socially and culturally contextualizes identity. This perspective acknowledges that there are many factors that influence how identity is constructed, including but not limited to race, class, gender, age, and nationality. In this study I narrowed my focus to racial identity of African American young adolescent girls; (AAYAG). My guiding research questions were:

1) What are the larger socio-cultural discourses at play in the construction of African American young adolescent girls' identities?

    a. What funds of knowledge do African American young adolescent girls draw on in the process of constructing their identities?

    b. What kinds of activities, in and out of school, do African American young adolescent girls engage in and what is the affect of this engagement in constructing their identities?

2) How do African American young adolescent girls make meaning of their own racial identity?

Studying the construction of identity of African American adolescent girls is a complex task. It is my belief that to gain a glimmer of understanding about this construction it is necessary to take a multi-layered approach. These research questions were designed to gain a detailed understanding of the interplay between various structures, discourses, and ideologies that are influential in the construction of African American girl's identities. While both research questions focus on identity, each question explores different components of identity construction. Both questions combined were needed to provide a nuanced understanding of the construction of African American young adolescent girls' identity.

The first question is intended to investigate how African American young adolescent girls are being represented in society, what types of discourses are being imposed on the girls, and which sites are instrumental in producing these discourses. Hall (2008) states that "precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies" (p.4). The two sub questions are specifically designed to explore various *historical and institutional* sites. My intentions behind these two sub questions were to examine how family, school, community, and popular culture all influence the construction of African American young adolescent girls' identity. Examining the girls' "funds of knowledge," allowed me to explore the influence of the girls' home and community life in the construct of their identity. Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) define funds of knowledge

as "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (p. 133).

While the first question tried to explore what was being placed on the girls, the second question tried to explore what the girls are taking up. What types of negotiations are the girls making when constructing their identity? Building an identity consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities" (Wenger, 1998). Particularly, this question focused on how the girls were choosing to represent themselves in relation to the discourses that were being placed on them. When I use the word discourse, I am largely defining in how Gee (1999) defines "Discourse" with a "big D" verse "discourse" with a "little d". According to Gee, discourse with a "little d" is simply language in use. However in reference to Discourse with a capital D Gee (1996) states that

> Discourses are ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes. A Discourse is a sort of identity kit, which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular social role that others will recognize. (p. 127)

Theoretical Framework

The overarching theoretical perspective that guided my research is the lens of constructionism. Researchers who undertake a constructionist lens generally focus on "*what* is constructed and *how* the construction process unfolds" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008, p. 5). As an epistemology constructionism grew as an alternative to positivist and realist philosophies of science (Gergen, 2001a; Hibberd, 2005). Central to a constructionist perspective is a critique of

claims to "truth" and "objectivity". It is not that constructionists do not talk in terms of truth however, Gergen (1999) states that often claims of truth and objectivity are "truths by conventions" (p. 26). Therefore through these claims of truth certain groups are often privileged over other groups. Because of this, it is important to examine claims of truth by questioning who is making these claims, whose voices are not being heard, and what is not being said?

In addition to taking a critical look at the claims of truth, knowledge, and objectivity, constructionists call for an alternative view of such concepts. This perspective moves away from the scientific view of transcendental truth that is beyond history and culture. On the contrary,

> Constructionist scholarship has been devoted to understanding the generation, transformation and suppression of what we take to be objective knowledge; exploring the literary and rhetorical devices by which meaning is achieved and rendered compelling; illuminating the ideological and valuational freighting of the unremarkable or taken for granted; documenting the implications of world construction for the distribution of power; gaining an appreciation of the processes of relationship from which senses of the real and the good are achieved; comprehending the historical roots and vicissitudes of various forms of understanding; exploring the range and variability in human intelligibility across cultures; and more. (Gergen, 2001b, p. 25)

Constructionists take up what are seen to be objective truths and show how they are actually products of specific socio historical practices and are given meaning through social interactional processes (Weinberg, 2008).

Gergen (1999) specifically identifies four assumptions that guide constructionist work. He is careful to state that these assumptions are not confident conclusions but rather working assumptions. It is not to say that all scholars who engage in constructionist research must live by these rules, but rather these assumptions are a good entry point in understanding and having a conversation about constructionist research. The first assumption is that: "The terms by which we understand our world and our self are neither required nor demanded by 'what there is'" (p. 47). Simply put, this assumption states that "for any state of affairs a potentially unlimited number of descriptions and explanations is possible" (p. 47). This assumption specifically speaks to the power that language plays in creating truth from a constructionist perspective. Gergen states that when we say something is accurate versus inaccurate it is not necessarily a depiction of the world or a description of "what there is" but rather "we are saying that the words have come to function as 'truth telling' within the rules of a particular game-or more generally, according to certain conventions of certain groups (p. 36). Gergen argues that for some this first assumption might be discouraging, for it can imply that there is nothing solid on which to build our beliefs. Alternatively, for some people, this perspective can be liberating for it frees constructionists from being locked within a particular convention of understanding. This becomes particularly helpful when having conversations about race, gender, sexuality, age, and other categories that historically have had negative discourses placed upon them.

The second assumption that Gergen identifies states that: *Our modes of description, explanation and/or representation are derived from relationship* (p. 48). According to this assumption our locus of understanding about the world and self are not a product of our mind but rather are gained through the process of relationships. Once again discourse serves as an

important tool in this process. For the constructionist, "the primary emphasis is on discourse as the vehicle through which self and world are articulated, and the way in which such discourse functions within social relationships (p.60). In the context of this assumption, I would like to note that the terms constructionist and constructivist are often used interchangeably because they both emphasize the social construction of what is considered to be real and emphasize that humans gain understanding through experiences. While there are some commonalities between the constructionism and constructivist perspective, this assumption about the importance of the discourse specifically distinguishes constructionist thought. For the constructivist, even though the social is important, much attention is given to cognitive processes and how the individual mind constructs reality in relation to the world (Gergen, 1999; Gergen & Gergen, 2008).

The third assumption guiding constructionist work states: *As we describe, explain or otherwise represent so do we fashion our future* (Gergen, 1999, p. 48). This assumption speaks to the transformative power of language and representation for the good or bad. In essence we can use language to reinforce, challenge, or recreate current understanding. In order to transform social life one must move into the realm of re-creation. For example, Gergen explains that to reject or avoid racist or sexist language is not adequate for securing new patterns of social life. There must be an "emergence of new forms of language, ways of interpreting the world, [and] patterns of representation" (p. 49). In order to achieve this he argues that we must take up *generative discourses*, that is, "ways of talking and writing (and otherwise representing) that simultaneously challenge existing traditions of understanding, and offer new possibilities for action" (p.49).

The final assumption states: *Reflection on our forms of understanding is vital to our future well-being.* (p. 49) Gergen argues that the challenge of creating new futures while also maintaining valued traditions requires reflexivity because embedded in the decision of what should be created or sustained is a value judgment of what is seen to be good. However, from a constructionist perspective "the generation of good reasons, good evidence and good values is always *from within a* tradition; already accepted are certain constructions of the real and the good, and implicit rejections of alternatives (p. 50). Thus, in order to tackle such a dilemma one must embrace a form of reflexivity that "attempts to place one's premises into question, to suspend the 'obvious,' to listen to alternative framings of reality, and to grapple with the comparative outcomes of multiple standpoints" (p. 50).

Social construction of adolescence. While I broadly situate myself within the constructionist paradigm and my theorizing about identity is situated within a non essentialist view of identity, I specifically draw on Saltman's socio-historical perspective to make meaning of adolescence. Aligning with the constructionist perspective, Kenneth Saltman views adolescence as a social construction. Saltman (2005b) states, "to claim adolescence is a social construction is to call into question more common claims that the nature of adolescence can be understood principally through the sciences of biology and psychology" (p. 15). More so to call adolescence a social construction is to view adolescence as a "cultural and social category" and to understand that it is only through this category that meanings about adolescence can be made (p.15).

To view adolescence through this lens does not mean to reject biologically and developmentally based characteristics of adolescents and it is not to say that adolescents do not

experience any physiological changes, but rather that the meanings given to those physiological changes are socially and culturally contextualized. For example, take the description of the puberty induced irrational adolescent. The fact that adolescents go through puberty would not be debated however; Saltman would argue, that the meanings about the nature of adolescence based upon youths' experiences of puberty would be different depending upon the social context. In this case he would claim that the description of the irrational adolescent would be socially and culturally placed upon the adolescent. Saltman's social construction of adolescence sets up a dynamic where the social, cultural, and biological are interrelated.

In addition to the social and cultural context, the historical context is essential to understanding the social construction of adolescence. To take a socio-historical view of adolescence requires certain critical questions to be asked such as: "How did these ideas about adolescence come into being", "when", "by whom", "and to whose advantage and at whose expense" (Saltman, 2005b, p. 18). It is through these questions that the social and cultural context can be explored and issues of race, class, gender, and power can be discussed. Particularly, it is this socio-historical perspective that will allowed me to move from a superficial to a meaningful look at the construction of identity for African American female young adolescents. This perspective situates itself nicely within the constructionist perspective because "constructionist studies are those that seek, at least in part, to replace fixed, universalistic, and socio-historically invariant conceptions of things with more fluid, particularistic, and socio-historically embedded conceptions of them" (Weinberg, 2008, p. 14). Therefore, it is the combination of a constructionist perspective and a socio historical perspective of adolescence that allowed me to take a critical view of identity.

Rationale

While there has been much scholarship on Black identity, one thing missing from the research, especially in light of a study on the construction of Black adolescent girls' racial identity, is a focus on adolescents. Gardner-Kitt and Worrell (2007) state that, "a major limitation of the existing research literature on Black racial identity is a tendency to focus upon the racial identity attitudes of emerging adults" (p. xx). However, Tatum (1997) states that middle school is a time in which Black youths' race starts to become salient within their lives. She notes that this is the stage in which students often start to self segregate themselves along racial lines.   It is interesting to note that though Tatum references middle school as a time when this racial separation starts to appear, her own work was done with young adults. The lack of research on black adolescent identity is significant because research indicates that black adolescents who have a stronger connection to a positive racial identity formation are more academically successful and have higher self esteem (Eccles, Pintrich, & Wigfield, 1996).

This research also holds potential for contributing to the literature on culturally relevant, culturally competent, and multicultural education (Banks, 1991; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). A key aspect of this literature is its focus on understanding students' cultural backgrounds and interests and knowing how to integrate them into curriculum and instruction. By exploring how family, school, community, and popular culture influence Black girls ways in the world, this research can help to contextualize what it means to be culturally relevant and culturally competent in relation to AAYAG.

Finally, this research specifically adds to the field of middle level education. Much of the literature in middle level education is based on a developmentalist perspective of adolescence

(Lesko, 1996b). This over emphasis on a developmentalist perspective has limited critical

inquiries in middle level education. While not neglecting developmentalist aspects of

adolescence, this research is more focused on a socio cultural perspective that may provide an

entry point for integrating critical conversations into middle level education. Beane (2005) states

that "few middle school advocates seem to understand that by emphasizing development alone,

the middle school concept fails to attach itself to any large and compelling social vision that

might elevate its sense of purpose, attract more advocates, and help sustain the concept against

its critics" (xiv). Particularly, it is my hope that this work can serve as a means to open

conversations and provide a critical lens on young adolescence.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section I will focus on two major bodies of literature. One is centered on adolescence and the other is on Black identity. Taking up Saltman's socio-historical perspective, I chronologically trace adolescence and adolescent identity and outline its theoretical evolution overtime. This body of literature is important for my study because it sheds light on how certain "truths" about the way society views adolescence were constructed and for what purposes, thus having significant implications for AAYAG. I then move on to review the literature on Black identity formation. Particularly, I review the work of scholars whose research has been taken up within the academy and popular culture. I then conclude with what is missing in the literature of Black identity that my study hopes to shed light on.

Adolescence

Essential to taking a socio-historical perspective on adolescence is a review of the work of G. Stanley Hall. Much scholarship about adolescence is either built upon his work, is built in direct opposition to his work, or is built on critiquing the socio cultural origins and legacy of his work. While there are many perspectives and people that have shaped our understanding about adolescents, arguably, no one person has contributed to mainstreaming notions of adolescence more than Hall. Though Hall is considered the father of adolescence, it is important to recognize that historically, "there existed philosophical, theological, and educational theories that contributed to an understanding of human nature and development" (Muss, 1988, p. 3) that had implications for adolescence. However it was with the publishing of Hall's (1904) two volume groundbreaking book *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education* that the developmental stage of

adolescence became popularized. Based on Hall's book, universally accepted "truths" about the nature of adolescence were created. Though published over a century ago, Hall's book and his other writings remain influential in current societal views of adolescent identity even though the psychology behind his ideas is currently obsolete (Fine & Mechling, 1993) and was built on "bad science" (Saltman, 2005a).

Hall's psychology of adolescence was largely influenced by Darwin's biological theory of evolution. Hall drew upon Darwin's evolutionary theory and expanded it into a psychological theory of recapitulation (Muss, 1962). While Hall was not the first person of his era to utilize recapitulation theory, as it was accepted as a scientific fact of the late 1800's and early 1900's, the manner in which he applied it to adolescent development was groundbreaking. According to Hall (1923), recapitulation theory states that, "every child, from the moment of conception to maturity, recapitulates, very rapidly at first, and then more slowly, every stage of development through which the human race from its lowest animal beginnings has passed" (p. 380). In Hall's version of recapitulation theory he literally believed that as a human developed from infancy to adulthood they psychologically reenacted their evolutionary stages. For example, "he suggested that modern children's tendency to pick scabs stemmed from their primitive ancestors' propensity to pick lice...[and] children feared animals with big teeth, big eyes, and rough fur because, only recently their savage ancestors had been eaten by such creatures" (Bederman, 2005, p. 66).

Though, according to recapitulation theory, all stages in human development correlated to evolutionary stages, Hall focused mostly on adolescence because he believed that adolescence was the recapitulated stage between primitive and civilized beings and therefore the most

significant of the developmental stages. Hall (1904) stated, "In some respects, early adolescence is the infancy of man's higher nature, when he receives from the great allmother his last capital of energy and evolutionary momentum. Thus the child is father of the man" (p. 71). Following this logic, Hall believed that focusing on adolescence and tapping into their savage state was necessary for the advancement of society. As a gateway between the savaged and the civilized, it was Hall's goal to make the most of adolescents' savage state in order to maximize their evolutionary momentum and thereby further society through their recapitulation into their civilized stage.

It is important to note that much of Hall's energy was focused on white boys. It was his belief that White adolescents were the evolutionary equivalent to non-white races of all ages; hence non- white races were considered "adolescent races." It was only white adolescents who had the ability to recapitulate to a civilized state of being, while non-white races could only recapitulate to a primitive state. Though racial inferiority of minorities was already an accepted norm, it is evident that Hall's recapitulation theory only served to confirm and perpetuate this racial untruth.

While Hall's biological beliefs about adolescence were influenced by his idea of recapitulation theory, socially and morally, Hall's beliefs about adolescence were influenced by the ethical principles of the Victorian era; a period that was largely based upon repressed sexuality (Moran, 2005). Combining the biological influences with the social, Hall believed it was important for adolescent males to suppress their sexual urges from their primitive evolutionary stage in order to reach the full potential of their civilized stage and thereby once again further civilization.

Though Hall's work did not specifically focus on adolescent identity, there are several characteristics of adolescents that can be seen in current views of adolescence that stem from Hall's work such as the view that an adolescent's life is defined by a period of storm and stress or the German expression Strum and Drang (Kimmel & Weiner, 1995). Again informed by recapitulation theory, Hall saw adolescence as a crucial transitional period between primitive evolutionary stages and modern civilization. It was Hall's belief that this turbulent stage between the savage and civilized created this internal conflict within adolescents.

> He [Hall] perceived the emotional life of the adolescent as an oscillation between contradictory tendencies. Energy, exaltation, and supernatural activity are followed by indifference, lethargy, and loathing. Exuberant gaiety, laughter, and euphoria make place for dysphoria, depressive gloom, and melancholy. Egoism, vanity, and conceit are just as characteristic of this period of life as are abasement, humiliation, and bashfulness. One can observe both the remnants of an uninhibited childish selfishness and an increasing idealistic altruism. Goodness and virtue are never so pure, but never again does temptation so forcefully preoccupy thought. (Muss, 1988, p. 22)

This dualism of storm and stress is clearly evident in present day society's view of adolescents. It is not uncommon to hear adolescents described as irrational beings who are happy one moment and then angry the next or hear people state that adolescents are just confused and they do not know what they want. Though Hall was clearly influenced by recapitulation theory, today's construct of adolescent storm and stress is largely influenced by the belief that adolescents are hormonally raging beings, which contributes to their irrational behavior, a depiction that Kimmel and Weiner (1995) state is largely an inaccurate myth.

Another characteristic that is often stated about adolescence that has roots in Hall's work is adolescents' needs for individuality (Gallatin, 1975). Hall (1906) states that, "the years from about eight to twelve constitute a unique period of human life….The child develops a life of its own outside the home circle, and its natural interests are never so independent of adult influence" (p.1). This need for individuality and escape from adult influences is largely how adolescence is defined today. The modern adolescent take on Hall's 1906 statement is that adolescents are searching for freedom from adult authority and the advent of the notion of the rebellious natured adolescent has taken root within present-day society.

While Hall's description of adolescence characterized by a period of storm and stress with a need for individuality from adults has had an important influence on defining the nature of adolescence, it is situating adolescence within a developmental framework that has had the greatest impact on how adolescence is viewed today. This developmental view of adolescence has dominated the research on adolescence and continues to be the prevailing view used to make meaning of adolescence (Lesko, 2001).

Margaret Mead. While Hall's work provides insight into a developmental view of adolescent identity, Mead's work is one of the first to provide insight into a socio-cultural view of adolescent identity formation. The importance of my discussion of Mead's work is not based on her beliefs about adolescence, but rather how she provided a drastically different perspective from which to view adolescence. Her work served as a catalyst for further perspectives of adolescence that will be beneficial to a discussion of AAYAG's identities.

As a budding anthropologist who was interested in culture, Mead's work was instrumental in exploring the twentieth century debate of nature vs. nurture in relation to

adolescent development. At the forefront of the nature side was Hall's work that was rooted in biological determinism. As a developmental theorist he believed that adolescence was a stage built upon previous stages and classified adolescence as a period of "biologically induced agitation and turmoil" and therefore adolescents' behaviors were "universal" in nature (Jaffe, 1998, p. 16). Margaret Mead set out to test the notion of the "universal" adolescent who in nature was commonly accepted to be in a period of storm and stress, regardless of geographic location, culture, nationality, or social environment. She did this by conducting research on Samoan females between the ages of 9 and 20. Mead's findings in her 1928 publication of *Coming of Age in Samoa,* which was 24 years post Hall's *Adolescence,* firmly situated her on the nurture side of the argument.

Margaret Mead was greatly influenced by her mentor Franz Boas, a professor of anthropology at Columbia University. Boas' theory of extreme cultural determinism was instrumental in the separation of cultural anthropology from biology (Muss, 1988). His theory of cultural determinism or cultural relativism was in opposition to biological determinism and its general premise was that "environment, culture, and socialization are the primary determinants of human personality and behavior" (Muss, 1988, p. 139). His theories were very controversial at the time because they diverged from the thoughts of many leading biologists and psychologists like Darwin, Freud, and Hall, whose theories were accepted as factually and complete scientific truths.

As a doctoral student of Boas, Mead conducted her dissertation research in Samoa to test Hall's theory that adolescence is universally a period of storm and stress. She did not dispute that American adolescents faced personal conflict but she did challenge that this conflict

occurred for adolescents of all cultures and that it was due to physiological changes that occurred during the biological developmental stage of puberty instead of defining conflicts through cultural determinism. In Mead's six month stay in Samoa she found that the adolescent girls in her study did not go through a period of turmoil. She felt that, "Samoa's lack of difficult situations, of conflicting choice, of situations in which fear or pain or anxiety are sharpened to a knife edge will probably account for a large part of the absence of psychological maladjustment" (Mead, 1928, p. 207). Furthermore she concluded that,

> Adolescence is not necessarily a time of stress and strain, but that cultural conditions make it so…we know that physiological puberty need not produce conflict. The stress is in our civilization, not in the physical changes through which our children pass, but it is none the less real nor the less inevitable in twentieth century America. (p. 234)

Thus, unlike Hall, she concluded that all adolescents did not go through a period of storm and stress, and cultural factors, therefore, and not biological factors determine the behavior of adolescents.

Though Boas' theory of cultural determinism started to gain notoriety it was not until the completion of Mead's anthropological work in Samoa that his theory gained wide acceptance or at least consideration by some of the proponents of biological determinism. When describing Mead's work, Muss (1988) stated that her book became the most widely read anthropological book with 16 different translations and millions of copies sold across the globe (p. 139). In Mead's (1928) foreword to *Coming of Age in Samoa* Boas acknowledged the impact that her work would have on the theoretical move from biological determinism rooted in psychoanalytic theory to cultural determinism.

In our own civilization the individual is beset with difficulties which we are likely to ascribe to fundamental human traits. When we speak about the difficulties of childhood and of adolescence, we are thinking of them as unavoidable periods of adjustment through which everyone has to pass. The whole psycho-analytic approach is largely based on this supposition. The anthropologist doubts the correctness of these views, but up to this time hardly anyone has taken the pains to identify himself sufficiently with a primitive population to obtain an insight into these problems. We feel, therefore, grateful to Miss Mead for having undertaken to identify herself so completely with Samoan youth that she gives us a lucid and clear picture of the joys and difficulties encountered by the young individual in a culture so entirely different from our own. The results of her painstaking investigation confirm the suspicion long held by anthropologists, that much of what we ascribe to human nature is no more than a reaction to the restraints put upon us by our civilization. (Foreword)

Boas' devotion of gratitude and Mead's work at large did not come without controversy. At the forefront of Mead's adversaries was Derek Freeman. In 1983 he published a book entitled *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth* in which he discredited many of Mead's findings and questioned her methodological integrity. Though Freeman criticized several parts of Mead's work in Samoa, three points that Freeman referenced in his critique were Mead's "sparsely experience," her over reliance on informants, and his belief that Mead set out to prove Boas' theory of cultural determinism through her work.

Furthermore, Freeman (1983) claimed that, even though anthropologically trained by Boas for three years, "Mead lacked any systematic training in biology, and was thus by no means

scientifically equipped to investigate the subtle and complex interaction, in Samoan behavior, of biological and cultural variables" (p. 74). This lack of experience and what Freeman deemed as an over reliance on informants to help her communicate with and understand "fundamental aspects of Samoan life" (p.72) created a situation that Freeman felt led to Mead's misguided interpretations and incorrect conclusions. It is important to note that just as Freeman criticized Mead's work, his critique of her findings has not come without criticism as well (Cote, 2000).

Though not without controversy, Mead's work and the cultural determinist view of adolescence has had significant impact on adolescence and therefore adolescent identity. The first impact is that it opened up the dialogue about adolescence. Mead's work on adolescence was the first major anthropological piece that directly challenged Hall's dominant and widely accepted developmental view of adolescence. Her work gave credence to cultural relativism as an alternative theory for viewing adolescence.

Secondly, her work has had a significant impact on later developments of adolescent theories (Cote, 2000). One of Mead's (1928) focal concluding points was the importance that the social environment in which one is born and raised has on an individual life (p.4). Her notion of the impact of social influences on adolescents has proven to shape how many theorists' conceptualize adolescence, adolescents, and adolescent identity. Though the next three theories to be discussed are not as determinist as Mead's cultural relativism, one will be able to see the impact Mead's work has had on the thoughts of these theorists.

Finally, using Mead's cultural relativist view of adolescence, one can conclude that if cultural upbringing and social environment influences individual lives then arguably these same cultural and social entities also influence the construction of individual's adolescent identity.

Erik Erikson. It is befitting for Erikson to follow Hall and Mead because his work is developmentally grounded but also socially and culturally situated. While Hall's influence was indirect, Erikson (1950) acknowledges the impact that Mead has directly had on his career and theoretical thinking in the forward of *Childhood and Society* by stating, "it would be impossible to itemize my over-all indebtedness to Margaret Mead (p. 13)." It is through talking to anthropologists like Mead and working on field work studies with them that Erikson saw the importance of bridging the developmental with the social context of identity formation. While G. Stanley Hall and Margret Mead both talked about adolescence, Erik Erikson is the first theorist to directly discuss adolescent identity. Likewise, as Hall has been historically credited for mainstreaming adolescence as a developmental stage, Erikson has been credited for shedding light on the concept of adolescent identity.

Beneficial to understanding Erikson's work on identity is to understand Erikson the person. Erikson was born in 1902 and raised in Hamburg, Germany, though both of his biological parents were Danish. Though his parents separated after his birth, when Erikson was three years of age his mother met his Jewish German stepfather who eventually adopted Erikson. According to Erikson (as cited in Gallatin, 1975) being a tall, blonde haired, blue eyed Dane growing up in a Jewish German community created some "identity problems" growing up. Erikson found himself being teased by his gentile classmates for being Jewish while being called a gentile by his Jewish friends at his synagogue because of his looks.

Moving into his late adolescence Erikson still found himself at a crossroads migrating from European country to country supporting himself through painting and sketching. It was not until his mid twenties through reacquainting with his friend, Peter Blos, that Erikson's career and

interest in psychoanalysts started to take shape. Blos, who eventually became a famous psychoanalysis in his own right, offered Erikson a job at a school in Vienna. It was through his position at the school that he had the opportunity to meet Anna Freud, the daughter of Sigmund Freud who was also psychoanalytically trained. With Anna Freud's encouragement, Erikson was trained to be a psychoanalysts specializing in children. It was in the Vienna Institute in which his training took root but he eventually relocated to the United States and held appointments at Harvard, the University of California at Berkeley, Yale, the Austin Riggs Center, and the Menninger Foundation (Gallatin, 1975; Kroger, 2004).

Over the course of Erikson's lifespan he has published several books and articles, but arguably his most notable work has been on the life cycle. According to Erikson (1950, 1968), everyone goes through eight developmental stages throughout their life. It is in the fifth stage, identity vs. identity confusion, in which he focuses on adolescence. He states, "we assume that not until adolescence does the individual develop the prerequisites in physiological growth, mental maturation, and social responsibility to experience and pass through the crisis of identity" (Erikson, 1968, p. 91). While the major task of adolescence is to form a stable identity, it is not the only time that identity is formed; according to Erikson, identity formation is a lifelong process. However it is during adolescence, the last stage of childhood, that adolescents must shed their childhood identifications and form a new identity that will take them into adulthood. It is in this process of forming a new identity that the identity crisis can form. Adolescence is a stage where adolescents are trying to discover who they are in comparison to how other people perceive them. It is also a time where adolescents are trying to discover what adult roles they will play within society. According to Erikson, one major social responsibility that causes

adolescents to have an identity crisis stems from their inability to settle on an occupational identity.

As a Neo-Freudian, Erikson pushed the boundaries of psychoanalysis. The major contribution of Erikson's work was showing how the social context influenced one's development, and particularly their identity formation. It was his belief that, "the whole interplay between the psychological and the social, the developmental and the historical, for which the identity formation is of prototypal significance, could be conceptualized only as a kind of psychosocial relativity" (Erikson, 1968, p. 23). Theoretically, Erikson's work set up a dynamic and standard in which adolescent identity could not be defined nor analyzed solely through the natural sciences or through the social sciences alone. It was his belief that only through a merging of the two that the complexity of identity formation could be understood.

Kenneth Saltman and a critical critique of adolescence. Kenneth Saltman views adolescence as a social construction which is broadly situated in a socio-historical perspective. Fundamental to Saltman's view is recognizing the impact that G. Stanley Hall has had on the construction of adolescence and how his influence has transcended time. Though the science that Hall used to construct and give meaning to adolescence has been proven to be scientifically false, as discussed earlier, many of his beliefs about the nature of adolescence still reign today. Saltman argues, that once these biologically "justified" characteristics are placed in a social historical context then one can see how adolescence was and is still used for a greater agenda. Without this socio-historical perspective one can simply accept the meanings created about adolescence based upon the developmental view to be true and unbiased.

Historically situating adolescence, Saltman argues that there were a couple of events that made the newfound interest in adolescence during Hall's era possible. First, there was an increase in the American life span due to advances in science. Second, industrialization bought in an influx of immigrants with different cultural backgrounds. Thirdly, and also due to industrialization, American youth and adults migrated to large cities, which created a new social context in which adolescence became visible. Saltman (2005b) asserts that Hall and his followers were largely concerned with advancing American civilization, which could only be achieved by molding successful white middle class adolescent boys. Also, with the increase in immigrants, nationalism and preserving American culture became a crucial concern. It was in these contexts that adolescence was constructed and organizations like the Boy Scouts and YMCA were created in response to the concerns of that time.

Just as Saltman situates adolescence as a social construction, he also situates adolescent identity as a social construction. Saltman believes that even though Erikson's theory of identity formation, based in psychosocial perspectives, showed how adolescents' personal identity are intertwined with their social contexts; the present-day concept of identity formation is commonly seen as exclusively an internal phenomenon. This viewpoint implies that identity formation is solely an individual process where adolescents come to find themselves without social influences. Saltman (2005a) argues that it is necessary to distinguish between viewing identity as a formation as opposed to a construction. One who believes in identity as a construction would state that "individuals are positioned in a larger constellation of social relationships, as well as in the larger social order of hierarchical relationships, which contribute to the creation of particular social identities and related meanings" (p. 238). Therefore it is through social

interactions in which adolescents can construct their identity. Furthermore their construction of identities largely depends upon adolescents' positioning within the social power dynamics.

Saltman stresses that to view identity as a construction requires one to acknowledge that there are many factors that influence how identity is constructed, including, but not limited to, race, class, gender, age, and nationality. Saltman does note that highlighting such descriptors has potential danger in creating a deficiency model of identity by non critical people. He notes that White middle class often becomes the norm in which all others are judged. However, the benefit is that "this critical perspective on identity recognizes the extent to which the construction of identity contributes to the stratification of youth and their tracking into particular life trajectories and social identities that maintain the social order" (Saltman, 2005a, p. 241). Most importantly, this view opens up the possibility to explore society's role in creating and maintaining social inequalities. Once we know society's role in shaping identities to maintain inequalities, then we have the ability to use society to shape identities for promoting equality and democracy.

Nancy Lesko. Nancy Lesko (2001) offers a contemporary view of adolescence that is valuable in critically analyzing what she considers to be the two dominant views of adolescence: the biologically based developmental view, offered by theorists such as G. Stanley Hall, and the socio-historical view, offered by theorists such as Kenneth Saltman. While she does offer a critique of both theoretical perspectives, it is the developmental view which she considers to be more detrimental and influential in society's construct of adolescence. It is important to note that Lesko is not necessarily concerned about what is adolescence, but more so how is adolescence taken up and used by society.

Similarly to Saltman, Lesko deems it necessary to disrupt Hall's notion of the natural biologized adolescent. In order to achieve this, Lesko (Lesko, 1996a, 2001) identifies and questions four "confident characterizations" of adolescents which she believes function as universal truths in scholarly and popular dialogue about adolescents. These adolescent characteristics include: "they 'come of age' into adulthood; they are controlled by raging hormones; they are peer-oriented; and they are represented by age" (Lesko, 2001, p. 2).   Lesko argues that these confident characterizations historically existed to promote nationalism and to maintain and protect white middle class male superiority. As present day accepted truths, Lesko feels that these characteristics are used to maintain separation between adults and adolescents and creates a hierarchical system that is reinforced by the developmental view of the natural adolescent who needs to be controlled.   In order to disrupt the developmental view of adolescence Lesko (2001) poses questions such as, "What interests and forces effected the creation of adolescence in primarily developmental psychological terms at the turn of the twentieth century?", "Why is the developmental construct so resistant to critique and change?", and, "What elements of our current ideas must change if we are to be able to think about adolescence differently" (p. 2)?

While not as critical about the socio-historical view as she is about the developmental view of adolescence, Lesko still finds the socio-historical view problematic.   She argues that while the socio-historical viewpoint has significance in the deconstruction of adolescence by "emphasiz[ing] the social construction of youth in particular contexts and institutional arrangements and acknowledge[ing] the distinctive experiences of youths from different class, race, and gender backgrounds" (Lesko, 2001, p. 7), the socio-historical view is

limited by its resistance to interrogate the dominant biologized natural occurring adolescent who is different solely based upon age. Lesko contends that exclusively focusing on social or cultural factors of adolescents without examining the biological allows the currently accepted characteristics of adolescents to be maintained as truths.

Lesko does not criticize these theoretical perspectives on adolescence without offering a perspective of her own. In conceptualizing adolescence Lesko (2001) argues that an alternative theoretical framework is essential in order to open up a new space to discuss adolescence that could lead to a reimagining of adolescence. Particularly, Lesko (2001) states that a postmodern approach that encompasses poststructuralist, feminist, and postcolonial scholarship is necessary because it helps in "examin[ing] the reasoning about adolescence and situat[ing] that reasoning within broader social and political crises and scholarly knowledge" (p. 8). Lesko's move to focus on systems of reasoning allows her to explore how society "thinks", "feels", "sees", and "acts toward" adolescents.

Like G. Stanley Hall and Margaret Mead, Lesko does not directly situate her work within adolescent identity but rather Lesko focuses more on adolescence as a cultural construct. Though different from merely focusing on adolescent identity, the view of adolescence as a cultural construct is one that has implications for adolescent identity. Lesko (1996b) states,

> Adolescents occupy border zones between the mythic poles of adult/child, sexual/ asexual, rational/emotional, civilized/savage, and productive/unproductive… Many groups have stakes in the outcome of meaning-production in these borderlands. Thus, the categories and processes involved in adolescents' identities are simultaneously sites of broader cultural debates about knowledge, identity, representation, and power. (p. 456)

It is important to note that Lesko's use of adolescents' identities is not in the same context of Erikson. Though Erikson's concept of identity was woven with one's social context it was still largely intrinsically centered and therefore Lesko would argue that Erikson's perspective on identity also falls victim to reinforcing the developmental view of adolescence. Here, Lesko claims that while society places adolescents in mythic poles like "child and adult" or "civilized and savage," Where an adolescent falls within that continuum and thus how their identity is shaped is based on "broader cultural debates." Lesko's intentional use of the term "mythic" stresses the point that these poles are not scientifically factual, but rather culturally contextual, reinforcing her move away from the notion of the naturally occurring adolescent. Therefore, for Lesko's theoretical view, issues of knowledge, identity, representation, and power are always circulating when adolescents' are constructing identities.

<div align="center">Black Identity</div>

Black identity has been discussed by several scholars from multiple disciplines across the decades. In this section I attempt to discuss some of the different research on racial identity by sharing the major ideas from the works of influential scholars in the field. I first begin by discussing W.E.B. Du Bois's notion of double consciousness. Then I move to discuss William Cross's work on nigrescence theory and Helms's People of Color Identity Model, which was largely influenced by Cross's work. Finally, I end with a discussion on Ogbu's cultural-ecological model which discusses how race influences students' academic school performance. After discussing each individual theorist's work, I move to examine the gaps that exist within the literature in relation to a proposed study on the construction of Black adolescents' racial identity.

Du Bios Central to any discussion about Black identity is W.E.B. Du Bios' notion of double consciousness, which was discussed in his 1903 publication *The Souls of Black Folks*. It is within this publication that Du Bois tackles the complexity of what it means to be Black within America. In the forethought of this publication, Du Bois states, "herein lie buried many things which if read with patience may show the strange meaning of being Black here at the dawning of the Twentieth Century" (Du Bois, 1903 p. xxxi). Situated at the core of depicting this "strange meaning" is his concept of double consciousness.

Before further discussing double consciousness, it is beneficial to give an account of who Du Bois was as a person. As an educated Black man, Du Bois's thoughts about race grew from his personal experience as a Black male born in the mid 19th century, his scholarly work within academia, and his socio political work within the Black community. Du Bois was born in 1868 in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, which was a small mill town. As a single parent, Du Bois's mother supported the two of them by working odd jobs for elite town members; these town members also provided charity support for Du Bois and his mother, including a rented house that she otherwise would not have been able to afford. Du Bois was fortunate to live within a community that embraced him to the degree that he felt more "privileged than oppressed" (Anderson, 1996). However, he was not totally able to escape the reality of being Black within America. Du Bois (1903) shares one such life-changing experience in *The Souls of Black Folks*,

> It is in the early days of rollicking boyhood that the revelation first bursts upon one, all in a day, as it were…In a wee wooden schoolhouse, something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards -- ten cents a package -- and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card, --refused it

peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil. (p. 2)

This recognition of difference motivated Du Bois to excel and he goes on to say,

I had thereafter no desire to tear down that veil, to creep through; I held all beyond it in common contempt, and lived above it in a region of blue sky and great wandering shadows. That sky was bluest when I could beat my mates at examination-time, or beat them at a foot-race, or even beat their stringy heads. Alas, with the years all this fine contempt began to fade; for the words I longed for, and all their dazzling opportunities, were theirs, not mine. But they should not keep these prizes, I said; some, all, I would wrest from them. Just how I would do it I could never decide: by reading law, by healing the sick, by telling the wonderful tales that swam in my head, --some way. (p. 2)

Indeed Du Bois did manage to win a prize, a prize of educational success that has helped to shape his legacy as one of the major Black intellects of all time. His educational studies took place in the United States and abroad and in 1895 Du Bois earned the distinguished honor of becoming the first Black person to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard University. It was eight years after earning a doctoral degree that Du Bois published *The Soul of Black Folks*.

While Du Bois focuses on several issues relating to Blackness within *The Souls of Black Folks* and over the course of his life, it is his theory of double consciousness that I will focus on as a theory of Black identity. The basis of limiting my focal point to double consciousness is because many of his other writings addressed how Blacks should act within society;

educationally, politically, and socially (Reed, 1997). This is seen in his writings on Booker T. Washington, which stimulated a debate on how Black people of that era should be educated. While his writings as the editor in chief of *Crisis Magazine: A Record of the Darker Races* often had a social political overtone, in fact, "historians have described Du Bois's use of the periodical to commingle his scholarly vocation as a sociologist and his activist concerns into 'scholastic activism'" (Johnson, 2005, p. xix). In other writings such as *The Philadelphia Negro* he conducted an anthropological study portraying the Black experience within Philadelphia in order to "lay before the public such a body of information as may be a safe guide for all efforts toward the solution of the many Negro problems of a great American city" (Du Bois, 1899, p.1). In all, Du Bois authored 20 single-authored books, 33 pamphlets, 19 edited books, 58 edited studies, and 2000 periodical pieces (Johnson, 2005). Though these scholarly writings circumvented, built upon, had implications for, and helped shape and reshape Black identity, it was his writings about double consciousness that directly related to Black identity.

Another rationale for focusing on Du Bois's double consciousness is because of its social and historical significance.   Du Bois's notion of double consciousness is one of the oldest and well known analyses of Black American identity that was not rooted in racist rhetoric, which, too, often plagued dominate society's perceptions of Black people during that time. This was a rhetoric that habitually and intentionally aimed to justify Black inferiority in order to maintain White superiority. It is important to note that though double consciousness is not rooted in racism, it is still not void of racism; in fact, the double conscious state is born of racism among other social ills such as, but not limited to, colonialism, imperialism, elitism, and oppression.

At the heart of Du Bois's (1903) double consciousness thesis is one of his most quoted statements,

> After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (p.3)

This paragraph embodies the complexity of Du Bois's double consciousness, which is centered on two ideals. One was a literal sense of "two-ness"; according to Du Bois, Black persons' identity within America consisted of two separate identities, their American identity and their "Negro" identity. Du Bois states that these two identities are not harmonious with each other, but rather in turmoil. This strife is intricate because the "American Negro" understands that his "Negro" identity, which is rooted within African cultural and historical traditions, has much to offer America and the world. Yet at the same time, he would not "Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa" (p. 3). In Du Bois's opinion, this strife could only come to an end by a merger of these dual identities in order to form a new identity that allows the "American Negro" to be both a Negro and American without being assumed to be less of a person or without talent. It is within this merger that the "American Negro's" true

genius could emerge, which he felt was mis-tapped or sometimes not tapped into because of the warring dual identity state.

Another component interwoven within Du Bois's double consciousness was a notion that a Black person is "always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (p. 3). While I have isolated this notion as a separate entity it is essential to note that this otherness is a major catalyst of the warring identities. Arguably, more important than the fact that Black self concept was formed through the lens of the other is understanding the perspective of the other's lens and its impact on the Black self concept. Du Bois argues that this lens, which is a White lens, often frowned upon Blackness and "looks on in amused, contempt, and pity" (p. 3). This creates a paradox where Black persons know that there is value within their Blackness; however, they have to struggle to mediate between their innate understandings of worth with an internalized outside perspective of being despised. Du Bois argues that this mediation is made more difficult because the value that their Blackness offers is also "Greek to his [the Negro's] own flesh and blood" (p. 4). This confusion is at the heart of the double conscious state.

Though Du Bois's theory of double consciousness was formulated in the early 20th century, many would argue that his view of Black identity has transcended time.

The "double-consciousness" or "two-ness" image has been a remarkably, but variously, evocative characterization of the Black American condition for several generations of observers identified with widely different intellectual and political projects. These appropriations have clustered, roughly chronologically, around three ideological programs: an integrationist-therapeutic motiv from the 1920's to the mid-1960's, a

nationalist-therapeutic one from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s, and an academic race-celebratory once since. (Reed, 1997, p. 92)

The significance of Du Bois's work lies not only within its historical importance, but also within its applicability to an analysis of how Black people constructed their self concept as they progressed through time. Furthermore, its importance lies within its ability to be applied to a current examination of Black identity.

William Cross. Foundational to any review of Black identity is William Cross's nigrescence model. Though nigrescence is only one stem of scholarship on Black identity, Cross (1991) holds that the significance of his model is two-fold. One being that it "offers an inherently more complex perspective from which to frame a discourse on Black identity" (p. 147) and, secondly, it provides an opportunity to closely examine a Black person during identity transformation. Outside of these two factors, Cross's nigrescence model holds great importance because it was revolutionary in developing a stage model of Black identity and his work has been a catalysts for several other studies on Black identity. This influence is seen in the advent of Parham's and Helms' (1981) Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS-B), which allowed the model to move from conceptual to operational, giving researchers the ability to "measure" nigrescence (Vandiver, 2001). The accessibility of the RIAS-B led to numerous other studies and placed nigrescence at the forefront of scholarship on Black identity (Worrell, Vandiver, Schaefer, Cross, & Fhagen-Smith, 2006). Furthermore, Cross's original nigrescence model set a framework that led to the development of other cultural identity models including minority, racial, ethnic, feminist, womanist, and lesbian/gay (Vandiver, 2001).

Nigrescence is a French word meaning the process of becoming Black. The psychology of nigrescence exploded during the 1960s in attempt to analyze the transformation that Blacks experienced between the Civil Rights and Black Power phases of the contemporary Black Social Movement (Cross, 1991). The Black Civil Rights phase was given birth largely due to the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court case of Brown vs. Board of Education and declined between 1966 and 1968 whereas the Black power phase took root after the Watts riots in 1965 and lost ground around 1974. While the term Black identity is a part of our everyday vernacular, Cross (1991) claims that the concept of Black identity was given credence largely due to the Black Power phase of the Black Social Movement.

The transformation of Black people during the Black Power phase led researchers to examine this process and several nigrescence models were thereby produced to explain these phenomena. Most of these scholars where primarily Black and trained in process psychology. This form of psychology "sought to isolate the developmental stages a person traverses in moving from an old to a new Black identity" (Cross, 1991, p. 156). Cross states that, similarly to other scholars' conception of nigrescence that was based on their life experiences, his experience as a clinical psychologist in Jacksonville, Illinois, and his participant observation of Black life experiences in Evanston and Chicago, laid the basis for his conception of his nigrescence model. While many scholars conceptualized nigrescence, it is Cross's model that withstood the test of time and arguably is one of the most influential.

Cross's nigrescence model was first developed in 1971, later revised in 1991, and then expanded upon in 2001. Though Cross revised his 1971 nigrescence model due to empirical research which contradicted some of his original thoughts, I will still start with it because this is

the model that gave birth to his other models, and as stated earlier, has been the foundation of other research on Black identity. Also, his original model provides a historical account of how Blackness was thought about during that period of time. I will then move on to discuss the revised model and briefly discuss the expanded model.

Cross's (1971) original nigrescence theory was created to depict the Negro-to Black conversion of Black adults. It is important to note that it was historically grounded within the social context of the Black Social Movement.   Cross notes that nigrescence is not a contemporary phenomena, it took place during the Harlem Renaissance and in other historical moments in Black history, however his model was originally designed to explain the transformation that occurred during the Black Social Movement, instead of a general premise of Black identity transformation throughout time. It is also important to note that this transformation of identity is centered around one's self concept. Similar to other research on Black identity, this self-concept is considered to be the sum of one's personal identity (PI), which includes factors such as self-esteem, self-worth, personality traits, level of anxiety, interpersonal competence, introversion-extroversion, combined with one's reference group orientation (RGO), which includes factors such as racial identity, group identity, race awareness, racial ideology, race evaluation, race esteem, race image, and racial self-identification. However, the key factor with nigrescence is that one's PI and RGO configuration differs between various stages of identity development.

Cross's (1971) original nigrescence model was divided into five stages: the Pre-encounter stage, the Encounter stage, the Immersion-Emersion stage, the Internalization stage, the Internalization-Commitment stage. As a person moved from the first stage to the last stage they

were considered to move from a deracinated to a culturally affirming self-concept (Cross, 1991). The first stage was the Pre-encounter stage and it represented the identity that is sought to be changed. Originally this identity was believed to be grounded in self-hatred. Black people within this stage were often believed to have a pro-White stance. This identity was in need of change because it was believed to be damaging to one's self concept, both on the PI and RGO levels, regardless of social class. It was associated with poor mental health, low self-esteem, and an assimilationist identity, which often manifested itself as an anti-Black identity.

The second stage, the Encounter, is when a Black person experience some form of event that makes them reevaluate their beliefs about race. This "encounter" challenges what one once believed about race within America and acts as a catalyst to move that person to stage 3, the Immersion-Emersion stage. This third stage moves away from reconceptualizing Blackness in a theoretical sense to manifesting Blackness through experimental actions. This is about destroying the old identity and moving towards a new identity. This stage is two-fold; in the first phase (Immersion) a person fully absorbs Black culture to an extreme, almost to a point of romanticism. These people tend to glorify African heritage, have Blacker-than-thou attitudes, and denigrate white people and culture by adopting an anti-White identity in order to prove that they are Black enough (Cross, 1991, p. 159). They also tend to idealize Blackness by adopting African names, wearing African clothing and jewelry, and joining Black organizations. The second phase (Emersion) is where a balancing of emotions occurs and one can move away from oversimplified views of Blackness to take a more cognitive approach to personal transformation. At this point people start to reevaluate their anti-White view and widen their view of Blackness, and therefore can move into the Internalization and Internalization-Commitment stages.

In the Internalization stage, people have finally developed a positive self-concept and have an acceptance of their Black identity that is not romanticized, but rather based in Black pride, self-love, and Black communalism. Also, in this stage their hatred of white people associated with the Immersion-Emersion stage has shifted to a "controlled anger towards a system of oppression and injustice and racist institutions" (Cross, 1991, p. 159). In the last stage Internalization-Commitment, the psychology of the person is not changed from the previous stage; however, this stage is marked by the level of activism and regular involvement in various organizations.

In 1991 Cross revised his nigrescence model, based on empirical findings that contradicted some of his original premises.   He also used his revised model to expand upon some of his original thoughts. One of the general principles that guided Cross's original work was that as a person experienced a "Negro-to-Black" conversion, they moved from a negative self-concept to a positive self-concept. As stated earlier, this change in self-concept was based on improved personal identity, (PI) and reference group orientation (RGO) levels. After reviewing empirical research, Cross discovered that a person's improved self-concept was not based on an improvement in one's PI level.   Cross discovered that a person's PI level normally was constant as they progressed through nigrescence but rather it was their RGO level that showed an increase.   More so, the assumption that people in the first stage of nigrescence often had poor mental health was incorrect.

While discovering PI continuity was an overarching change within his conceptualization of nigrescence, there were several other changes that occurred in the various stages of Cross' nigrescence model. Most of the changes to his model occurred in the Pre-encounter, Immersion-

Emersion, and Internalization stages. In regards to the Pre-encounter stage, Cross first

reevaluated the assumption that people in that stage were all presumed to be self-hating. Instead

of generalizing all Pre-encounter people as self-hating, it was now presumed that the preexisting

identity that needed to be changed was considered non-Afrocentric (Cross, 1991). This non-

Afrocentric identity could be displayed through various attitudes towards race including low-

salience, social-stigma, and anti-Black attitudes.

People with low-salience attitudes give little or no thought to race issues and the impact

that their race has on their lives. These people are often naïve when it comes to racial

discussions. It is not that they deny being physically Black but if "pressed to give a self-referent,

they may respond that they are human beings who happen to be Black" (Cross, 1991, pg. 191).

For these people, their sense of well being is not based on their racial identity, but rather other

things, such as religion, profession, or social status.

A person who has a social-stigma attitude often sees race as a problem to be negotiated.

Instead of seeing race as culturally rich, their only connection to Blackness is related to issues of

social discrimination. For them race is something to be overcome and their Black identity is

dictated by a feeling of oppression. Lastly, the anti-Black attitude is what Cross (1991)

considers to be "the extreme racial attitude pattern to be found in the Pre-encounter stage" (p.

191). These people view Blackness similarly to that of a white racist or, conversely, they hold

White people and culture in extreme high regard. Cross states that in addition to these attitudes

towards race, many people in the Pre-encounter stage fuse these attitudes with Pre-encounter

characteristics such as "miseducation, a Eurocentric cultural frame of reference, spotlight or

'race-image' anxiety, a race-conflict resolution model that stresses assimilation-integration objectives, and a value system that gives preference to other than Afrocentric priorities" (p. 192).

Stage 2, the Encounter stage, of Cross's revised nigrescence model is consistent with that of the original model. The encounter stage maintains as the catalysts stage that is necessary to induce identity transformation. This catalysts can be a single event, like the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., but most likely it is a series of small events that starts to reshape the way a people conceptualize the role of race within their lives and society.

The Immersion-Emersion stage in the revised model is also similar to the original model; however, in the revised model, the number of identities in the immersion process has increased. In Cross's original model the Immersion identity was solely described as an intense Black involvement and an anti-White attitude was considered a secondary aspect of that person's immersion identity (Vandiver et al., 2001). Now in Cross's revised model this anti-White perspective can emerge as its own unique immersion identity. Overall, this stage represents people's first attempt to change their identity. Being that people are more familiar with their "old self" than the "new self" whom they hope to be, a major part of this identity is embedded in denying all that was once them and taking on a simplistic new identity.

Some of the most significant changes to Cross's original nigrescence model occur in the Internalization and Internalization-Commitment stage. It is important to note that Cross states that the changes discussed are assumed to be the same for both stages since the psychology of Blacks in both stages are the same. One of these changes was a reconceptualization of Black Nationalism. In the original model, Black Nationalism was indirectly alluded to in the Immersion-Emersion stage as being a force that enabled people's simplistic outlook during that

stage. In the revised model, Cross moved the role of Black Nationalism to the Internalization stage and specifically addressed it as having a positive influence within achieving Internalization.

Another change that occurred was the inclusion of distinctive multiple internalized identities including Black Nationalism, Biculturalism, and Multiculturalism (Vandiver, 2001). In the original nigrescence model, "a bicultural/multicultural perspective undergirded the original Internalization stages, with the primary focus on race" (Vandiver et al., 2001, p. 182). In the revised model Cross expanded his focus beyond race and distinctly described each identity. In regard to Black Nationalism, the person's Black identity is the salient identity. People with internalized Bicultural identity place importance on their Blackness and sense of Americanness. Lastly, people with an internalized Multicultural identity embraces their Blackness with other cultural "interests and saliencies" (Cross, 1991, p. 213). Though there are differences between each identity, the commonality across these identities specifically associated with the Internalization stage is an identity based on Black self acceptance.

In 2001 Cross expanded upon his 1991 nigrescence model (Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Worrell, Cross, & Vandiver, 2001). Though the names of the stages remain the same, as in the revised model, the major difference is Cross's attempt to move from a developmental framework to a world view perspective. Also, with this world view perspective there is no longer an assumption that a person's racial identity is solely representative of one particular attitude but rather a person's racial identity is based on identity clusters and their racial identity is assumed to comprise various identity attitudes. In all, there are nine nigrescence attitudes in the expanded nigrescence model. Three are Pre-encounter attitudes, which include Assimilation,

Miseducation, and Self-Hatred.   Two are Immersion-Emersion attitudes, which include Intense

Black Involvement and Anti-White Involvement. Finally, there are four Internalization attitudes,

which include Nationalist, Biculturalist, Multiculturalist Racial, and Multiculturalist Inclusive.

Janet Helms. Similarly to William Cross, Janet Helms' construct of Black identity stems

from her background in psychology.   However unlike Cross, Helms' research on racial identity

is not solely focused on Black identity. In addition to focusing on Black identity, Helms is well

known for her research on White Racial Identity (Helms, 1984, 1990). While much of Helms'

earlier work was centered on Black and White racial identity, she later expanded her Black

Racial Identity Model to create a People of Color Racial Identity Model (Helms, 1994, 1995).

Helms states that her People of Color Model is a derivative of Cross's (1971) Negro-to Black

conversion model and Atkinson, Morten, and Sue's (1989) minority identity development model.

For the focus of this section I will limit my discussion to Helms' People of Color Identity model

because her original construct of Black identity largely aligned with Cross's original nigrescence

model.   It is important to note that though Helms's (1984) original thoughts about Black

identity stemmed from Cross's model, she still has contributed greatly to the research on Black

identity through the creation of the Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS-B). This scale

was used to operationalize Cross's original nigrescence theory, measuring the themes from the

first four stages of his theory.

According to Helms (1995, 2007), racial identity theory is not situated within biological

differences but rather are sociopolitical and economic conveniences. Helms notes that in the

United States racial membership is often assigned based on socially constructed criteria such as

skin color. Though these various phenotypes are incorrectly deemed to be racial in nature and

often are used to classify people; Helms argues that racial groups have nothing to do with biology but rather are centered around differences in domination and oppression of certain groups. In particular, Helms argues that people of color historically have represented the oppressed group. For Helms the term people of color includes, "those persons whose ostensible ancestry is at least in part African, Asian, Indigenous, and/or combinations of these groups and/or White or European ancestry" (Helms, 1995, p. 189).

Though Helms' People of Color Racial Identity model is similar to Cross's nigrescence model, there are some differences which are unique to her model. The obvious difference is that Helm's expanded her model to discuss the complexity of racial identity for all people of color and not just Black people. Helms was able to expand her model because she believes that people of color have historically been subjected to harsher sociopolitical and economic conditions. It is Helms' (1995) belief that this experience, though not equal across races, has created a situation in which all people of color are charged with the task of "recogniz[ing] and overcom[ing] the psychological manifestations of internalized racism" (p. 189). For Helms, this is the central racial identity theme for people of color and her model attempts to explain how this process occurs.

Unlike Cross's original nigrescence theory, Helms' People of Color Racial Identity model is divided into ego statuses versus stages. Each status has associating schemata which are behavioral manifestations in relation to the corresponding status (Helms, 1994). Helms's statuses include; Conformity (Pre-Encounter), Dissonance (Encounter), Immersion/Emersion, Internalization, and Integrative Awareness. These statuses are hierarchal, with the least sophisticated status being Conformity, and most sophisticated status being Integrative

Awareness. Though statuses are hierarchal in order, people do not necessarily rely on their most newly formed status to dictate the schema to be used. When confronted with a racial situation, a person will interpret it using their most dominant status and thus the responding schema. If the dominant status is not effective in helping the person to psychologically cope with the racial incident, then subsequent status or what Helms (1995) calls secondary statuses are applied. In the event that those statuses still prove ineffective than a person might either strengthen previous statuses or develop a new one.

Helms's (1995) first status in her model is the Conformity (Pre-Encounter) status. People within this status often form an opinion about themselves based on other people's perceptions thus forming a devalued opinion of one's own group and placing higher value on White standards of merit. Furthermore, people within this group are often unconscious about socio-racial issues. People within the Dissonance (Encounter) status have a weak socio-racial self-definition and are often indecisive about their own socio-racial belonging. Next, people in the Immersion/Emersion status idealize their own socio-racial group while denouncing Whiteness. Great value is placed on perceived loyalty and commitment to one's own socio-racial group; in some cases, life decisions for that person are based on the uplifting of their own group. Within this status, self-definition is still based on external standards but one's own group's external standards. A more healthy racial identity is formed once the Internalization status is reached. This status is characterized by a "positive commitment to one's own socio-racial group, internally defined racial attributes, and capacity to assess and respond objectively to members of the dominant group. [People within this group] can make life decisions by assessing and integrating socio-racial group requirements and self-assessment" (Helms, 1995 p.186). Finally,

the most evolved status is the Integrative Awareness status. People within this group not only

hold value for their own socio-racial identity but also empathize and collaborate with members

of other groups. People within this status often have a humanistic outlook on life.

It is important to note that the use of statuses instead of stages was an intentional move

for Helms because much of her own earlier racial identity models were divided into stages

(Helms, 1984, 1990).   Helms (1995) states that this conscious shift in language was necessary

because many researchers were relying on their own conceptualization of the term stages instead

of utilizing her operational definition. Helms felt researchers often read the term stage as an

isolated construct. However, she notes that, people often exhibit behaviors and possess beliefs

that are reflective of more than one stage. Thus, Helms' switch to status was not a reflection of a

reconceptualization of stages on her part, but rather was intended to compel researchers to

further explore the complexity of racial identity in a more in-depth manner than the current

conversations about racial identity that were taking place.

John Ogbu. John Ogbu was a Nigerian-born anthropologist and educational ethnographer

whose research mainly focused on how race, and particularly ethnicity, influenced adolescents'

academic achievement. Ogbu and Simons (1998) note that Ogbu's work can be divided into two

phases, with the first 15 years being primarily focused on the differences in academic

achievement between minority and dominant students, and then his later work shifting to focus

on academic achievement within minority groups themselves. While Ogbu's research does not

focus purely on Black identity, his work does hold significance for a discussion on Black

identity, particularly his later scholarship that heavily focused on Black students' academic

achievement.   For this purpose I will mostly narrow my discussion to Ogbu's later research that

focused on his cultural-ecological framework, which attempts to explain minority school performance. While this is not a framework of Black identity, this model has been specifically used by Ogbu to explain Black students' academic underachievement (e.g. Ogbu, 2003).

Before discussing the components of Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory, it is important to make a distinction between what he calls voluntary and involuntary minorities. Broadly, "cultural-ecological theory considers and compares two ways of becoming minorities and their educational implications in the United States, namely, immigration and non-immigration" (Ogbu, 2003, p. 50). According to Ogbu, voluntary (immigrant) minorities represent a group of people who chose to come to the United States of their own free will. People who fall into this classification of minorities include non –White immigrants, refugees, and migrant workers. Central to Ogbu's thesis argument is the ideology that voluntary immigrants have about their presence within the United States. These groups of minorities view the United States as a land of opportunity and therefore migrate here for things such as better jobs, educational opportunities for their children, and more social, political and religious freedoms. More so, they do not view their presence in the United States as something that was forced upon them by White Americans. Some examples of voluntary minorities include people from Caribbean, African, and Asian countries.

On the other hand, involuntary (nonimmigrant) minorities represent a group of people who are American because their ancestors were colonized, conquered, or enslaved by White Americans. These people include Native Americans, African Americans, Alaskan Natives, Native Hawaiians, Puerto Ricans and early Mexican Americans in the Southwest. Ogbu argues that involuntary minorities' ideology also differs from voluntary minorities. These groups of

people often view their presence and or status in the United States as something forced upon them by White people. Unlike voluntary minorities, they did not choose to be part of this country for opportunistic reasons but were rather unjustly forced into their minority position. A final distinction that Ogbu makes between voluntary and involuntary minorities is that "involuntary minorities are less economically successful than voluntary minorities, usually experience greater and more persistent cultural and language difficulties, and do less well in school" (Ogbu and Simons, 1998, p. 166). For this remaining section I will limit my discussion to involuntary minorities since my research focuses on Black and particularly Black Americans' racial identity. However, in light of this discussion of voluntary versus involuntary minorities, and my move to focus more on his cultural-ecological framework in respect to African American students, I would like to note that it has been argued that Ogbu's identity as a Nigerian immigrant doing research in the United States might have negatively influenced his views of and conclusions about African American students (Foley, 2005; Foster, 2004).

Ogbu's cultural-ecological framework consists of two components; (1) societal and school factors and (2) minority community forces. Ogbu explains that the first component of his framework reflects the discriminatory practices and structural barriers that are placed within society that affect minority education and school performance. This first section which he refers to as the "system" is broken into three factors; societal educational policies and practices, within-school policies and practices, and inadequate societal rewards and recognition for academic achievement. The first factor, societal educational policies and practices, include "polic[ies] of school segregation, unequal school funding, and staffing of minority schools" (Ogbu and Simons, 1998, p. 161). On the other hand, within-school policies and practices include things

such as, teacher expectations, tracking, how students are assessed, cultural biases within the curriculum, and how teachers interact with students. Lastly, inadequate societal rewards and recognition for academic achievement refers, more so, to the lack of incentive that society rewards minorities for their educational achievement, which includes things such as employment opportunities and wages.

The second part of Ogbu's cultural-ecological framework focuses on minority community forces. "Community forces refer to the way members of a minority group perceive, interpret, and respond to education as a result of their unique history and adaptations to their minority status in the United States" (Ogbu, 2003, p. 46). These perceptions, interpretations, and responses to education not only affect students' performances but also affect the educational strategies of their parents. Community forces are comprised of four factors: minorities' frame of reference; beliefs about the value of schooling; relational interpretations of schooling; and expressive factors, which include collective identity, and cultural and language frames of reference (Ogbu, 2008; Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

Minorities' frame of reference refers to the way minorities interpret a situation particularly, how they evaluate their treatment and position in society by comparing their status to others. In the case of involuntary minorities they often compare their situation to that of White middle class Americans. Ogbu argues that this creates a negative frame of reference because involuntary minorities see their status and general opportunities as inferior to White Americans solely based on the fact that they are minorities. Furthermore, Ogbu states that this negative frame of reference carries over to their view of schooling. It is his belief that involuntary minorities "do not consider their ghetto, barrio, or reservation schools 'better'

because they do not have the 'back home' educational situation. Instead, they think that their schools are 'worse' because they are not like white schools in the suburbs" (Ogbu and Simons, 1998, p.171).

Ogbu states that a minority's belief about the value of schooling is determined by that particulars group is folk theory of "making it" and role models. By folk theories he is referring to how that group constructs its beliefs about the role of education in achieving success. He claims that involuntary minorities have an ambivalent folk theory. It is not that involuntary minorities do not believe that education is important in achieving success, but rather, because of the United States' historical legacy of discriminatory practices, involuntary minorities have become skeptical about buying into the "American Dream" that hard work and education will prevail over racism and discrimination, and guarantee success.

In addition to folk theories of making it, Ogbu states that involuntary minorities' role models also shape their views about schooling. According to him, involuntary minorities' have conventional and non-conventional role models. Some examples of conventional role models include entertainers, athletes, and professionals while non-conventional role models are people who often fight against the status quo. Involuntary minorities' choice of role models can be problematic because role models such as entertainers and athletes are often seen as people who did not use education to gain their level of wealth and success. Professionals such as doctors and engineers are often looked down upon, because there is an assumption that in order for them to acquire their level of success, they probably had to compromise their cultural identity by adopting White cultural practices. Furthermore, these professionals are often disconnected from

involuntary minorities' communities and are not seen as viable role models due to their lack of visibility within the community.

Minorities' relational interpretations of schooling is the third factor of the community forces. Ogbu discusses relational interpretations deal with the degree of trust and mistrust that minorities have towards schools, teachers, school personnel, and those that control schools. This factor also deals with the beliefs that minorities have about the role of schooling in group subordination and control. In regard to involuntary minorities, Ogbu states that they have a justifiable distrust of equitable schooling due to the United States history of racial discrimination.

Finally, expressive factors, which include collective identity, and cultural and language frames of reference, makes up the last component of the community factors. This is an important component because much of Ogbu's work and received criticism centers around the concepts discussed within this component. Generally, expressive factors are concerned with how minorities interpret their own collective identities and cultural frames of reference in relation to White collective identity and cultural frames of reference. Ogbu (2004) states

> Collective identity refers to people's sense of who they are, their 'we feeling' or 'belonging'. People express their collective identity with emblems or cultural symbols which reflect their attitudes, beliefs, feelings, behaviors, and language or dialect…Usually, the collective identity of an oppressed minority group is created and maintained by two sets of factors: status and minority response to status problems. (p. 3)

Status problems include involuntary incorporation into society, instrumental discrimination, social subordination, and expressive mistreatment. These shared experiences by oppressed minority groups form a collective identity. Furthermore, Ogbu states that as the

oppressed minority group combats these status problems, as a unified group, their collective identity is reinforced as oppositional to what they interpret White collective identity to be.

Closely intertwined with collective identity is a group's cultural and language frame of reference. A group's cultural frame of reference refers to the way that group feels one should behave as a member belonging to that group; while their language frame of reference refers to the way a group member should speak. Similarly to oppositional collective identity, Ogbu argues that for involuntary minorities, and particularly African American students, their cultural and language frames of reference are formed in "some domains oppositional" to White cultural and language frames of reference" (p. 258). Hence, in an attempt for African American students to maintain their sense of collective identity they often denounce those things that they interpret to be White. Ogbu believes that this condemning by African American students often takes place in educational settings and is a major cause of African American student's academic underachievement.

> The oppositional identity and oppositional cultural frame of reference enter into the process of minority schooling through the minorities' perceptions and interpretations of schooling as learning the white American cultural frame of reference which they have come to assume to have adverse effects on their own cultural and identity integrity. Learning school curriculum and learning to follow the standard academic practices of the school are often equated by the minorities with learning to "act white" or as actually "acting white" while simultaneously giving up acting like a minority person (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986, p. 182).

Ogbu argues that those students who are academically successful are able to do so because they have found ways to cope with the burden of "acting white", which include; acting like a class clown, letting peers copy their homework, acting dumb in class, studying in secret, befriending bullies to protect them in exchange for helping them with their work, or camouflaging by joining Black student organizations (Ogbu, 2004).

Ogbu's work has encountered great criticism across the years (Foley, 1991, 2004, 2005; Foster, 2004; Gibson, 2005)   As stated earlier, one criticism is that Ogbu did not take time to address his subjectivity and positionality as a Nigerian immigrant within his work, which might have biased him toward voluntary minorities. Another major criticism of his work is that Ogbu focused less on societal factors affecting educational experiences and outcomes and more on community forces, thus placing greater blame on academic underachievement on the culture of the student, particularly African American culture, versus society factors such as racism, sexism, oppression, and classism. Lynn (2006) argues,

> Social anthropologist [like Ogbu] have attempted to equate the idea of culture with that of society, thereby appropriating and confusing cultural values and beliefs with those that are purely social. This has led to the development and proliferation of 'culture of poverty' or 'cultural deficit' frameworks...assuming this framework, the conclusion follows that because education is not an African American cultural value, African American families do not invest in their children's education. (p. 112)

In defense of his work, Ogbu (2008, 2004) states that his work and particularly his ecological-cultural framework has been misinterpreted over the years and he in fact does acknowledge that both societal and community forces are responsible for minority academic

achievement. Regardless of which side of the debate one falls on, it is clear that his work has had a significant impact on educational circles that has leaked into mainstream society's view of African Americans students' school performance.

<div align="center">Gaps in the literature of Black identity</div>

One thing missing from the research discussed, especially in light of a study on the construction of Black adolescents' racial identity, is a focus on Black adolescents. In the case of nigrescence, Cross specifically states that though, "it is possible for a Black person to be socialized from early childhood through adolescence to have a Black identity… nigrescence is not a process for mapping the socialization of children" (Cross, 1991, p.190). Likewise, Helms' and Du Bois's construct of racial identity was not intended to solely focus on adolescents.   Even in the case of Ogbu's work, there still exists a gap because while his work has ramifications for Black adolescent identity, it is still not aimed to explain how Black adolescents construct their racial identity. This lack of focus on racial identity during adolescence is a significant lack. Phinney (2008) argues,

> [E]xposure to a wider world during adolescence leads to an increased awareness of group stereotypes, as well as of differences among groups in terms of power and privilege and the implications of such difference. These experiences lead to questions and uncertainty that are at the basis of identity exploration" (p.100).

In addition to a lack of focus on adolescents, the work discussed here, except for Ogbu's, did not address how schooling and society influences Black adolescents' construction of race. Though Ogbu's work does look at the school context, much of it focused on high schools rather than middle school. Furthermore, when he did take school and societal factors into

account; one of the major criticisms of his work was that he diminished the role that these factors had in contributing to students' academic underachievement. Once again, not looking at the role that schools plays in identity construction is detrimental because the prevailing images and attitudes within a school context plays a key role in constructing African American identity (Phinney, 2008).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

McCall (2005) defines methodology as "a coherent set of ideas about the philosophy, methods, and data that underlie the research process and the production of knowledge" (p. 1774). Methodologically grounding this study is intersectionality theory. Fundamental to intersectionality theory is the belief that social identities, such as race and gender, intersect in a distinctive way such that each identity can only be defined through the intersection with other identities. Shields (2008) explains that from an intersectionality stance, social identities *mutually constitute*, *reinforce*, and *naturalize* one another.

> By *mutually constitute* I mean that one category of identity, such as gender, takes its meaning as a category in relation to another category. By *reinforce* I mean that the formation and maintenance of identity categories is a dynamic process in which the individual herself or himself is actively engaged. We are not passive "recipients" of an identity position, but "practice" each aspect of identity as informed by other identities we claim. By *naturalize* I mean that identities in one category come to be seen as self-evident or "basic" through the lens of another category. (p. 302)

It is important to note that though these social identities are mutually constituted, reinforced, and naturalized, this intersectionality stance still views each social identity as a social construction. More so, the focus within intersectionality theory is on the unique social construct that occurs when multiple social identities are intersected. As stated in chapter one, Shields (2008) argues that identities are always changing thus aligning with a non essentialist view of identity as never singular and always in flux.

Though intersectionality theory situates identity within a non essentialist view, the closes alignment is within Hall's (2008) view that identity is *strategic* and *positional*. Intersectionality theory finds its roots in Black feminist scholarship. Particularly, Kimberlé Crenshaw, who is a prominent figure in Critical Race Studies, is given the credit for coining the term intersectionality. While Crenshaw's work takes place within the legal field, as a Black feminist, she uses intersectionality theory as a tool to address how identity politics have often left women of color marginalized. Crenshaw (1989, 1991) argued that feminist and antiracist discourses has traditionally failed to consider intersectional identities, which often leaves women of color experiences and voices silenced. One of the critiques by black feminist scholars was that traditional feminist research was conducted by white women about the experiences of white women, yet was often generalized to speak for all women, thus representing an essentialized womanhood (Collins, 1990; hooks, 1984; Spelman, 1988). Likewise, Crenshaw argues that antiracist scholarship has often been conducted from the perspective of Black males, thus leaving women of color neglected once again. She argues that because antiracist and feminist discourses have traditionally been designed to focus on race or gender exclusively, women of color whose intersectional identities center them as both women and of color are marginalized within both. It is important to note that this focus on marginalization is more than rendering one particular group powerless based on their intersection of identity, but it is also about how identity politics can play a role in producing inequalities within groups. Crenshaw (1991) states, "the failure of feminism to interrogate race means that the resistance strategies of feminism will often replicate and reinforce the subordination of people of color, and the failure of antiracism to interrogate

patriarchy means that antiracism will frequently reproduce the subordination of women" (p. 1274).

Intersectionality isn't simply used to explain how intersecting marginalized identities operate, but rather it has a political undertone that highlights how the intersection of identities can leave particular groups oppressed. Applying intersectionality to public policy, Hancock (2007) states that intersectionality theory is needed to examine policies that are designed to help oppressed groups who should theoretically benefit from racially targeted or gender targeted policy, but in reality benefits from neither. Intersectionality theory can also explain the inequality found within racial or gendered groups. She goes on to state that "instead of designing policies that create a talented tenth or a fortunate fifth of a marginalized group, how might we redesign domestic and foreign policies to ensure that *all* members of any marginalized group are enabled to empower themselves" (p. 66)?

<div align="center">Applying intersectionality theory to my study</div>

Intersectionality theory is both defined as a "normative theoretical argument" and an "approach to conducting research" (Hancock, 2007, p. 63). When classifying intersectionality, Hulko (2009) states that she prefers to use the term paradigm because to her, intersectionality represents "a cohesive set of theoretical concepts, method of analysis, and belief system" (p.44). Though intersectionality has been situated as both a theory and a methodology, it seems that more attention has been given to the theoretical aspects of intersectionality verses the approach to conducting intersectionality research and thus becoming what Shields (2008) calls a methodological challenge. Unfortunately, McCall (2005) notes that though intersectionality is one of the greatest theoretical contributions of women's studies, "there has been little discussion

of how to study intersectionality, that is, of its methodology" (p. 1771). More so, Nash (2008) states that even studies that have applied an intersectionality approach often lack a rigorous method for exploring multiple identities.

The ambiguity in methodological approaches created a methodological dilemma for my study; one that seemed to be centered, more so, around the actual methods of collecting data verses the theory behind my methods choice. One reason for this methodological complexity can probably be attributed to the fact that "race, class, gender, and sexual meanings and identities intersect is not simply an abstract theoretical insight…Race/ethnicity and class and gender and sexuality are always produced and read in relationship to one another in the social world" (Bettie, 2003, p. 56). Therefore it makes the discussing of identities easier theoretically, however messy, complex, and complicated to discuss in relation to the real world. In response to this dilemma, I relied on qualitative methods to capture the complexity of these multiple and intersecting identities in the real world. Marshall and Rossman (2006) state that qualitative researchers are "intrigued by the complexity of social interactions expressed in daily life and by the meanings that the participants themselves attribute to these interactions" (p. 2).

<div align="center">Participants Selection</div>

There were four girls in my study, Asha, Jamila, Jasmine, and Talia. All girls were in the sixth grade. While Asha lived in a university town, the other three girls lived in a smaller town 20 miles away. The criteria to be a part of the study was that the participants self identified as Black or African American, they were a girl in middle school and lived in the town or adjacent town of the researcher. In order to recruit my participants I asked local teachers if they knew of any students and parents who might be willing to participate in my study. My first participant

Asha was identified in this manner. My next participant Talia was identified because her mother was in an Education Program. The final two participants were referred by Talia's mother, because they were also sixth graders who went to the same church and were a part of their other social networks. I initially met Jasmine and Jamila at the girls' church dance practice. Both of their mothers and the girls agreed to participate in the study.

Participants

Asha is twelve years old and has two younger sisters who are in Pre-K. Her mother is an Elementary School teacher where "the twins" attend and where Asha attended Elementary School. Her father was born and raised in Connecticut, but his mother was originally from the college town where Asha now lives. He is a truck driver. Though Asha's mother is currently working on her specialist degree, she did not go straight to college from high school. After meeting Asha's father, she decided not to go away to college. She later was able to quit her job and become a full time student because Asha's father supported her dreams. Asha is extremely reserved and many people might call her mature for her age.

Talia is eleven years old and has a younger sister who is in the fourth grade. She lives in a fairly new subdivision where the houses start at $300,000. Her father is a full time minister who used to pastor at a local Baptist Church, but God has led him to start his own church. The church has recently leased a building, but before then, held service at the middle school where Talia attends and where her mother used to work as a paraprofessional. Talia's mother is currently a full time student working on her bachelor degree in history education. Besides being a full time pastor, Talia's father works part time with computers.

Jamila was the most outgoing of all of my participants. She is eleven years old and has a sister who is two years older. Jamila lives in a fairly new subdivision where the houses start at $140,000. Though born in Chicago, she moved to Georgia at a young age when her parents left the military. Her mother is currently a paraprofessional at a local elementary school and her father works for a company installing insulation. Jamila admits that reading is one of her weaker subjects but she excels at mathematics. Her grades are above average and last marketing period she was a couple of points from making honor roll.

Jasmine is the quietest girl in the study. She lives with her mother, older brother, and little sister. Her mother is currently looking for a job. Jasmine lives in an older house located in a quasi subdivision. Though her house and surroundings are well kept, there are other houses that are in disrepair. Last year Jasmine had to attend summer school because she did not pass the CRCT in reading. This school year she took the initiative to ask to be in a reading program at school. In her free time Jasmine enjoys spending free time with her sister.

Table 3.1: Participants' Family

Participant	Age	Mother's Age	Mother's Occupation	Father's Occupation	Family Structure
Jamila	11	41	Paraprofessional	Insulation Company	Married
Asha	12	37	Elementary Teacher	Truck Driver	Married
Talia	11	37	Full time student	Preacher	Married
Jasmine	11	33	Unemployed	Unknown	Single Mother

Table 3.2: Participants' Current School Demographics

Participant	School	Black Enrollment	White Enrollment	Hispanic Enrollment	Asian Enrollment	Multi-racial Enrollment	Economically Disadvantage Enrollment
Talia	Carver	46%	54%	3%	3%	2%	64%
Jamila	Carver	46%	54%	3%	3%	2%	64%
Asha	Clarke	57%	27%	10%	3%	3%	68%
Jasmine	Youth	19%	73%	3%	1%	3%	31%

Data Collection

In order to explore the identity construction of African American young adolescent girls and what their identities mean to them, it was necessary to utilize a variety of methods. Particularly, I relied on the qualitative methods to collect rich and complex data. Patton (2002) states that findings within qualitative studies grow out of three forms of data collection: interviews, observations, and written documents. In order to address both research questions and sub-questions it was necessary to have diversity within my collected data. Also, because of my focus on young adolescent participants, I believed that using a variety of methods would be the best technique to capture my participants' experiences and perspectives. My data consisted of interviews, group meetings, and observations.

Interviewing. Seidman (2006) argues that the purpose of interviewing is not about gaining answers to a question, testing hypothesis, or to evaluate, but rather at the heart of interviewing is an interest in the lived experience of other people and the meaning on which they make of that experience. In order to explore my participants lived experiences, particularly in relation to race, I interviewed both my participants and their mothers.

In relation to the girls, I conducted two one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Eder and Fingerson (2003) state that though sometimes challenging, interviewing children and adolescents can create unique opportunities within a study. They argue that one reason for interviewing youth is because it allows them to express their own opinions and thoughts instead of relying on adult researchers to make interpretations of their experiences and beliefs. This notion of allowing youth to voice their opinions goes deeper than collecting accurate data. It is also about evening out the power dynamics within research. Youth's societal position as non adults and the "researched" doublely disempowers them within the research setting. Therefore, allowing youth to use their voices is a step to redistributing power.

Another reason Eder and Fingerson states it is important to interview youth is because interviewing students allows the researcher to capture data that they might not have access to through simply observing youth participants. This is particularly the case for things that are often salient within their lives but may not be observed in their daily interactions and exchanges with their peers. An example that they give is of the relationships that youth have with their families. Though these relationships are often salient to youth, it is a topic that they often do not discuss with their peers.

As just stated, the girls participated in two one-on-one one semi-structured interviews. They were semi-structured in the since that I had an interview protocol, however I was not strict to following my protocol. While trying to ask every question, I was not hesitant in allowing my participants to take the conversation in another direction before trying to address another question. The first interview (APPENDIX B) occurred in the beginning of the study and second interview (APPENDIX C) happened mid-way or closer to the end of the study, depending on the

participant. These two interviews varied in length depending on the girl and consisted of a mixture of open ended and closed ended questions. The first interview questions were geared towards collecting data that would be beneficial to answering my first research question. I specifically chose not to focus on race or gender questions in the first interview in order to allow us, the participant and I, time to build a relationship. These questions were also designed to provide background information about the girls and therefore the first interview had more closed ended questions with open ended follow up questions. The second interview specifically asked the girls questions in relation to their race and being a girl.

In conjunction with the two formal interviews, I also conducted a photo elicitation interview. In photo elicitation the researcher uses photographs within the process of interviewing in order to stimulate dialogue that might not occur during normal language-based interviewing. Particularly, I used auto driven photo elicitation (Clark, 1999). This form of photo elicitation is when the participants take their own photos and discuss them during the interview process versus traditional photo elicitation where the researcher brings photos into the interview process and ask the participants about their perceptions of the photos.

The use of auto driven photo elicitation can be a particular valuable method for working with youth. Clark-Ibáñez's (2007) found auto driven photo elicitation was a helpful tool in interviewing 10 year olds. She found that photo elicitation was useful in starting a dialogue about various aspects of her participants' lives that would not necessarily be visible to her as an adult researcher. She also found that photo elicitation required her to readdress some of her assumptions that she had about the lived experiences of her participants. She came to realize that meanings that she often placed on the children's lives were not correct and things that she felt

would be relevant to her participants were irrelevant to them. Samuels (2007) talks about a similar experience with photo elicitation. He states that the auto driven photo elicitation led him to break his "frame of reference" and required him to reassess his assumptions. He goes on to argue that this is one of the benefits of photo elicitation over conventional interviewing. During his conventional interviews his own views shaped the questions he would ask and thus the responses he would receive. However, auto driven photo elicitation generated responses that were more relevant to the participants themselves.

For my auto driven photo elicitation interview, I had my participants to take at least five pictures of things that represent them being Black, 5 things that represented them being a girl, and they could use the remaining film to take pictures that represented who they were within any context. Though the researches previously mentioned had success with doing auto-driven photo elicitation, I found that the results that I was hoping for did not occur. In my opinion, I believe that the concept of race was just too hard for the girls to figure out how to represent it through photograph. Though not successful, I do believe that maybe with a little more guidance this method of data collection can prove to be beneficial in future research.

The last interview was of my participant's mothers (Appendix D). This interview was semi-structured and audio recorded. This interview also varied in time according to the participant. The goal of this interview was two-fold. The first part was geared towards understanding the mothers' own experiences with race. This was done to gain insight into how their mothers where conceptualizing race and particularly Blackness. I thought this was a necessary step in grounding the main goal of the interview which was to see how my participant mothers influenced their racial identity, both intentionally and unintentionally. Therefore, the

second set of questions focused on what types of experiences were their mothers creating for their daughters.

Observations. Observations took place over the course of the study. These observations took place in various locations that the girls and their parents identified as being important. These locations included church services, sporting events, dance practice, and a parent's job. During these observations I took field notes on a note pad and informally interview the participants and/or their mothers.

In all I conducted 8 observations collectively. It is important to note that for Asha, I only observed her once. My other three participants were active church members and on a basketball league which made it easy to observe the girls without being invasive or making them and, to be honest, me feel awkward. Since Asha was not a part of an organized activity, it was hard to identify a location where neither she nor I would feel weird about observing or being observed. The one space in which I came to observe her was at her mother's job. Every day after school she would walk over to her mother's job and wait until her mother was ready to leave work. This provided an ideal and meaningful location to observe Asha.

Group meetings. My last form of data came from group meetings with my participants. Eder and Fingerson (2003) state that children "acquire social knowledge through interaction with others as they construct meanings through a shared process. This is also the most natural way to communicate social knowledge to others" (p. 35). In all we had four group meetings. The first meeting was a "get to know you" meeting. For this meeting I took the girls to Applebee's. This was an extremely informal meeting. It was used to introduce myself to the girls and the girls to each other. I used this meeting to ask informal questions about what the girls like to do. I used

that information to inform where our other group meetings would go. This meeting was not recorded, however I had my note pad with me and I took notes about what the girls stated they would be interested in doing and any other data that I felt might inform our future group meetings and my research questions.

The second meeting took place at large Southern University that was centrally located to the participants. This meeting was audio recorded from being to end. For this meeting the participants filled out a sheet called "Circles of my Multicultural Self" (Appendix E). In addition to filling out the sheets and sharing, the girls drew a picture to go along with each identifier. This meeting was audio recorded and transcribed.

The three meetings was a book club meeting and it also took place at the university. At the end of the last group meeting the girls were giving a paperback copy and audio cd copy of *The Skin I'm In* by Sharon Flake. This meeting focused on a discussion that was guided around excerpts from the book. This meeting was also audio recorded from being to the end.

The last meeting, was located at Borders. In this meeting the girls constructed individual "I Am" poems using a protocol. (Appendix F) This meeting was also audio recorded and transcribed.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

When I originally decided upon a research topic to explore the racial identity construction of young adolescent African American girls, I knew I was taking on a bold task but was fairly confident that I could achieve my goal. However, after engaging in the research I soon discovered how complex, messy, and nuanced the construction of racial identity was for the participants in my study. Furthermore, I realized that my original method of data analysis,

inductive analysis that was informed by grounded theory, would not allow me to show just how layered and interwoven identity construction was occurring for my participants. In addition, when I finished collecting data and was left with the task of writing my findings, I felt an ethical dilemma in taking my participants and to some degree silencing their voices due to my data analysis choice. I theoretical situated these girls as being marginalized because of their race, gender, and age and I felt that even though I was using individual girl's experience to discuss this issue of racial identity construction, they themselves were still getting lost in the analysis.

In order to fully capture the complexity of racial identity construction I turned to narrative inquiry. Aligning with my constructionist viewpoint Polkinghorne (1995) argues that the purpose of narrative analysis is to answer how and why a particular outcome came into existence. More so, I found narrative inquiry as a useful tool because similar to my non essential view of identity narrative inquiry approaches all studied phenomenon as fluid and complex. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue that as inquirers, we tend to define our phenomenon as if life stood still and did not get in our way. But life does not stand still it is always getting in the way, always making what may appear static and not changing into shifting, moving, interacting complexity" (p. 125). This turn to narrative inquiry also especially helped to address the dilemma of voice. Johnson-Bailey (2004) states that the narrative "format gives preeminence to displaying data in its original state, which is acknowledged as a trustworthy way of giving 'voice' to the participants" (p. 124). However, she does warn that though this format is known for attending to power issues, ultimately the power still remains in the hand of the researcher because they are the ones who will construct the story and gain the benefits from publication.

I engaged in a three part analysis. The original analysis occurred the first day I collected data via grounded theory, then I moved to using narrative inquiry as a way to show the interconnectivity of identities of individual participants and to allow their voices to be heard. Finally, informed by my narrative analysis, I moved back to analyze across the girls.

Part 1. Originally I set out to analyze my data through inductive analysis that was informed by grounded theory methods of analysis. Patton (2002) states that in inductive analysis patterns, themes, and categories emerge from one's data. This is different from deductive analysis where normally a researcher starts off with a hypothesis in which he or she use data to analyze that particular theory. In order to engage in inductive analysis, I utilized grounded theory methods of analysis, because of its emphasis on inductive theory building (Ezzy, 2002). Also grounded theory methods allowed for a degree of freedom in my analysis procedures. Though Glaser and Strauss (1967) set forth specific steps in grounded theory, they did encourage researchers to use grounded theory strategies flexibly in their own research (Charmaz, 2006). In regard to Strauss and Corbin's (1990) procedures for grounded theory, they stated "we know that readers will treat the material in this book as items on a smorgasbord table from which they can choose, reject, and ignore according to their own "tastes"-and rightly so. Some will use our techniques to generate theory, others for the purpose of doing very useful description or conceptual ordering (classifying and elaborating)" (p. 4).

It is with the consent of these most notable grounded theorists that I engaged in grounded theory analysis. Particularly, my use of grounded theory was informed by Charmaz (2006, 2005). While Charmaz is influenced by the works of Glaser, Strauss, and Corbin, she takes up one of the major criticisms of grounded theory; its positivist underpinnings, and tries to situate

grounded theory within a constructivist framework. Charmaz (2005) goes on to state that a constructivist approach to grounded theory

> [E]mphasizes the studied phenomenon rather than the methods of studying it. Constructivist grounded theorists take a reflexive stance on modes of knowing and representing studied life. That means giving close attention to empirical realities and our collected renderings of them-*and* locating oneself in these realities. (p.105)

Charmaz states that this form of grounded theory takes up traditional grounded theory guiding principles as tools; however, it does not adopt its objectivist assumptions. In other words, this perspective still seeks to gather rich empirical data, record the data systematically, and use comparative methods to analyze data, but it does not assume that these tasks are neutral. From this perspective, grounded theory is not purely inductive, nor is any other qualitative method, for that matter, because the questions that we ask and the categories that we create from our data are based on our interpretations of reality versus objective accounts of it. With this being said, Charmaz (2006) does lay out guidelines influenced by traditional grounded theory that I used to analyze my data. This included initial coding, focus coding, theoretical coding, memo writing, and theoretical sampling, saturation, and sorting.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) define coding as "the analytic process through which data are fractured, conceptualized, and integrated to form theory" (p. 3). Charmaz (2006) states that coding is the backbone of grounded theory analysis and identifies three major forms of coding. They include initial coding, focus coding, and theoretical coding. My initial coding started after I conducted my first set of one-on-one interviews. During this process it was important for me to stick close to the data. After the interviews were transcribed, I read and reread the interviews. I

then took Ezzy's (2002) suggestion to make wide margins to record my initial codes. Charmaz (2006) states that initial coding can happen word by word, line by line, or incident by incident. My initial coding took place incident by incident. This incident by incident coding also was applied to my field notes. In order to not jump to broad conclusions, Charmaz states that it is beneficial to use action words when coding data.

> At first, invoking a language of action rather than of topics may feel strange. Look closely at actions and, to the degree possible, code data *as* actions. This method of coding curbs our tendencies to make conceptual leaps and to adopt extant theories *before* we have done the necessary analytic work. (Charmaz, 2006, p. 43)

Some of my initials codes included teasing by others, difference, storytelling, comparing to others, contradicting, reflecting about incident, wondering about race, descriptions of other, experience with racism, othering from peers, agreeing , disagreeing, free time activity, unfair, description of blackness, experiences with family.

After initial coding I moved to focused coding. During focus coding I moved to categorizing my data by first comparing my initial codes to each other. I looked to see if some codes ideas overlapped. For example, things coded "wondering about race," "unfair," and "reflecting about incident" was filtered to conceptualizations about race. After creating focus codes I sift through larger chunks of data. Charmaz (2006) states that during focus coding the researcher is constantly comparing data to data in order to create codes and then comparing codes to data and codes to codes in order to refine codes. Then I once again shifted through data and placed data under these codes. During this process I would literally copy and paste data under these codes. Often I would have the same data under multiple codes. Because I typed up

my field notes, I would also place data from my field notes into these codes. Similarly to Strauss and Corbin's (1990) axial coding, during focus coding, subcategories of a category are often developed and the links between them are explored. I continued focus coding until I completed collecting all data. After collecting data my final themes were: race is largely situated within a Black-White discourse, Blackness is situated in a cultural deficit perspective, girls are discussing and conceptualizing Blackness in varying contexts (home, school, community, peers), and in relation to themselves Black is just a color.

Part 2. It was at this point that I felt like I was completely losing who the girls were and their personal stories in this process of systematically trying to sort through and make meaning of my data. With this dilemma I turned to narrative inquiry for a solution. I originally did not approach constructing the narrative as a form of analysis, but rather just a representation of the girls. However, I soon realized that Polkinghorne (1995) was correct when he stated that an analytic process does occur when configuring a narrative. Also agreeing with Daiute and Lightfoot (2004), I feel that narrative discourse provides an excellent tool to examine social histories that influence identity development. They argue that "narrative analysis generates unique insights into the range of multiple, intersecting forces that order and illuminate relations between self and society" (p.xii). Narrative analysis therefore became a natural path for me to turn to during this analytic process.

Polkinghorne (1995) states that narrative analysis "relates events and actions to one another by configuring them as contributors to the advancement of a plot" (16). In order to construct my narrative I first took all of my interview data for each girl and placed it into one document. Since my participants would often tell the same story in multiple settings I then

grouped data according to stories. After grouping data according to stories I then looked through my field notes to see if there were any corresponding field data that connected to a story from the interview data. After shifting through the data to find individual stories, I then moved to grouping similar stories with other similar stories. While each girl's narrative took on its own shape because each girl's experience is different, most of the narratives were then organized around home stories, school stories, and community stories.

Part 3. After constructing the girl's narratives I moved into theoretical coding. This form of coding only comes after categories have been generated through focus coding. According to Charmaz (2006), theoretical coding looks at the relationship between these developed categories in order to move your analysis to a theoretical direction.   During this process some of my final focus coding combined and became subsets of other categories.

<div align="center">Other key components of the data analysis process</div>

Memo Writing A key component to successful coding and therefore analysis in grounded theory is memo writing. The process of memo writing is necessary to give a researcher the "space and place for making comparisons between data and data, data and codes, codes of data and other codes, codes and category, and category and concept and for articulating conjectures about these comparisons" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72). Memo writing occurred throughout the research process and it served as a way to keep me engaged in analysis from the beginning of the research until the end. My memos became conversation that I had between me and my data, my codes and my narrative pieces as I engage in the analytic process. Charmaz states that there is no method to writing memos, but rather a researcher should do what works for them.

Theoretical sampling and saturation. What makes grounded theory unique is the constant interplay between analysis and data collection. At the center of this interplay is theoretical sampling. After categories are developed, researchers use theoretical sampling to gather pertinent data in order to "elaborate and refine categories" in the emerging theory (Charmaz, 2006, p. 96). Theoretical sampling is not about collecting a bunch of random data, but rather its focus is on "conceptual and theoretical development" (p. 101). Nor is the process of theoretical sampling about finding patterns in the data, but rather contextualizing and filling categories. "When your categories are full, they reflect qualities of your respondents' experiences and provide a useful analytic handle for understanding them" (p. 100).

Theoretical sampling may take place in the beginning of the research when tentative categories are initially starting to emerge, or the later stage of research when the researcher is trying to make links between categories. One of the major goals of theoretical sampling is to saturate theoretical categories. A category is saturated when colleting new data does not uncover new properties of theoretical categories.

One concluding note, the way that data analysis unfolded within my study was not as linear as was just listed. Data analysis is a constant back and forth between data and data collection (Ezzy, 2002). Therefore, it also becomes a back and forth between coding, memo writing, theoretical sampling, and saturation. My memos were written for individual girls and then another section looking across girls. The individual girls section allowed me to see the distinctive difference among the girls and see how their own identities were negotiated and how their own socio-historical context influenced their racial identity construction. However, the across girls section allowed and required me to look at common themes that I saw across all of

my participants. Then the memo writing between these two sections allowed me to see how different the girls were at the same time. For example, when analyzing Jasmine's data I never realized that she never talked about her father. I did understand that she was raised by her mother but the silencing of her father was not highlighted until I realized how much Asha and Talia would talk about their fathers. Furthermore, though Jamila did not talk about her father, he was the co-coach of her basketball team where I did several observations, so even his presence was visible. The way that Black fatherhood was shaping became a theme which emerged into a theme of life as a counter narrative.   This neglect by Jasmine to discuss her father made me specifically ask her about her father in our one-on-one interviewing, thus being an example of theoretical sampling. This just shows how cyclical the process of data analysis occurs.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE GIRL'S NARRATIVES

Dear Readers,

In this chapter I present the narratives of my four participants, Asha, Talia, Jamila, and Jasmine. Each girl's section starts off with a poem that they created in one of our group meetings. These poems are then followed by a brief introduction of the participants. After the introduction comes the girl's narrative.

The narratives are slightly laced with my analytic lens to make for smoother transitions and to some extent to guide you as the reader. My voice is in italics while the girls' voices are in standard form. Any words that are in brackets are meant to clarify a sentence. Though my voice is integrated within the narratives, there is still much room for one to make their own meaning of the narratives presented. Therefore, I urge and hope that you come to the narratives with an open mind. There are places in the narratives that are not grammatically correct and there are some statements that might make the reader feel uncomfortable. While to some degree as the constructor of these narratives, I had the ability to paint a different story. I needed to be true to the girls, their voices, their stories, and the research.

As you read the narratives, I invite you to explore the complexity of racial identity. Furthermore, I invite you to read the narratives with these questions in mind: How do the girls represent themselves, how do they feel they are represented by others, what meaning do they place on Blackness, what and who influences these meanings that they bring to Blackness. How do the girls various other identities such as gender, class, and age influence how they are conceptualizing Blackness?

Asha

I am a Black girl
I wonder if I will ever make the basketball team

I hear people calling my name

I see a lot of nice people trying to be mean

I want to have true friends.

I am a Black girl

I pretend to be invisible

I feel like I could fly

I touch my forehead every time to make sure it's ok

I worry that someone will try to turn everyone against me

I cry when something bad happens to me

I am a Black girl

I understand that everyone will not like me

I say that one day I will be famous

I dream, that the whole world was nice

I try to look at the positive things in life

I hope that it pays off one day

I am a Black girl

Asha

Asha is the oldest of three children. She has two younger sisters who are identical twins and are in Pre-K. She is very smart, academically successful, reserved, and quiet in group settings, but if you get her in a one on one conversation she will talk your ears off. I have had the opportunity to spend time alone with her while traveling back and forth between her and my other participants' homes where she has talked non-stop. However, it has been my experience, that regardless of the setting in which I interact with her, she is extremely politically correct with what she states and often thinks before she expresses her opinions. Because of this, she often speaks slowly and with pauses between words to give a thoughtful, yet honest, response to questions, particularly to questions that might reinforce certain stereotypes or put down a certain population. It is interesting that this same thoughtfulness was reflected in conversations I had with her mother.

Though Asha has a great relationship with her father and her parents are happily married, his job as a truck driver requires him to travel a lot, and therefore she spends a great deal of time with her mother and sisters. In addition, she went to elementary school where her mother taught and since her mother's school is located next door to her middle school, she also rides with her mother to school and often spends afterschool time at her mother's job. While some teenagers might complain about spending this much time with her their mother, Asha seems to value this time and it is clear that she and her mother have a great relationship.

It is also evident that Asha's middle class status has privileged her over many of her peers. She states that when her friends come over to her house they often tell her that she has a great house. Having had the opportunity to go to her home, I would concur. While not overly

elaborate, it is a nice house, has a well-groomed lawn, and is in a good and quiet neighborhood.
It is nicely furnished, extremely neat, and is warm and inviting.

Asha's social interactional savvy and thoughtfulness definitely carried through in the
constructed narrative presented below. This narrative starts off with a basic introduction of how
she described herself and moves on to retell stories of her lived experience in school, at home,
and in an extracurricular program.

I'm in Advanced Everything

My name is Asha I'm 12 years old and I'm in the 6th grade. [I am] silly, active, fun and
very shy. [I want to be] a pharmacist; I love science. I [also] love to read. I like a lot of authors;
right now I like Stephen King. I loved that book [*The Skin I'm In*]. I wish they would make a
movie. I got into it. It was something I could relate to like being called the darkest person [by]
the boys when I'm really not. I'm dark, I'm not **dark** dark though. I really don't pay them
attention and they do a lot of girls like that, girls who aren't even dark. It's just like every other
thing they say. I don't know, I guess to be funny but it's not to me. They say it to tease. I think
people just tease people because they feel bad about themselves.

My friends we get teased about [our butts] because we don't have one. But I don't pay
attention to it. I hear it almost every day. Like the nick name that the boys came up for me was
"Pancake." I actually laugh at it to make them feel stupid. But it is funny. Everybody is going
to think something. My friend, the very mean one, she overhead a girl talking about her clothes
cause she had the ripped pants with the holes in them. They were black and she had black and
purple on that day. And this girl was teasing her. I don't think she was teasing, she was just
looking at people and choosing to talk about them. She was like, "Why does she have holes in

her pants?" and "I don't like those pants because they are ugly." My friend got mad, so she got up [and] walked over to the girl. I told her to sit down, but she didn't listen. She walked over to her and said, "Were you talking about me?" and the girl was like, "Yeah". That just started a whole big argument.

It's important to note that the girl who was teasing Asha's friend was a White student. This issue of clothing seems to be a clear racial divide and the cause of conflict within her schooling experience.

A few girls, well they are White, they talk about our clothes because they dress differently. I guess the way we dress is ugly to them. My friend asked, "Why do they talk about us and why don't they like the way we dress?" Like these shoes, Creative Recreations, they don't like these shoes I have on. We don't like the way they dress. Like one girl she wore a skirt that was white and it had holes in it, like little small flower holes, and short leggings that stopped at her knees. They [also] get teased for wearing flip flops in the winter time. Sometimes I like the way my White friends dress.

With Asha's account of a clear division between Black and White clothing, one can wonder where other racial groups fit into the clothing divide. Asha provided clarification to that by stating that the Mexican students at her school dress like the Black students. She also gives an interesting account of a new Korean student who recently started attending her middle school.

This girl, she just came from Korea and she had Air Forces and Jordans on and [the white kids] made a big deal. They were asking questions like, "Why does she have those shoes on?"

They think only Black people can wear those types of shoes. Not that it's a big deal but I think it was their first time ever seeing an Asian person dressed like this.

While it is problematic that regardless of a student's race, ethnicity, or culture, their style of clothing is automatically divided into being White or Black, it is more interesting to see how these lines are divided among minority groups. While some may argue that the classification of students dressing Black or White might just be reflective of the fact that the two dominant racial groups within that school are Black and White, this does not explain why it is acceptable for one set of minorities to be associated with "Black" culture while it is controversial for another group of minorities. This narrative is even more intriguing in relation to research that states that Asians are often seen as the "model" minority. The issue raised by the White student was not that the Korean girl was wearing Jordans and they were ugly, but the issue was why was she wearing those sneakers because she is not Black. While this student was not talking in stereotypical terms of "ideal" minority, one can see the opening for such a line of thought to start. This image of the "ideal" minority is in stark contrast to what Asha identified as stereotypical views of Black girls such as them being ghetto and loud. It's interesting that though Asha voiced that White people believe these stereotypes, it is within her own Black community that she states she hears the use of the term "ghetto" most.

Loud, well everybody is loud. Certain ones are ghetto. Like at my school ghetto is when girls put it in weave like pink, black, blue, orange, green and red hair. I really don't use it [the term ghetto] but I have a few times. It's how you act, attitude, you don't really care about certain things. White people, well Black people say that about Black people too. That's mainly where I hear it from. I do, [think it's true], it's how they put their self out there. Like at school this girl

cussed the teacher out, told her to shut-up talking to her, was screaming, had an attitude and told this White girl to get out of her way.

Though Asha states that school is not a place that she talks a lot about her own race or racial issues, it is clearly a space in which some conceptualization of race is occurring. While the issue of clothing seems to be a dominant catalyst for such conversations, which probably has a lot to do with Asha's age and gender, there are other openings that she discusses.

We only got one Black teacher. I'm talking about out of the whole teachers and for Connections, there's only one Black teacher. The principal and assistant principal are Black and the secretary is Black so that's only six and the janitors. It's like 95 percent is White and the other five is Black and I wonder because there's not a lot of Black teachers there but at my mom's [school], at Kennedy there's like five there too. I would like to have more Black teachers. Some girls [think our teachers are racist] at our school because we raise our hands first and the teacher, she'll look over us until the White kids raise their hands. I don't think she's racist cause the ones who raise their hands say stupid stuff.

This racial disparity is not only seen within the faculty and staff but also something see recognizes within her classes. I'm in advanced everything. There's advanced math and language arts [classes] but I get pulled out for advanced social studies and science. In my advanced math I'm the only Black girl. There's mostly Black kids in the sixth grade and there's only five in the advanced classes out of the whole sixth grade. *When asked to account for the disparities in participation in advanced classes, Asha states that:* Certain Black students take their stuff seriously and certain ones don't really care because they don't have parents at home to encourage them to do better. There are some really smart ones there, they just don't want to learn

cause they think it seems kind of funny to be in the advanced classes. It's kind of stupid to be in advanced classes because your friends are not in that class.

*Asha does acknowledge that this issue of not taking schooling seriously is not limited to Black students. In fact, she stated that the White students "*just play, they take it more seriously than we do, well certain Black kids do, but not really serious.*" While Asha goes on to state that only about two students in the sixth grade take their schooling seriously, it is clear that, to some degree, she still picks up the prevalent discourse of the disengaged Black student. It is interesting to note that she herself was not originally placed in advanced classes and it was not until her mother advocated for Asha that she was placed in advanced classes.*
Asha goes on to give an example of how an experience directly made her think about racial differences.

I thought about my race in 6th grade. I was actually in the hallway just reading and there were Whites and Blacks in the hallway walking and one girl she ran into the boy by accident. She was White and he was Black. He got mad at her even though it was an accident and I wondered why we get mad quicker than they do with certain things. We all argue; there's some White girl drama at my school but they don't think fighting is the answer. But they [do] argue. That's what makes Black people different.

While that account discusses how a simple experience of being in the hallway made her think about her own racial group, Asha does recall a school- initiated activity that created an opportunity to take pride in being Black. Last year I entered an art contest for "I Have a Dream" and it wasn't' just for Black students, but I actually won for Kennedy Elementary. I won out of all the elementary schools in King County. It was an "I Have a Dream" art competition and I

actually won it. I drew myself with my finger up pointing and I had a bubble saying "I Have a Dream" and I drew all the things that I would like to be around my head in little clouds. I was showing that it is nothing wrong with being Black. They blew it up and now it's hanging up at the King County board office. That made me happy.

Another time that Asha recalls discussing something about race in her schooling experience was in the fifth grade during a lesson about slavery. Social studies we talked about slavery. We didn't talk about anything else [relating to race] outside of that.   There was only one White student in my class last year. Students last year they don't really care about it [slavery]. They didn't want to listen. She [the teacher] tried to make a connection. I remember one time she said we should be lucky because now we're not working for White people any more so we should actually appreciate the things we have because slaves they didn't at the time have rights.

This notion of having rights seems to be a clear influence on how Asha thinks about being Black.

To be Black I think is to be different because we're not like everybody; we're not like the Whites.   They controlled us during slavery. They went to school and got a good education and had the utensils they needed. We didn't have what we needed so they thought they could control us because they thought they were better than us. I think with us not being in slavery anymore we have changed a little. We have the opportunities that they have now.   So it's not like that we're not as good as they are because we have the same opportunities as they do, they can't control us right now. You don't have to ask to go to the restroom. They don't have to ask the Whites to do anything.

While Asha is very adamant that White people no longer can control Black people, she is not without an experience that makes her question this notion of control. I remember watching

TV and I saw these commercials saying choose McCain not Obama because he'll add more taxes. I think people just at the time they didn't want an African American president. I was wondering why do they sometimes think they are better than we are and they think they can control us. [However], they can't because we're the same, just a different color.

Some of Asha's opinions about the presidential election were reflective of conversations that she heard her parents having. I was in their room for like 15 minutes and they were talking about "See how people who are racist will just choose a White president because they want to keep their tradition going with all the White presidents [rather] than having a Black president." *This presidential election was so important to Asha's parents that they drove to Washington D.C. so that the family could participate in the inauguration ceremony. This is a fact that Asha was proud to state in many of our interactions. It is not surprising that some of Asha's own views were reflective of her parents' views.*

I look up to my mom and my dad. They've come a long way and I've seen where they came from, what they're doing now and where they are. I know they didn't have little and they didn't have a lot but they have paid attention in school and finished school. They have more than what they used to. They have high expectations for me and my sisters. They're not very strict but they are strict on certain things. [For example], we don't get a lot of TV even though I barely watch TV. Like out of every day I get only an hour of TV. I love [to watch] Man vs. Wild. I don't know why but I like it, it's funny. My dad, he likes it too, but my mom can't stand it. When we are not watching TV they like for us to either read or color.

In addition to being her role models, Asha parents are very influential in shaping some of her views of race.

I talk about what's going on at school to them. [Once] I was talking about some girls at school fighting over a boy. I said these African American girls and he [my father] said, "Go ahead and say Black." I was like, "But I know we're not black or brown." I asked him, "Why did he say 'Go ahead and say Black" and he said, "Well, they are basically the same thing."

*When asked did she personally feel there was a difference between the terms African American and Black, Asha concurred with her father and stated that "*I don't think it is a difference.*" Besides stating things that influence the way in which Asha thinks about race, her parents also create experiences for her that they feel will positively impact her. Clearly, deciding to take her to the presidential inauguration was one. Another experience comes in the form of Asha's involvement in a Black sorority-sponsored youth program. Asha states that when her mom found out about the program they applied to get accepted*

We actually got chosen. We had to write a paper about ourselves and why we would like to be in it. The elementary and middle schoolers they go together and the high schoolers go together. It's like eleven [girls in the elementary and middle school group] and some of them go to school with me. Last time we went we talked about college. I want to go to Spelman. They had example college applications. We went to one lady and she gave us a card so if we needed any help with school we could call her.

It's fun, not just for the friends that I have there but things I can learn about what we need to help our self with. We meet like twice or three times a month. [We] just talk about things that help African American girls. Like hair and skin care so we know what products to use on ours and stuff like that.   I thought it was helpful because I have problems with my skin. I know it's just acne but my face gets bumpy whenever it wants to.   We don't have the same skin

or hair so we would need to learn about that so it won't break off. I get the information from other places, just not as much as I do from the club. Like Proactive, not that I pay attention at those commercials, and magazines, how they have the ads [about] how it will help you and things. But they [the club] give more information about it. [We] basically learn to enjoy yourself, enjoy who you are and take care of yourself. It helps certain kids that really need it and kids that just want to know more.

While this program seems to have a positive influence upon Asha's self concept, it is interesting how even a program this is meant to be positive can reinforce racial stereotypes. We were talking about taking care of our body and we got into don't let boys abuse you and they said like Black boys look for big butts and White boys look for big boobs. I kind of agreed with the Black boys liking the girl's butt but I don't know about the other girls because there are some white girls at my school who are bigger than me.

When Asha first told me this, I assumed that it was just the girls making this comment, but then she told me it was reinforced by the teacher. It is interesting that in spite of her own reflexive thoughts, peer and family conversations, and experiences relating to race, racial differences, and stereotypes, at the end of the day, Asha feels that: It's not a big deal but just to certain people I think they really take it seriously.

Talia

I am a future lawyer and basketball player

I wonder if I'm gonna be rich.

I hear my guardian angel spirit.

I see a spirit all around me.

I want an Escalade with rims and my tag will say "Daddy's girl"

I am a future lawyer and basketball player

I pretend like I'm Candice Parker.

I feel imaginary.

I touch God's hand.

I worry that I will not make tomorrow daylight

I cry when I fail my duties.

I am a future lawyer and basketball player.

I understand everybody will talk about me.

I say I'm gonna make it.

I dream of me dying.

I try to get good grades.

I hope to follow my dreams.

I am a future lawyer and basketball player.

Talia is a preacher's daughter, extremely respectful and eager to please. She comes off with having a naiveté and innocence that allows her the freedom to voice her opinions without hesitation. She often just blurts out the first thing that comes to mind without any type of censorship but often recants her response after recognizing other people's reactions. Between her opennesses, fast speech, and slight speech impediment, it often takes a while to comprehend and follow Talia's line of thought. Compared to other 11 year olds, she can seem a little immature at times. This immaturity is a concern that her mother voiced to me during an interview in addition to her subpar academic achievement and mother's perception of her delayed physical development. Talia's teachers have told her mother that Talia tries very hard in class but sometimes there seems to be a slight disconnect in her understanding. Talia has also lashed out in frustration to her parents about them pushing her too hard. Particularly, as an older child and preacher's daughter, she is often forced to be a model example for children in her church. This is a fact that her mother recognizes is unfair to Talia and she as a parent is trying to figure out how to handle.

Talia is very slim in stature and considers herself to have a chocolate complexion. Having a low self esteem because of her skin color is another concern that her mother raised during conversations; it is a battle that her mother also fought during her own childhood. In relation to this self esteem issue, I am also sure that the fact that her younger sister is what people might call light complexioned and extremely articulate, and has often been praised about how smart she is in my presence, also has an impact on Talia's self esteem. In spite of this, or maybe because of this, Talia can often be found smiling. She has a big, beautiful, and radiant smile that can light up a room.

What follows is Talia's narrative. One theme that truly carries through in her narrative is the value that she places on family and the influence that they have on who she is as a person. This can be seen through her joy of basketball, her spirituality, or simply through the things that she does during her free time.

Nawww Nawww

My name is Talia Anne Parker I'm 11 years old and I'm in the 6th grade. I like playing basketball, singing and dancing. Basketball is a family sport. My mama played it, my grandma played it, my dad played it, almost everybody in my family plays basketball. I'm a basketball manager for Lewis *Middle School*. When I first started playing basketball I didn't know what it was till I did it. I didn't even really know how to dribble the ball. I didn't know what a basketball really was actually. My heart was in cheerleading, but my mama says I cannot do it next year cause she wants me to play basketball.

When I interviewed Talia's mother she stated that it really is Talia's father that doesn't want her to cheerlead. She explains that Talia's father sees basketball as offering potential for a future college scholarship versus cheerleading being more of a recreational thing. From conversations with Talia and her mother, it seems that Talia's passion for basketball is mainly due to the fact that her friends and family members play and enjoy the sport. Both Talia and her sister play basketball in a county league and some of her friends from church and school are in the same league. Her mother stated that her true passion is in singing and dancing.

Singing helps me express myself and when I dance it makes me feel good. I really want to go to Ballet on Chase. I did go to Jane's School of Dance for like 2 weeks and I learned a lot of dances too. I used to do ballet until they got sarcastic about stuff with color. They didn't give

me and this other girl any attention so we just flunked out. We asked for help but they wouldn't give any so we just quit. But Ballet on Broad is a nice place, it's not colored. It has Caucasian people and African American. It's located on West Chase Street, not too far from here.

I usually dance at church and sing at church; it makes me feel like I'm somebody. Beyonce [is my favorite artist] she knows how to sing and dance. She's pretty with long hair. I know that Beyonce said she was with Destiny's Child, they used to be my favorite. I like gospel, R&B, Hip Hop, and Kid's Bop. It [Kid's Bop] doesn't actually come on a station but sometimes it comes on 64 Disney channel, or either 63 Nickelodeon.   I like BET and Disney channel.   I watch Sweet Life of Zach and Cody, Hannah Montana, Sonny with a Chance, Sweet Life on Deck, and That's so Raven. I relate to Bailey off of Sweet Life on Deck. She's a girl, her birthday is actually on the same day as mine. She's 13 or 14 *and* in *the* 9th grade.   She lives in Florida, she's smart, *and* she plays basketball too.

[*In my free time*,] I go outside, play basketball with my sister or ride the scooters with my sister. Sometimes I read. I love fiction books. Barbara Parks, I read most of the Junie B Jones series. Sometimes I read the Teen Eleven magazines. It tells like the newest couples, the newest fashions, like that's how I found out about skinny jeans. I didn't even know what skinny jeans were. They give you fashion trends and they sell like make-up stuff to you. And I also get the Justice magazine. It's a magazine and a store. They send coupons like 40% off 50% off. Especially around Christmas they have 70% off.   The reason why I got a lot of clothes is because my mama loves going shopping; she goes to Justice almost every week.

If not reading, shopping or playing basketball with her sister, as a preacher's daughter, Talia can probably be found at church or practicing for children's choir or the children's dance praise team. Religion is something that has a big influence on her and her family.

We were in Bible study one day and they said you always should plant positive seeds instead of negative ones cause your positive will out do your negative one. You should pray every night, but if you stop praying that's the negative seed that's coming out in you. If you do pray a lot you will add a diamond to your crown. That's what we learned at school.

I say this plain prayer every single night and then I start off on my own little verse. I pray about how everyone should be safe to their destination, my mama and my daddy. Let me have a good day tomorrow. And that God will wash away my sins. The first prayer I learnt was now I lay me down to sleep I pray the Lord my soul to keep if I should die before I wake I pray the Lord my soul to take. It makes me feel safe. Anytime I do not pray it makes me feel like I'm in the harm of danger

Talia stated that her daddy taught her how to pray. Her relationship with her family members is very important to her.

Latalia, she's my favorite and only sister. She's 9 years old, her birthday is September 21st. She loves playing basketball that's why I like my sister. My mother is 37, her birthday is January 18th. She's still in college getting her degree for social studies education. My Dad *is* a full time pastor and works at Menca Corporation part time, they put together machines like computers and stuff. His birthday is August 17th he's 38. I have a little dog Champion Oreo Durham. We named him Oreo cause his skin is black but his mane is white.

We see each other on a daily basis. We go shopping; my favorite store is Best Buy. Sometimes we go grocery shopping together. One day we all got our nails done and pedicures, even my Daddy. We just ride in the car just to ride in the car sometimes, we don't' go nowhere we just ride around. Mostly we talk about how your day has been and most of the time we have games to go to or either I'm gone away and they miss me. Sometimes my father gets home late because he has preacher stuff to do.

Talia's description of her family is in stark contrast to the stereotypical depiction that is often displayed about African American families in the media and even in research. The popular media depiction is not unfamiliar to Talia. In fact, in her photo elicitation interview, one of the pictures that she took was of her father. She stated that this picture was important to her because many Black girls do not have fathers. While I think that her picture is meaningful in the sense that her story provides a counter narrative to the dominant view of the African American family structure, I do find it troublesome that it is a discourse that she takes to be overwhelmingly true. Talia took the picture because she was proud that she had a father, not because she was trying to show that it is not true that all African American girls are without fathers. I am not arguing that she needed to make some type of social or political statement with her picture. Asha also took a picture of her father but she stated that the picture represented her being a girl because she is a daddy's girl. Rather I believe it is important that we realize that even when her own family structure provides a counter to the pervasive portrayal of African American families, that she still views African American families from this culturally deficient discourse. Her view about family structures and particularly fatherhood is further emphasized

in her view of why students dislike her and one of her friends at school, Jamila, who is also in

this study.

See people don't like us at school; they hate us because we come from a good family. Most of the places are torn down like Niles Creek. Some kids live in houses that doesn't have any doors because we rode by there one day. Most of the kids live over there actually and it's real sad to see them out there just playing on the swing sets with no doors in the house, no windows. It was just sad to see that sight. It really is. It's like their fathers have given up on them. They didn't want them. They were going to put them for abortion or something like that. *One can assume that most of the students in her school do not live in Niles Creek and Talia does not know the personal backgrounds of the kids who do live in those houses; however, it is apparent that she has an opinion of these children, their parents, and the reason for their circumstances. I would argue that these opinions clearly echo the widely held beliefs about low income African American families. She further goes on to explain what it means to come from a good home.*

You don't use bad language. You have manners, like none of those kids at my school have manners except for me, Jamila and Angelica really. They cuss the teacher out in a second. Like Tisha she said, "I don't care honey you betta go on with your fat self." White teachers let black kids talk to them any way. My auntie said I can't be no teacher. I would be about [to] murder somebody on their first day. But me and Jamila actually take our stuff seriously, but those white teachers be hating on us. They haters over there. I mean come on. Our teachers are racist, some of them. How about this: I came to school for picture day and my mama had bought

me this new outfit that I really really wanted to wear. So this white lady said, "Dress code" as soon as I got out that car. I said, "What??" and I had to go change.

The reason why she thought this was an example of her teacher being racist was because she felt that the white students had inappropriate shirts on as well but they did not have to change their clothing. While Talia thinks that some of her teachers are racist, it is interesting to note that Talia equally dislikes her one Black teacher.

They need to do more cause all my teachers are Caucasian except one of my teachers, Mr. Moore. I can't stand him. He is supposed to teach history stuff but he never talks about it; he talks about maps. For some reason he doesn't seem like a social studies teacher to me. He doesn't' talk about race in history. We haven't talked about Harriett Tubman yet and that's usually the first thing you ever talk about in social studies and Martin Luther King and the Underground Railroad.

In the previous school year Talia's teacher did cover slavery. While she does state that discussing it in social studies "didn't make me feel no kind of way. I would be sad if it was me working on a plantation," *it did make her think about why were there only Black people enslaved.*

I wonder why there wasn't Caucasian slaves for some reason. I've been thinking about it, like OMG. We were talking about slaves at school in social studies, how they used us for the sugar cane and tobacco plantations, some owners didn't let us bathe and didn't let us brush our teeth, [and] we only had one pair of clothes. I said why wasn't there Caucasian slaves? He didn't say nothing and then we went to the next subject.

One of the reasons that slavery was discussed in her fifth grade class was because it is part of the 5th grade Georgia Performance Standards. Her current school year social studies Georgia Performance Standards covers Latin America and Canada, Europe, Australia and Oceania. While these standards do not require students to discuss the contributions of Martin Luther King and Harriett Tubman, they do require for students to learn about, "the importance of African slavery on the development of the Americas" and learn "the importance of Toussaint L'Ouverture in Haiti." (GPS citation) *I am not sure if those standards have not been covered in her current school year as of yet but it is clear that the material that was discussed was not presented in a way that allowed her to make cultural connections and did not allow her to see that different races are being discussed in her current social studies class.*

Talia's social studies class is just one example of how her schooling provides opportunities for her to discuss, experience, and conceptualize race and particularly, Blackness. One experience that she states made her think about her race was when President Obama gave his Back to School message on September 8th.

I thought about race when Obama did the speech with kids. This Caucasian boy in my class named Jacob got suspended just because of this one thing. We were in homeroom class, we didn't have to switch this whole day to watch the speech and stuff. He said, "I hate black people. Why won't they just sit down?" And then he said, "My mama said I can't see this, I don't like black people." He said, "I need to get out of this classroom, my mama said I cannot see this. Hurry up, get me out of this classroom." He had to stand out[side] the door but he still looked through the door to see what everybody was doing. He kept calling people black monkeys and stuff, he made me mad.

While this narrative directly shows an experience that she directly identifies as relating to race, there are other narratives that she gives that are situated at her school that she does not directly associate with race or being African American, but are not exclusive of racial issues.

Everybody thinks I'm quiet. I don't even talk at school for some reason.   Most girls in my school don't really like me actually. My name is on the toilet. It said F Talia. I don't know why. Well it's probably because I have kind of long hair but I never wear it down cause it's so spongy and stuff. I don't have a relaxer or nothing in my hair. Every time I get it straightened it puffs right back up. The first day I had gotten my hair straightened out, my mama said, "Do not let nobody cut your hair." I went to school my hair was stopping right there [*she points to slightly longer then shoulder length*] and then when I came home it stopped right here [*shoulder length*].

 [Usually] I have my hair in a bun and people used to pick on me because of that, they still pick on me after I got my hair straightened out. They said, "Is your hair real?" cause they never seen my hair like this. So I said, "Ok, you got jokes. They said you got a new weave. I said, "Nawww, nawww."

Historically hair and skin color has been a great issue within the Black community. Talia experience is no different. Though she does not mention having an issue with her skin color, it is something that her mother stated that Talia was conscious of; being that she is considered having a dark complexion. While not referencing her own complexion, a single by Beyonce "Put a ring on it" prompted her to ask me, "Why don't you have a ring on your finger? You're pretty, light skinned and have long hair." When later asked about this statement in a one-on-one interview, Talia stated that I'm actually caramel and then she voluntarily stated that she is what

she considered chocolate. She stated that my skin color and hair really didn't matter but rather she was just asking because I seem like I was married because I act real sophiscated and sit properly. It is evident that Talia has clear opinions on what she considers to be "proper" and these opinions are influenced by many things, including but not limited to, language arts class, her mother, and the movie The Princess Diaries.

I'm in Lady's of Carver; they teach you how to eat correctly. We meet every Tuesday and Thursday during school. We ate grapes and strawberries; it was so good. We skipped lunch to eat that and then we had pizza and stuff. This is how you actually supposed to sit; straight with your right knee under your left and then you supposed to eat correctly and you have to talk correctly. Like, "Can I go use the bathroom?" Of course you can use the bathroom. Everybody knows you can use the bathroom. You ain't going to use the bathroom in your pants. May I USE the bathroom.

She does recognize that "proper talking" is a necessity for academic achievement. If you go to college you have to talk proper, like when you go in for your interview. I would be scared to do an interview. It's not really controllable to control [your language]. Like sometimes you get really mad so your language- it's not controlled.

This issue of talking proper is not disassociated from issues of race for Talia. My sister is a very smart little girl and we used to go to this school called Roads [which is predominantly White] and then we moved to a bigger house. My sister went to the first day of school and came back saying I AIN'T DOING THIS [in a loud tone]. She used to talk so proper but she said I ain't doing this cause that elementary school is all Black.

This issue of speaking proper is not just associated with just Black people but rather ghetto people. In another conversation I asked Talia who uses the word ain't and she reinforced this association by stating ghetto people use the word. While Talia's sister used the word ain't, I would argue that the issue was more than the word, but also how she stated I ain't doing this. When she repeated what her sister expressed, she raised her voice and spoke in a loud tone that some people might call attitudinal. In fact, after Talia' sister stated "I ain't doing this," Talia's mother responded, "Stop acting so ghetto." Almost as if she was embodying "ghetto" versus just talking like she was "ghetto".

Though brief, this exchange proved to have an impact on Talia to the point that she felt it relevant to restate the dialogue and place meaning on it. Conversations that happened at home clearly affected the way that Talia thinks and talks about her race. One of the biggest ways that her parents influenced her is through the retelling of their own life experiences.

My daddy said he had a dream that a white man was fittin to kill him. He had preached about that one day too. "I had a dream that a white man would kill me. I had a dream that they would hang me up by a tree." Cause they were in Applebee's and the workers came around saying Black monkey get out of the way Black monkeys, Black monkeys. They didn't know it was a White Applebees. They were calling my mom and dad Black monkeys. They got so scared and that was the first night my Daddy ever got scared of something. [This happened] before I was born cause I never knew of this before. He told me during Black history month.

This story apparently has made a great impact on Talia. Over the course of my research study she has stated this story twice. Once in a one-on-one interview and once during a group meeting, she told the same story. While this story was told to her by her father, she also has

*been told a story that reflected racist traditions by her mother. This narrative is interesting because it stemmed from a question that she posed to me in a group meeting. She asked "*Why do White people go to better colleges?" *Then she followed with:*

Cause my mama said she used to want to come home and kill herself cause those White people would be so mean to her cause she didn't have no clothes because her clothes were handmade. She used to wear the same pair of jeans cause they were an unfortunate family. She didn't have a pencil to write with one day for a quiz and the teacher said, "Ahh, I wish she'll take a bath she stink." My mama said the teacher didn't know how to whisper so she just said it out loud and then my mama had cried behind her desk fittin to kill herself.

*When I asked Talia why did she think this story related to the fact that White people go to better colleges she stated, "*Ok that's why my mama didn't go to college back then. That she just started back now." *It is interesting to note that her mother also told me this same story in our one-o- one interview without me prompting her to tell the story. While she did not attribute this story to her not attending college, it clearly had a great impact on her and her self worth. Talia's mother's sharing of that story occurred in a girls writing group that one of her instructors at the university that she attends created for girls at a local middle school. Her instructor invited students from her undergraduate class to participate within the writing group. Though Talia did not attend the middle school where the writing group was created, her mother thought it would be a good opportunity for her daughter and thus the two of them regularly attended the sessions. The sharing of this narrative stemmed from a writing prompt within this group. It's interesting that Talia's mother stated she would have not chosen to share that story if not a part of that group. She herself acknowledged that the whole experience was buried within*

her, but after sharing the story with the group and particularly hearing her daughter's response of shock and disbelief, felt that it probably would be powerful to share more of her past experiences with her daughter. She especially felt that as someone who has also struggled with low self-esteem and acceptance of her own skin color, to the point where she has bought bleaching cream in the past, that sharing her past experiences might be helpful for her daughter. While Talia's parents have both influenced her conceptualization of Blackness, she has also been influenced by her Aunt Kim. She states that in addition to her mother, she also looks up to her aunt the most. "I spend the night [at her house] and she's just like a big sister to me. She's real young, 27 I think. It doesn't feel right calling her Auntie, so I just call her Auntie just to call her Aunt."

Besides being a role model, Auntie Kim also creates experiences for Talia to make her reflect upon her Blackness. I've known about the Moore's Ford fight since 2007, it's located right up the street. My Auntie tells me about it every year. It's a lynching that happened a long time ago. I went to the reenactment, I go almost every year. They use the same people every year but they do something better each and every year. We meet at Creek Baptist and first we go to the Court House where they picked them up at. It was a [Black] couple of four and they were going up the street and then White Caucasian people had came to the car and they shot the people. One of the ladies was pregnant, they shot the baby out her stomach and drowned the baby in the river. They named the baby Justice after he died. They found the man but he's real old right now. He's still in jail, they got to keep him in jail till he die. I get scared every time I go through that street. Last year when I was there it was kind of sad. He got me scared for a second cause those people might still be loose but most of them are dead. It was like 30 people.

As I engaged in this research study I did not necessarily expect to be educated by my participants on Black history. However, that is exactly what happened. Having heard this story, I did my own research on the case and came to find out that the Moore's Ford fight has great historical significance. The 1946 lynching was of two women, one whom was seven months pregnant, and two men. It was the last documented mass lynching. Though not shot out, as Talia mentioned, the baby was cut from the pregnant lady's belly after she herself was shot and murdered. Unfortunately, Talia was incorrect in stating that someone was arrested for the lynching. Though Harry Truman sent the FBI to investigate the lynching, no one was willing to speak and testify about the horrific lynching and the case was closed. It has been reported that the 20-30 person lynch mob were not wearing any masks and were well known in the community. The case was later reopened but to no avail. To this day there is an eerie silence that is associated with this tragic event that is rooted in fear and old school southern traditions. In spite of this wretched end, this lynching was a catalyst for Harry Truman to make civil rights a priority. While lynching was a customary act of violence at the time, the fact that two women were involved and one of the men was a World War II veteran made it an unusual case.

Jamila

I am a young girl

I wonder why people talk about me

I hear my grandfather talking to me

I see my grandmother's ghost.

I want to play basketball in college.

I am a young girl

I pretend that I'm famous.

I feel loved

I touch my grandparents' hands

I worry that my parents will die because of their conditions

I cry when I think about sad memories

I am a young girl

I understand my mom has thyroids and my dad has high blood pressure.

I say that I will be just like my mom one day.

I dream of being successful in the future.

I try to be nice all the time.

I hope to one day be a good mother.

I am a young girl.

Jamila

Jamila is an energetic, outgoing and lively girl. On a typical day she can be found at basketball practice, playing in an actual game, attending her sister's middle school basketball game, or watching her sister cheer for the boys' basketball team. Both Jamila and her sister, Kelly, are in middle school. Jamila is in the sixth grade and Kelly is in the eighth grade. Though Jamila attended a predominantly White elementary school, she now attends a predominantly Black middle school. This transition of social settings causes much concern and stimulates great conversation between Jamila and her mother.   Jamila's mother is apprehensive about the drama that comes with being in a predominantly Black school. Her mother also mentioned to me that she feels Jamila has gone boy crazy since starting that middle school. Because of this perception, Jamila's mother makes it a point to talk to her girls about withholding from sex until they are married. It is clear from this open line of communication that Jamila has a close relationship to her mother; nevertheless it is still plagued with typical mother-daughter conflict.

Besides having an open line of communication, Jamila's parents show their involvement by co-coaching her county league basketball team. While they normally attend the basketball games of both daughters, on some occasions there are schedule conflicts with both of the girls having games at the same time. When that happens her parents split off. This occurred on one of the days that I interviewed Jamila and her mother. While Kelly and her father were able to catch the end of Jamila's game, Jamila and her mother totally missed Kelly's game and therefore her father recorded her basketball game. When I went to interview Jamila's mother, the basketball game was playing and the family and one of Kelly's teammates were watching the video footage. Even though Jamila's mother stated she could watch the game later so I could go ahead and conduct her interview, I could not help but want to be a part of this family moment. It

truly spoke to the essence of this family. Jamila's mother was cooking dinner for her husband because he works Saturday afternoons and was urging him to go take a nap and rest up before work. Meanwhile, he was engrossed in the tape, shouting play-by-play commentary on what Kelly and her friend needed to do better.   On the other hand, Kelly was being annoyed by her father's over zealousness and complaining about him and his yelling while he was at the game. Finally, she decided to leave and go upstairs to take a shower and change into her cheerleading outfit for the middle school boy's basketball game. Meanwhile, Jamila was sitting at the kitchen table eating hot wings, which is her favorite thing to eat.

The narrative that follows is of Jamila, a very friendly soul with a warm smile. She is fairly physically developed and is confident but not without insecurities. Though slightly rough around the edges, she is well mannered and respectful to adults. And despite not being placed in academic advanced classes, she is quite smart and perceptive.

<div align="center">Look at My Grades, I'm Not Slow</div>

My name is Jamila Williams. I'm 11 years old, I go to Lewis, and I'm in the 6th grade. I would describe myself as a silly, funny, smart, pretty girl. I like to watch TV like some stuff on BET, Disney channel, [and] Nickelodeon like the Game, Sweet Life on Deck, and I Carly. I like rap and gospel. I like to rap or think I can. I think I can rap but I really can't. The music I talk about is stupid, I don't even know what they be saying half the time. I try to look for the lyrics. Sometimes they talk too much about sex and stuff, that's why I say I'm going to listen to my little White folks stuff. Like Justin Bieber and Taylor Swift, I like one song from her, and Miley Cyrus.

I [also] like to play basketball. I'm very energetic so I like to be outside, do stuff where I run. I really don't have a lot of [free] time because in middle school they give you more work. You got to study for these tests and do that project and if it's not this it's that. *Jamila goes on to describe a typical week.* Monday is just Monday, I first eat a snack, I clean up and then I do my little homework and that's really it. I talk to my mom some about the day. I like to talk about school drama that's going on, school work, and things of that nature. I don't really talk to Kelly, but we kind of spend time together. Tuesday normally I have a [basketball] game and Wednesday Kelly has a game. Thursday we kind of rest a little bit. Then Friday Kelly has a game again. Saturday I have a game and then [church] dance practice and stuff like that.   I like dance- it's actually pretty fun. It feels kind of good because you do something to please God and I sing too so that's two things. *Jamila is also an usher in her church.* Then Sunday I go to church, not every Sunday, mostly though. Sometimes my mom won't go or I'll be out of town, [like] sometimes Mississippi. I went to Tennessee last week for my cousin's dinner. But I go [to church] when I can. I really don't go out of town a lot cause weekends I got to do my school work and stuff. That's my normal week.

Jamila has a strong family unit. While she complains about her mother and argues with her sister, she also has great respect for her family.

My sister, we have an off and on thing. Most of the time she acts like she can't stand me and sometimes I can't stand her. Then sometimes we cool. My Daddy, he's cool. My mom, sometimes I just want to say, "Shut up, get out of my face." I say, "Ma, OK, I heard you, just stop, stop, stop talking." But I love my mom though, I love them. I look up to my mom and my

dad. We go to church together, sometimes we go out to eat, and we watch movies together at home. We haven't had family night in a long time.

While Jamila states that her parents are her role models, because of her interest in basketball, she also looks up to Candace Parker.

For basketball I look up to Candace Parker. She's a basketball player and she had a baby. She's like the best player there is ever. I cried cause I got her autograph one day.

Jamila's father took her and her sister to see Candace Parker play while she was a college basketball player for the Tennessee Volunteers. It is no wonder that Jamila also aspires to play college basketball herself.

I plan on going to college and in that I want to be a basketball player. But after that I want to be a teacher; I like kids. I don't want to call them failures, but it's hard to try to get a job if you don't have any college. Plus I need to work on my talking cause my talking is bad. A lot of people [tell me that I need to work on it]. They say, "Girl, what you be saying?" Instead of saying who's there? I say who that is or something like that. Folks call me stupid and stuff.   A lot of people call me stupid- I don't know why. They say, "Girl, you bout stupid, I say look at my grades, I'm not slow. Mostly I had honor rolls for elementary and I got like honor roll now. So it's about pretty much the same. I was two points away from the principal's list. Just two points away, I had an 88 in my English arts.

Though Jamila states that she needs to work on her talking, she does acknowledge that there are some times and places that she does not have to monitor the way she speaks. The other night I was like "Man, I ain't about to do this stuff," and then my mama said, "You mean, you're not about to do this stuff" and I said "You're right." Ain't is not a word.   In certain places and in

certain times [it's alright to use ain't] like when you're texting or when you are with your girlfriends who already know how you talk. It's a different way you act when you're around certain people like college students or if you are trying for a college application or something like that. That's why me and my sister are different cause she acts the same way every time. My mama and daddy think I'm about crazy. That's why my mom said I don't let you go no place cause you know you be acting crazy. I had to calm down in school some, so when I get home I just want to let all that stuff out, like what I wanted to do at school.

Jamila's schooling experience provides an influential social context for the construction of her identity. Most of my friends go to my school. I be all over the 6th grade. At school we just trip out. Everyone knows me. I talk to Black people, White people. Sometimes at break a little group of Black folks just all get together and we just talk about stuff. We just act the fool sometimes, we be dancing and stuff. Sometimes it's like that with White people. But I talk to everybody; I'm not racist.

This notion of being open to having friends of various races is something that is reinforced by Jamila's parents through their interactions and statements. Jamila mentioned that her parents have friends from different racial backgrounds. However, this encouragement for Jamila to embrace other races and specifically, White friends, is purposeful on her mother's part. Jamila notes that her parents, particularly her mother, want her to have more White friends because her mother states that, "White folks don't keep up drama and stuff like that." Out of her top five friends at school, Jamila has one White friend named Madison, one mixed friend, and the rest are Black. She states that her mixed friend is part Black and White.

She's Black and White. I asked her how she was really light skinned cause I knew she was Black. I'm like you always in the sun, you don't get no darker, something wrong. She told me, "I'm mixed." She has a White mom and a Black dad. I said, "Oh, OK, and that's it." I saw a picture of her mom too. Poor thing, she's in jail.

It is interesting that even though Jamila has a friend whose White mother is in jail, Jamila often echoes her mother's belief that White people have less drama. Furthermore, it is worthy to note that while she is able to sympathize for the White mother who is in jail, this same compassion is absent in her discussion of Black people with and without similar backgrounds.

I think Black girls are so much different from White people, their vocabulary, the way they participate in school work and [their] education, and the way they solve situations. White people know how to solve their problems. Black girls, every time something goes wrong, they point their finger, say, "If you have something to say, say it in my face." Then sooner or later they gonna end up fighting. White girls they just don't hear a lot of stuff, like they don't fight. They don't fight over silly stuff. I never saw a White person fight yet. White people are really nice. If I'm trying to act nice, I try to act White. I'm not going to lie, some of them are mean but most of them are nice. Most Black people were raised in the ghetto and you know they get the joning so that's why I act kind of White when I act nice.

According to Jamila, clothing and style also seems to be a way to differentiate between Black and White girls.

If you're Black and are tacky then folks come up to you and [say] "Girl, what you got on?" But if you're White, they don't even be sweating you. So it is kind of different. I guess

Black people expect you to dress differently. White people they say that's you. I'm like, "Why can't ya'll just treat everyone the same?"

Jamila also thinks there is a difference in the way that Black students value education.

Black people at our school, not all of them, but most of them, be like, "Man, forget this." Like the other day, this girl Shanica, she told the teacher, "I hate you" and she was yelling in the hallway. I was by my locker, my locker was right across from her and then she said, "I hate you, I hate you, I don't care, send me back to juvie, I don't care." To me a White person would never do that. White people, at our school, think, "I came here to get an education." The Black people they just come to come. It's like they come and start stuff or they not even studying school. But I'm not like that. That's why folks probably don't like me, like they used to. I do my work cause my mom would beat me down if I ever got a F. Lower than a C she would beat me down.

Even instances that Jamila identifies as moments where she was proud of being Black are not lacking negative discourses about Black students.

On my award ceremony in the 5th grade I felt kind of good cause I got a lot of awards and White people, they didn't get that much. It was a White school, it was still some Black people there, but the population was more White. I had about twelve [awards]. I feel like I kind of represented. It was a lot of smart people there, like so much smarter than me. So I felt like, Oh yeah, Black people we're smart too."

The mere fact that Jamila had to get on honor for her to think that Black people were smart requires one to question how are schools structured and how are educators cultivating positive learning experiences for and interacting with Black students. In Jamila's case the focus

should be placed on the lack of cultivating, positive learning environments. If this was her elementary school experience, it is no wonder why Jamila speaks so negatively about Black students and her view of their perceived disengagement from school. This discourse is further reinforced by racial differences that Jamila sees in her current middle school's gifted pod. Though her middle school is more racially diverse than her elementary school, this diversity is not reflected in her school's gifted classes. She states that the pod is mostly White with a few Black people. When asked to explain the reason for this difference she states "Because like I said last time, White people they take education more seriously." *It seems that the inequality in representation only helps to reinforce her views about her Black peers.*

It was a big transformation for me [going to Lewis, my current middle school] because my old school, Lincoln Park, there was a few Black people. A lot of people say Lewis is a ghetto school. [Lewis is] half Black and half White. There's some that are Mexican and stuff. My mom said, "That's why I don't want you to go there, because I don't want you to hang around these ghetto people." She said, "You'll start to act like that and I don't want you to do that." That's why everybody said that I'm changing because I've been hanging around the wrong group. Folks think I'm ghetto cause I'm loud, but I'm not ghetto. I'm naturally loud. *Jamila goes on to explain what it means to be ghetto.*

It's like the home you come from, you got parents not taking care of you. Like if you came from a bad home, like folks be cussing and fighting all around you, then you are going to do that in the future. They don't carry themselves, you just go to school doing whatever you want, trying to fight everybody and you just talk loud and stuff like that. I do that sometimes, but I just be playing. I don't be looking for no mess, but if you come at me with some mess, I'm

going to give you some words back. Like, "Oh, I heard you said yada yada yada about me and if you got something to say just say that in my face." I'm not going to lie, I use to be like if you came to me I wouldn't say nothing back, but I say it's a new year and I'm not about to have all this crap with folks coming up to me with all this stuff.

The social climate of Jamila's schooling experience has really influenced the way that she thinks and talks about race and racial differences. This influence is not limited to her peers but is also shaped through exchanges with her teachers.

My teacher is not really racist and then again I think oh my gosh she's only getting onto Black people, she's racist. That's the first thing that comes to my mind, I don't know why. See to me, Black folk they act stupid and like they don't want to do nothing. So they [the teachers] don't have to really get on them [White students], it's mostly just for Black people. But sometimes when everybody [is] talking, that's where I be getting mad. I'm like everybody's sitting up here talking and then she's just picking on the Black people in particular. Especially if she gets on me, I be like, "Woman, you tripping."

Though Jamila feels like saying that to her teacher, she does not express that thought because she is rather respectful, and she knows there are consequences for talking to her teacher in such a manner. They'll give me a strike in a minute, three strikes then I got detention. Most teachers like me, so I'm gonna keep it like that, but I think that stuff in my head.
While Jamila often essentializes Blackness, she also situates Blackness within a struggle for racial equality.

To me being Black is like being unique and just being yourself, not having to be all prissy and it's not being ghetto, it's just being you. It's being different than different kinds of races. It's

like you had to fight for all the things you been through and White people just had it handed to them. They ain't had to do anything. Black people worked hard for it. It's not right because I don't know what's the big deal about races these days cause it's like you're the same, you're just like anybody else, but just your skin color is just different. That's why I was wondering like, "Why did Martin Luther King and all of them had to fight for everything?" A lot of people had to stand up for rights. I'm still wondering that. Like why they had to fight for everything and then like every time White people got anything, it's just been handed to them. The civil rights, Black people getting beating, and slavery, that stuff just made me want to cry because it's like how many White folks did they show getting beating on the fields on a hot day. I mean how many White people did they show? None, and that stuff is just not right. They thought they were better than us, that's why they said you're my slave, you're my slave, you're my slave, go in the field and work for me. I don't like slavery. Last year we was studying about slavery and things like that and she showed us videos. Like when they tell me about that I said, "Were there any White slaves or anything? Or any other ones?"

While Jamila gives a harsh account of Black history, she feels that the current circumstances for Black people have come a long way. I think that from the past and like now it's been a huge difference in a good way. You don't have to work as hard because you know it's like they have equal rights now. It's kind of cool to me. I think it's good. Barack Obama he's Black, he's the president. He represented too, because there were no Black presidents ever in the US. I don't care if that boy mixed. I don't care, I was happy because them White people can't say anything now.

Jasmine

I am a basketball player and black girl.

I wonder what I will be when I grow-up.

I hear a dog barking.

I see the purple cloud

I want a charger.

I am a basketball player and black girl.

I pretend I'm driving a car.

I feel people talk about me.

I touch God's hand.

I worry that I might not get an education.

I cry when people die.

I am a basketball player and black girl.

I understand its not easy being a girl.

I love God.

I dream I'm rich and famous.

I try new things.

I hope I become rich.

I am a basketball player and black girl.

Out of all my participants, Jasmine was the quietest during the interview process, and I soon realized that taking a narrative approach to representing and analyzing her would be problematic. While the data collected from her was equally significant because there is power and meaning within one's silence and inability or unwillingness to respond descriptively to a set of questions, her short responses did not provide the traditional thick, nuanced, rich data that qualitative researchers seek. Jasmine often replied with a body gesture, a quick one-word response, or by saying, "I don't know" or some other non-contextual answer. However, as a researcher, it was still important to me to make sure her voice was heard and her story was told. To some degree her silence made it even more important to tell her story and to make sure her voice was not further silenced. The extent to which one is represented in research should not be determined by the participant's ability to step out of her bounds to conform and cater towards the researcher's needs and desires, but rather the researcher should be sensitive to who her participants are and find a way to represent and respect their voices, no matter how silent they may seem. While I am completely not sure of the root of Jasmine's quietness, though some reasons might include her natural shyness, an uneasiness due to age or class differences, low racial saliency (Cross, 1991), or maybe a combination of all of the above, I am sure that her story is worthy to be told and valuable to this research study on African American young adolescent girls. In this spirit, I relied on poetic representation as a vehicle to voice Jasmine's lived experience. In defense of using poetry in educational research Cahnmann (2003) states that "just as the microscope and camera have allowed different ways for us to see what would otherwise be invisible, so too poetry and prose are different mediums that give rise to ways of saying what might not otherwise be expressed (p. 31). In attempt to allow Jasmine's experiences

to be expressed I used her data to construct a poem in the same process that I created the other girl's narratives.

Jasmine

Jasmine is the middle child. She has a brother that is 12 and a sister that is 10, but she also has other siblings from her father. The neighborhood that she lives in is predominantly Black and working class. Though nice, her house is old and humble and is located in a cul-de-sac with a portable basketball hoop in the center that seems to be a gathering place for kids in the neighborhood to play. Jamila and Talia both stated that they enjoy going to Jasmine's house because there are many kids to socialize with outside. Her mother was raised in the same city and Jasmine's grandmother lives within walking distance to her house.

Though Jasmine lives in a predominately Black neighborhood, her elementary and now middle school is majority White. So while most of her out-of-school friends are Black, the majority of her school friends are White. Of her top five friends at school, she stated that two of her friends are Black and the other three are White. Though Jasmine categorized her friends into race in response to me asking, she really did not talk much about her Blackness nor did she tell many stories in which she reflected upon her race or other races. The poem that follows reflects Jasmine's quiet demeanor, love of basketball, and ambiguity about race and life in general.

God Did

11

sixth grade

doctor

helping people when they're hurt or sick

basketball

Phineas and Ferb

Sponge Bob

They're funny and -- they're just funny.

Hannah Montana when I'm bored

Basketball

Um hmm

Church music and R&B

Jordans and Nikes.

Action and sports and mystery

Seventeen [magazine]

[did I mention] Basketball

School

Home

Homework

Play basketball

Church.

Two or three Sundays

It's fun

I don't know

It doesn't have a feeling

it's fun

I'm with my friends

It's for God

My sister

My mom.

She does everything for us,

She don't have one

[A job that is]

She's looking for one right now.

I want to do the same thing like she does for us.

　　Skating

Bowling

He doesn't live with us.

I think he lives with his cousin.

He buys us stuff that we need

Sixth grade

    Help[ing] me become a doctor

        You can't do nothing

            But next year I will

I like reading

                                    Failed my test

                                    Went to summer school

                                    I don't like reading

[But I really do] like reading

I don't have a feeling.

It's just school.

I don't know.

No

No

I don't know.

[I think]

By the color.

    By the way they talk.

        Like they're from the hood.

Some of them

[They think]

 Crazy

   Wild

    Crazy

[I think they think because I know]

Most Black girls like to fight.

Because most of my friends they like to fight.

I don't know that one either.

No.

Shakes head yes

No.

No.

Shrugs shoulders

Nope

It's just a color

I don't know

I need advice

It doesn't matter

It doesn't matter to me

      if I'm

      Black

       Or

      White

Black, White, and Black, and White

[I'm]

African-American

I didn't make my color

God did

CHAPTER FIVE: LOOKING ACROSS THE GIRLS

Coming out of these narratives, it is clear that there are many circulating discourses that are being placed on and picked up by the girls. It is also evident that these discourses do not function in a linear manner from being placed on and thereby being employed by the girls. Rather, discourses interact, compete, shift and contradict each other. Gee (1999) argues that discourses can "split", "melt", "die", and be "hybrids" of other discourses. Thus the ways in which the girls use these discourses to make meaning of their racial identity becomes extremely contextual and complex. In this section, I will work across narratives and other data to discuss some of these complexities. The particular themes that I will discuss, to highlight the complexities of circulating discourses, include

1) Black girls are discussing and contextualizing Blackness in varying contexts

2) Race is largely situated in a Black- White discourse for the girls in the study

3) When limited information is provided in home, school and community settings, participants make meaning from dominant discourses

4) Glimpses of critical thinking about race were occurring with the girls in the study

Before transitioning to discussing these themes, and in light of the lack of research that focuses on racial identity of young adolescents (Gardner-Kitt and Worrell, 2007), it is important to assert that African American young adolescent girls are indeed conceptualizing race. In other words, African American young adolescent girls do see race, are talking about race, are assigning specific meaning along racial lines, and are having significant conversations about race. This conceptualization is sometimes articulated intentionally, as when Jamila asked her

friend why "she was so light skinned," and in other ways it is carried out more hegemonically as in racializing the terms ghetto[2] and smartness.   Apple (2004) states that,

> Hegemony acts to "saturate" our very consciousness, so that the educational, economic and social world we see and interact with, and the commonsense interpretations we put on it, becomes the world *tout court*, the only world. Hence, hegemony refers not to congeries of meanings that reside at an abstract level somewhere at the "roof of our brains." Rather, it refers to an organized assemblage of meanings and practices, the central, effective and dominant system of meanings, values and actions which are *lived*. It needs to be understood on a different level than "mere opinion" or "manipulation." (p. 4)

In other words, the girls often racialiized things in subtle and unconscious ways that are not forced upon them through manipulation. However, since hegemony does operate on this subconscious level these racialized notions become hard for the girls to question and challenge and thus become truth telling. More so, they become part of the lens through which they view and make sense of the world.

Black girls are discussing and contextualizing Blackness in varying contexts

Throughout my conversations and observations, there seem to be three major social contexts that shape the way the girls think and talk about race and particularly about Blackness. These settings include their homes, schools, and communities.   While they are all listed

---

[2] I do understand that the term ghetto is already inherently racilaized because ghettos were where Jewish people were required to live prior to their transportation to concentration camps during World War II. However my use of the word racialized is strictly in terms of Blackness. More so when I say racialized I am discussing how a word that is a noun is now taken up by these girls as an adjective to describe a particular group of people.

separately these three social contexts do not operate individually. Rather the discourses that

come out of each individual context are influenced by other social contexts' emerging
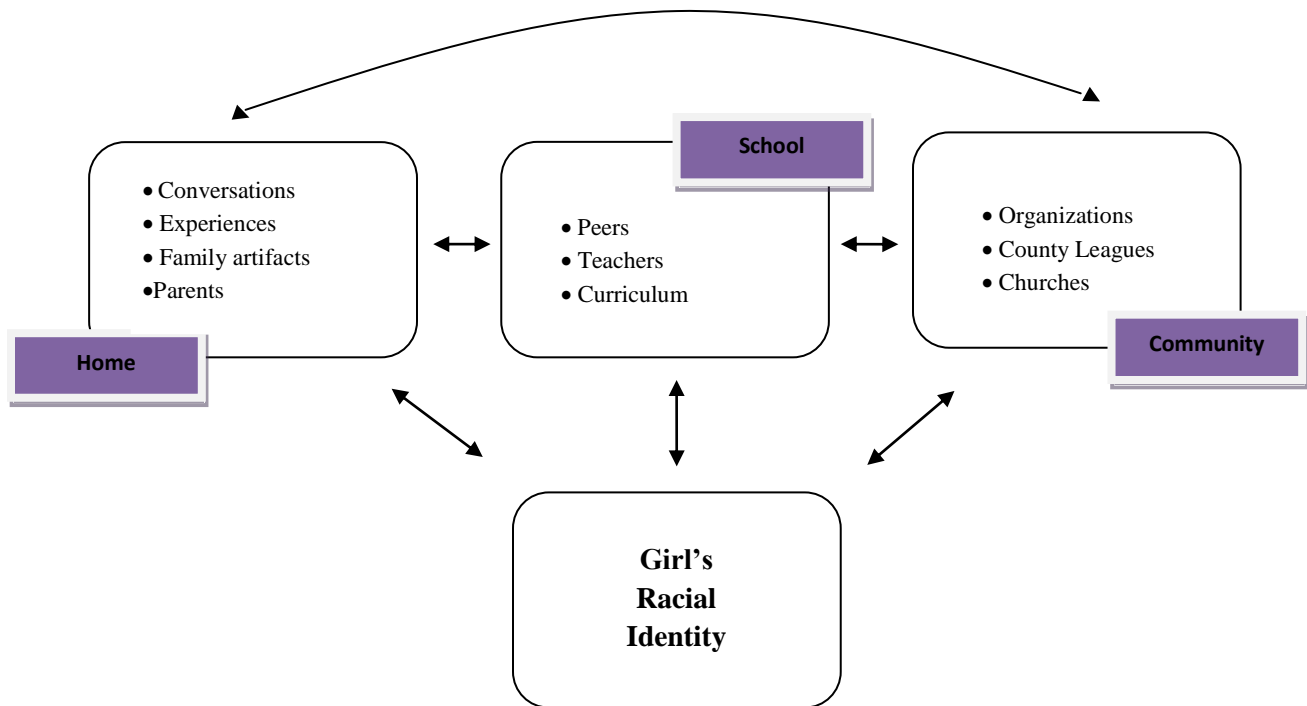
discourses.

Figure 5.1: Racial Identity Model

Borrowing from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, the home, school,

and community all act as the girls' individual microsystems because they all comprise the girls'

immediate environment where they experience and create day-to-day realties. The

interconnectivity between discourses situated in the girls' home, school, and community settings

acts as a mesosystem. However, this interconnectivity goes beyond how family-school-

community partnership is often discussed in the literature (see Epstein, 1996; Rutherford and

Billig, 1995). The notion here of interconnectivity more so speaks to how discourses contradict

and reinforce each other and thus influence how girls make and place meaning on race and particularly Blackness.

Home

The girls' home life is a major influence on how they view and make meaning of their race. This home influence can be divided into how their parents engaged in conversations with their daughters, created experiences for their daughters, and incorporated selected symbolic artifacts into family life. Of the three, the major form of influence happens through conversations between the girls and their parents. These conversations can be characterized as *sharing personal life experiences, silencing personal life experiences, and reactionary talk*. These conversations occurred both intentionally and unintentionally, meaning that there are instances where the girls' parents purposely engaged or didn't engage in conversations to specifically influence the construction of their daughter's racial identity, and in other instances statements were made in passing or an experience was shared, but not by choice. To some degree even the statements made in passing are deliberate for the parents, but they are not meant to be lifelong learning lessons but rather to change their daughters' immediate behaviors.

Conversations

Sharing experiences. Every single mother that I interviewed shared personal stories with me that they felt were influential in shaping how they viewed race. Talia's narrative truly spoke to the power that sharing such stories has on their daughters' views of race. While Talia was the only girl that reiterated a shared story, when I interviewed the girls' mothers, three of the four stated that it was important to share their past stories with their daughters. However, unlike the stories that Talia shared, these other mothers' shared stories were not explicitly about racism.

Rather, they dealt with the hardships that the parents experienced growing up in rough economic connections. They were more so stories of survival. For example, Jamila's mother stated:

I talk to them. I tell them how when I was growing up you know my grandmother had 13 kids and my father's mother raised me, not my mother's mother. It was a tough, it was crazy I guess. I don't know what to say about it. But anyway I didn't feel like I had, I felt like I had to make it because I didn't have anybody. You know what I'm saying? I felt like I don't know, I felt like I didn't have a choice but to make it.

While not stories of explicit racism, if we consider the legacy of the harsh economic conditions, social treatment and political injustice African Americans faced in the Deep South (Williams, 1987), which is where all four of the girl's mothers were raised, it becomes impossible to separate race from such stories of survival.

Silencing experiences. Equally as powerful as sharing experiences with their daughters were the choices mothers made to not share particular experiences with their daughters. While Jamila's, Asha's, and Talia's mothers found value in sharing their own life experiences, it was also clear that Jasmine's mother specifically chose not to share stories in order not to negatively shape her daughter's view of other races, particularly White people. During our interview, she retold stories of things that influenced how she thought about race:

Growing up, your parents teach you different things and different ways to handle situations according to race. My grandparents used to tell me stories about how everything was, you were Black or you were White and Blacks weren't allowed to do a lot of stuff. I know once my granddaddy told me he had went into a bar and him and two other guys were chased out by some

White guys and one of them, they caught him and he had a cut on the side where they stabbed him. When we were younger in Winder I grew up and it was a Klan group that was going around burning crosses in yards and stuff, so I learned about racism. I remember just being scared because I had heard stories about it, but until you actually live it, it was scary.

Though Jasmine's mom identifies this as an important influence on her racial identity construction, when asked if she ever share these stories with Jasmine she stated:

I really don't. I just never had -- I don't want to give her an idea to be like scared -- I mean, or to judge anybody. Because I try to tell them often to not judge somebody. If you like somebody, they can be your friend, whether they're White or Black.

Talia's mother also speaks about the hesitations that she had in sharing her past experiences with racism and low self-esteem due to her being Black.

I guess I really didn't, I just felt like she would experience the hurt from my story I didn't want her to have to feel that. I didn't want her to experience that. And I wanted to shelter her from that, but then as things gradually happened, you know as I find out things are really progressively happening to her, she's experiencing the same thing but in a totally different way. So I was hopefully by me sharing with her it will help her.

Both Talia's and Jasmine's mothers felt the need to silence their stories, however for different reasons. On one hand, Jasmine's mother felt that she did not want to create a negative world view of race and particularly White people. She used silence as a way to expand her daughter's acceptance for others and open up the possibilities for friendships across racial lines. Whereas, Talia's mother used silence as a way to shelter her daughter from hardships and pain

that she has experienced in her life. However, once she realized that her daughter was experiencing some of the same hurts and pains, though within a different context, she realized that the rationale she had for trying to shelter her daughter was the exact reason why she needed to share stories.

In the context of sharing intentional and unintentional stories, it is interesting that this change of perspective for Talia's mom grew out of sharing a story about her past unexpectedly. It was not that she chose to share this story to shape her daughter's views, build up her self esteem, or bond with her daughter. But rather it came out of a writing workshop.

I really don't like to talk about, you know I really don't talk about it that much, but with my college professor we were doing the writing workshop. I read one of our pieces of writing and I never discussed what I wrote with her, and when I read it she was looking at me like, "Oh my God Mama, did you experience it really?" And all the other girls you know it was a very emotional moment for all of us, but she never heard me say those words. You know, say what I said. It sort of shocked her. Cause I guess to her I've always had the perfect life, but that was a mistake I made not letting her know my history. So that workshop with my professor was like you know like an awakening to me. So I knew then I really had to let her know what I had gone through. Not all into detail, but I do let her know that I've not always had it easy and the things that I've gone through. And she seemed to look at me more like a person and she seemed to respect me more. Cause first she was looking at me like this perfect person, where now she sees that I'm not perfect. And that I make mistakes and that I had to hurt and cry just like everybody else.

Talia's mother's shift from being hesitant to share an experience to believing she needs to share her personal life experiences shows the powerful influence that these parents feel that story telling has on their daughters, regardless if the choice is to go forth and share or to silence their personal stories.

Reactionary talk. The dominant way that explicit discourses about Blackness were articulated to the girls from their mothers was through reactionary talk. By this I mean that the girls often mentioned that their mothers directly or indirectly told them statements about race. An example of a mother's use of explicit reactionary talk is seen when Jamila stated that her mother told Jamila that she wanted Jamila to have more White friends because they don't keep up drama. Another example was when Talia's mother told her sister to stop acting ghetto. The reason I am situating it as reactionary talk is because these conversations are often in response to conversations that the girls are having with their parents. The context of Talia's mother telling Talia' sister to stop acting ghetto was in reaction to what she perceived as her daughter being loud and speaking grammatically incorrectly. Jasmine's mother gives a powerful example of reactionary talk:

Sometimes we do have conversations about the difference between Blacks and Whites. Like...well there was an incident at school and she didn't think she was treated right and she said that she thought it was something -- I can't remember what it was, but she said she didn't think that the teacher picked her or something because she was Black, but I did tell her, I mean some people are like that and you just have to go on, but if it's something that you feel like you should stand up for, don't ever be afraid to stand up for yourself or question why something didn't happen or why something did happen.

Selected artifacts of family life-subtle influences. Outside of conversations there were also subtle influences that the girls might not notice or refer to explicitly, but undoubtedly take a part in molding their racial identities. These influences include things such as, household artwork, magazines, and books. An example of these subtle influences was observed when I interviewed Talia. The dining room that I sat in to interview Talia had a picture of the Last Supper. In the picture Jesus and his disciples were all Black. Though Talia might not identify that picture as her parents trying to shape her identity, one can presume that in a home where Christianity is extremely important, to have a Black picture of Jesus and his disciples versus the traditional and more accessible White representation of the Last Supper does affect the way that Blackness is framed in her home.

Though Talia did not bring up this picture in our interview, the influence of racial representation was highlighted in another conversation. In one of the group meetings she declared that Adam was White and Eve was Black. The reason that Talia literally thought that Adam was White and Eve was Black was because in her children's Bible the pictorial representation of Adam was White and pictorial representation of Eve was Black[3]. When I questioned her about knowing their race, she adamantly stated that it is in any children's Bible and I should read it. Asha then challenges her by saying we were not alive then and therefore we do not know the races of Adam and Eve. Not giving up her stance, Talia then responded by saying you can go to the dentist and see it, they're everywhere. Though subtle, this shows how simple things such as representation in paintings on the wall and children's texts can shape the

---

[3] Though I do not take up interrogating this representation of a White Adam and a Black Eve, it is one that needs to be explored. Especially, since many Christians believe that Adam was made in the image of God and Eve was the one responsible for bringing sin into the world. It shows how hegemonic principles can be carried out via representation even in something, seemingly, well intentioned like a multicultural depiction of Biblical characters.

way young adolescents view the world. I also argue that this shows how the intersection of multiple identities and social context also influence how young adolescents view race. As a daughter of a preacher and thus an active church member, Talia was taught that the Bible or the "Good Book", as she calls it, is the truth. Therefore it only made sense for Adam to be White and Eve to be Black since those were their assigned colors in the Bible. However, Asha being a daughter of a Christian mother and Muslim father, who would identify themselves as more spiritual than religious, was not taught to take the Bible literally. In other words, in this instance, Asha's less defined religious identity allowed her to be more critical of Biblical racial representation.

Experiences. Final, the last way that the girls' homes influence their racial identity construction is through parents' decisions to create certain experiences for their daughters. Asha's mother brings up two experiences that she felt were important for Asha to be a part of that were also discussed in Asha's narrative.   One experience is of an out of school program geared towards Black girls and the other was a family trip to the presidential inauguration.

Ms. Haynes, once I found out what the program or what they had to offer, in this year they're offering pretty much self esteem issues of the girls and the opportunity to be around more positive Black females, just exposure to body images, taking care of your body, about colleges, fitness, all the stuff that they've offered so far, and as well as the Cotillion Ball that they have coming up to teach them ballroom dancing and the etiquette type stuff. That's one reason why I wanted her to get involved in the Ms. Haynes and hopefully once she gets the exposure to the sorority type lifestyle, even if she does not choose to be a Gamma, or if she does not choose to pledge, but just that exposure to positive, African-American females. I feel the more positive

people she's around, hopefully it'll rub off and not just be me telling her all the time you have

dentists and lawyers and doctors and all that stuff in the Gammas. She was like ok, I'm around

all these positive females, if they can do it -- not just because Mama did it, but if they can do it, I

can do it, why can't I do it? So just exposure around positive people, be it Black or White, when I

put her in the programs, if it's something that she's going to benefit from, let's do it.

In regard to the presidential inauguration, Asha's mother states:

But I felt that it was just a moment that we would probably never get again. I just wanted her to

be a part of this, just to -- not actually -- because we could have stayed at home and watched it

on TV, but just so she could see all those people coming, just the whole experience. It was

different for me, too, because I have never experienced anything like that in my life. Coming off

the train, but the escalator, taking pictures of -- everybody was friendly, you saw Black, you saw

White, you saw old people just being wheel chaired in there. It was just different and I wanted

her to be a part so when she gets up to the point one day she can say," I was there." We took all

these pictures, we collected newspapers, we got all this stuff laminated, we just got like this box

like a time capsule of all this stuff that happened during that particular time. Even though I

wasn't around when Dr. King was going through his whole thing, I can only experience what I

see in books or what I see on TV, but just the fact of that was one of those moments you can say,

"I was there" or" I remember when," or" I knew exactly how it felt to be there at that" -- even

though she cried the entire time.

Even in regard to this research, three of the parents mentioned to me on separate occasions that

the major reason for allowing their daughters to participate was because they hoped that the

conversation and activities that I planned on doing with their daughters would allow them to develop a greater self concept as a Black girl. Jamila's mother stated to me during an interview,

I appreciate you taking the time out doing this with Jamila. I guess this will make her look at herself as being a black woman. And I hope that it helps her to realize that, I mean, she's black and she's proud, I'm sure. And I know Kelly is as well, but I hope it makes them look at themselves and see that they are beautiful and, you know, help them make good choices.

School

Similarly to their homes, multiple discourses about Blackness and conceptualizations about race occurred in the girls' school settings. Schooling is an important context because schools' discursive practices act to regulate "children's bodily, linguistic, and emotional expression" (Ferguson, 2000, p. 49). Of all the social contexts, the girls talked about their schooling the most. This might be due to the importance that peer relations play in everyday young adolescent girl's lives (Vaughan, Foshee, Ennett, 2010) and the fact that a large portion of their day is spent in school. Also, the school context includes many more actors, such as teachers, staff, peers, and administrators, for the girls to discuss. However, in the context of racial identity construction, the major identifiable influences for the girl's in this study were their peers, teachers and curriculum[4].

---

[4] Since Talia was the only girl to discuss the influence of a school program, I left it out of the list. However, it was something that clearly influenced the ways in which she identified things such as language and behavior as being proper and unladylike. These practices that she learned were reflective of white bourgeois culture (Bell, 2003). Furthermore, the lack of reference to school programs with the other girlds does raise a question about the lack of school-based middle school programs and activities for sixth grade students.

Peers. Regardless if the girls identified a classmate as a friend, enemy, or just an associate, it was clear that the conversations they had with peers and thoughts about peers influenced the way that the girls thought and talked about race. The girls' peers were influential because their peers provided a way for the girls to explore perceived differences and similarities within and particularly between racial groups. These explorations of differences was exemplified in Asha's narrative when she discussed how a Black boy in her school got mad because he was accidentally pushed by a White girl and therefore made Asha wonder why Black people get mad quicker. Or in Jamila's discussion of the Black girl who she felt was disrespectful to her teacher, which was then followed up by stating that, in her opinion, another White student would never do that to a teacher.

What is interesting is that Talia and Jamila, who both attended the same school and thus knew the same students, would often tell multiple stories about one girl to account for attributes that they assigned to Blackness as a whole. When I questioned them on their over usage of one girl during a group discussion, everyone stated that it was because there is always one girl and everyone else followers her. I would argue that the use of one girl to make meaning of Blackness just shows how pervasive dominant discourses can be in constructing meaning. Just as there was one Black girl that fit the stereotypical image of what they perceived "Blackness" to represent, such as being loud, being from bad homes, or being disrespectful, it is easy to presume that there might have been one White female student who fit the same characteristics. In the case of Jamila, it was clear that she did have a White friend whose mother was in jail that could provide a counter narrative to the pervasive view of the bad Black family and the good white family. To some degree, the girls' experiences with peers just reinforced dominant discourses.

Teachers. Second in importance to the girls' discussion of their peers were their conversations about their teachers. Central to their discussion about their teachers was how the girls perceived their teachers to be racist or in Asha's case, how she didn't perceive her teacher to be racist but her Black peers did. Jasmine was the only girl in the study who did not identify her teachers as racist. However, Jasmine's mother did state that on one occasion Jasmine voiced that her teacher was racist. Though I cannot speak to whether or not the girls' teachers were actually racist or not racist, in the context of this study and understanding the girls, I can state that the perception of Asha not believing her teachers were racist could be due to her identity as an advanced student. Similarly, to Jamila and Talia, Asha stated that her friends thought their teachers were racist because their teachers normally would wait until a White student raises his or her hand before picking on someone to answer a question. When I asked if she believed her teachers were racist, Asha stated she didn't because the Black kids say "stupid stuff." Though of the same age, gender, and race, to some extent, Asha's identity as an advanced student allowed her to "other" herself from her peers. I would also argue that Asha does not possess the stereotypical characteristics of a young, Black female, which makes her less likely to get in trouble with teachers, and thus less likely to feel discriminated against by White teachers. In a study exploring teachers' perceptions of Black girls, Lei (2003) found that attributes associated with Black girls at the school such as being loud, argumentative and visible, were viewed as posing a threat to those in power and particularly the male prerogative. Therefore, many of the Black girls who posed those stereotypical characteristics were often punished the most.

Curriculum. The only time that the girls identified learning about race in school was in the context of their fifth grade social studies class, because slavery is a part of the fifth grade

social studies Georgia Performance Standards. In one of the group meetings the girls had a

discussion about what they learned in school about slavery.

Tavon: We learn about that in fifth grade. We don't study that now.

Essence: We don't learn it any more.

Lisa: What did they tell you in school about slavery?

Asha: Slavery was Abraham Lincoln stopped slavery.

Jamila: Yeah, cause I did a report on him. (talking on top of Asha)

Talia: I heard Frederick Douglass stopped that. (talking on top of Asha and Jamila)

Lisa: You heard Frederick Douglass did what? (talking on top of Talia)

Talia: Martin Luther Martin Luther King did that.

Lisa: Wait wait wait. Martin Luther King did what?

Asha: Martin Luther King did not do that. (everybody is talking on top of each other)

Talia: He freeeeeed us. (said it loud and jokingly)

Jamila: (laughing)

Asha: No he didn't.

Jamila: He gave a speech like but Abraham Lincoln.

Talia: He did that.

Jamila: Honey I know what I did. I studied Abraham Lincoln.

Asha: Martin Luther King gave the I Have a Dream speech.

Jamila: A dream speech. (in unison with Asha)

In the context of this study, the major thing that emerged within this discussion of slavery and

the girls' previously presented narratives is that the way in which slavery was taught did not

allow an opportunity for positive racial identity construction. On one hand, Jamila stated that

learning about slavery made her sad, while Talia stated that it did not make her feel any kind of

way.   However, in their narratives both Talia's and Jamila's questions posed about slavery

provided great potential openings for rich conversations about oppression, privilege, economic

trading, the legacy of racism, cultural patterns, representation within text and a host of other topics that could be used to engage students and more so allow them to develop critical thinking skills.

Furthermore, the one teacher that was identified as trying to make a seemingly positive connection to the Black students in class, fell short of doing so, from the Asha's perspective. Recalling Asha's narrative, she stated:

Students last year they don't really care about it [slavery]. They didn't want to listen. She [the teacher] tried to make a connection. I remember one time she said we should be lucky because now we're not working for White people any more so we should actually appreciate the things we have because slaves, they didn't at the time have rights.

Identities are socially and historically situated (Gee, 1999). Just telling students that they should be appreciative of their freedoms does not allow for a positive representation of slaves. It just historically situates slaves as being oppressed. Imagine the room for positive racial identity construction if this teacher would have stated all of the great contributions that slaves made to society in spite of their being enslaved. By doing this, instead of just situating slavery within a legacy of oppression it also creates a legacy of determination, will, intellectual genius, pride and other qualities that might enable the construction of a positive racial identity.

Community

The last social setting, but least discussed by the girls within my study, was their local communities. One of the biggest community influences were community-based organizations and sport leagues. For the context of this discussion, I am using the term community-based organizations and sport leagues broadly. Some things that might be included are county-based

youth sport leagues, local churches, community activist-initiated programs, and community

branches of national organizations such as the Boy's and Girl's club.   In relation to this study,

there were four identifiable influences on the girls: a county-based basketball league, a local

Sorority youth program, a church, and a community-group-sponsored Moore's Ford

reenactment. For this section I will take up the influence of the girls' basketball team. This is

not to undermine the influence of the other community organizations, but rather it is because the

ways in which these organizations influenced the girls' identity construction was taken up and

discussed during their narratives, and the basketball league was not. Furthermore, the basketball

league, and particularly the games happened to be one of the community settings where I

observed and took field notes.

As members of the same county, Talia, Jasmine, and Jamila were all a part of the same

basketball league and team. Much of the girls' time during the course of this study was spent at

basketball games or basketball practice, thus becoming an important socio cultural site for

identity construction. Entering into the girls' basketball team, I felt that I was warped back into

at time of racial segregation. The first thing that stood out was the fact that the population in the

gymnasium was alternated between a section of Black People, followed by a section of White

people, followed by a section of Black people, and concluding with a section of White people.

This immediately made me think of Tatum's (1997) work and I thought maybe all of the Black

kids sit together in the cafeteria because all of the White parents sit together at their basketball

games. Since I got to the game right at tip off, I quickly found the first available seat, which was

in a White section. Though initially shocked by the divide, I soon realized that the two

basketball teams were racially divided as well. The girls in this study's basketball team was all

Black except for one White girl, while the opposing team was mostly White. I concluded that the racial segregation in the gymnasium reflected how the teams were divided and nothing more, because while segregated; there was no observable racial tension between parents.

My interest soon peaked again when Talia's mother, who was even later then I was, came in and sat by me. I jokingly told her that I was integrating this section. She then looked around and initially responded with, "I didn't even realize that." She continued to look and then realized that the father of the one White girls was standing alone on the non bleacher side of the gymnasium and stated, "I guess he does not know where to sit." Understanding that racial segregation of schools is principally due to racial segregation of neighborhoods (Clotfelter, 2004), I was intrigued by the racial divide in the teams, being that the girls are all from the same county and asked Talia's mother how were the teams picked. She stated that the teams are grouped by ability so the teams would be evenly matched. Then she informed me that her daughter originally was on the other team but because Jamila's mother was the coach she was able to get her switched. The reason why it was best for her to be switched was because Talia, Jamila, and Jasmine were pretty much involved in the same extracurricular activities, particularly church activities, and it made it easier transporting the girls from activity to activity. This showed how socialization patterns along racial lines can inhibit systems that might create racial integration.

Overall, the girls' involvement in the basketball league provided a supportive positive network for the girls and their families. After my first game, I attended three more games that were more integrated and probably reflected the fact that the teams themselves were more integrated. However, in spite of this integration there still was more interaction within racial

groups than there was between groups. It was clear that many of the Black parents knew each other and each others' kids and it truly was a family and community bonding experience. Often the girls' aunts, within this study, would attend their basketball games. There were grandparents who attended the games. On one occasion, a grandparent who was watching her granddaughter play wanted a bag of popcorn from the concession stand and asked another kid who she referred to as sweetie to get her a bag of popcorn as she handed the child her money. Also, there seemed to be a couple of local Black men, who didn't appear to have kids, who would come out and watch the basketball league games during the weekend. Being that there were always two games happening at once, a couple of these men would walk in between the two gymnasiums to get the latest updates. In passing to get to the exit there always was communication between these men and people at the game, particularly Black people. This communication ranged from a simple "hey", to a hand shake, or stating "What's going on, I haven't seen you in a while." Even I, the unknown observer, would get an official head nod of recognition. It was a true community environment where kids were switched off between families because the kids were extended family members, attended the same schools, and were a part of the same churches, or other overlapping social networks. This community site provided a network of trust, encouragement, and Black collectiveness that historically has been a part of the Black community (Bair, 2009).

Race is largely situated in a Black- White discourse for the girls in the study

Understanding that discourses are socially and historically situated, it is not surprising that race was often framed within a Black-White discourse, especially considering the fact that this study took place in the South. When I talk about a Black-White discourse, I am referring to the fact that the girls often made meaning of Blackness in relation to Whiteness. This meaning

came in the form of saying that Black people are the same as White people, Black people are

different than White people, and Black people experience racism due to White people. It was

rare for the girls to explain something being uniquely Black without comparing it to or framing

the conversation around Whiteness. Even when Jamila stated to be Black is to be unique, I

would argue that for something to be unique, it still would have to be in relation to something

else. In the case of these girls, the other is always White.

Once again, if we examine socially and historically situated Blackness, it is not hard to

see why this Black-White discourse is occurring.   The girls' parents' stories, especially Talia's

parents, speak to the racial legacy of the south. This legacy is filled with a history of White

domination, Black oppression, racial tensions and hatred. What speaks more to the legacy of

these racial tensions is the fact that Jamila's, Talia's, Asha's, and Jasmine's mothers, being born

in 69, 73, 73, and 77 respectively, were born after the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Furthermore,

Talia's mother, who is the youngest of all the mothers, and therefore one would expect to have

the least experience with racist was the one who told the story about the Ku Klux Klan burning

crosses in yards within her community when she was a kid.

Though important, outside of acknowledging overt and covert racism that created

economic hardships and inequalities between and within racial groups, this legacy can be

simplified to a history of Black and White relationships because they were the two predominant

races of the South. Furthermore, while certain parts of the South are becoming more culturally

diverse, the two dominant racial groups that were reflected in the girls' schools and assumedly

their communities, due to school zoning laws, were White and Black students.   School

demographics thus created a current social context for Black students where the "other" for them

is largely White. Applying Dubois's (1903) double consciousness, it only makes sense that the girls are framing Blackness within a Black-White discourse because to define self is to see yourself in the eyes of the other. As Harrison (2010) argues, Black young adolescents also experience a form of double consciousness.

I would like to note that it was not just the Black girls within my study othering themselves and situating race within a Black-White discourse, but there were other actors who contributed to maintaining this Black-White discourse. In some instances it was reinforced through their parents by the sharing of their stories, sometimes it was their school curriculum through the teaching of Slavery and Black history, and other times it was their peers. Recalling Asha's narrative, this influence of peers in contributing to the Black-White discourse was ever so present when Asha talked about one of the White student's reaction to an Asian student wearing Jordans. It shows that even non-Black and non-White races can be categorized within this Black-White discourse. Furthermore, when Asians, for example, were not categorized in this discourse, they were completely left out of the discussion, unless I specially asked the girls about another minority group. To some degree non-Black and non-White people represented silenced races in the context of the girls' lives. While out of the scope of this dissertation, this raises the question of how the Black-White discourse influences other minorities' racial identity construction.

Cultural Deficit. Interrogating the Black-White discourse further, it is important to note that this discourse is often framed from a cultural deficit perspective. Solorzano and Yosso (2001) state that "the cultural deficit model contends that minority cultural values, as transmitted through the family, are dysfunctional, and therefore cause low educational and occupational

attainment" (p. 3).   The meanings that the girls placed on being Black most often included

negative qualities.   It is not to say that everything that they heard and stated about Black people

was negative, and everything they heard and stated about White people was positive. There were

clearly spaces in which the girls discussed how they felt they were discriminated against by

White people. They also discussed how to be Black was to be unique because of Black people's

history. However, the meanings that the girls placed on Blackness as a collective generally

reflected culturally deficit beliefs.

<div align="center">Table5.1: Black-White Chart</div>

Black	White
Crazy/Wild	Racist
Not nice	Nice
Rap about sex	Don't sing about sex
Drama	No drama
Bad homes/parents	White girl drama
Fight	Don't fight
Cheap	Buy good gifts
Act stupid	Don't like the way Black people dress
Academically disengaged	Don't take schooling seriously but more than AA kids
Smart but think it is stupid to be in gifted classes	Come to school to learn
Black boys like butts	White boys like boobs
Are not in the gifted classes	Are in the gifted classes

Ghetto	Let Black kids speak to White teachers anyway
Loud	Know how to solve their problems
Bad language/not proper	Have better vocabulary
Single mother households	
Currently have equal rights as White people	
Unique	
Had to fight for everything	Had everything handed to them
Where enslaved	Were not slaves
Black is just a color	

Even though the girls largely situated Blackness within a cultural deficit perspective, one of the themes that emerged from this study was that the dominant discourse that they used to describe what it means to be Black is that Black is just a color. It seemed to some degree that the meaning they give to their own racial identity is different from the meaning that they give to racial identity as a collective. In other words, the way that they conceptualized Blackness became separate from the way in which they internalized what Black meant to them. I would argue that this differentiation between the two is necessary for the girls to maintain a positive self concept. If one defines Blackness from a deficit perspective, then to embrace this collective identity would mean to also embrace these same negative beliefs to make meaning of their own identity.

<div align="center">Meaning Making</div>

When limited knowledge is provided in home, school and community settings, participants make meaning from dominant discourses. In other words, when trying to make

sense of a situation, participants can either create new discourses or pull from a discourse that they already know. In the case of the girls within my study, they often made meaning from the discourses that were readily available to them. An example of this was seen in Talia's narrative when she discussed why she stopped attending Jane's School of Dance.

I did go to Jane's School of Dance for like 2 weeks and I learned a lot of dances too. I used to do ballet until they got sarcastic about stuff with color. They didn't give me and this other girl any attention so we just flunked out. We asked for help but they wouldn't give any so we just quit.

Though the meaning that Talia placed on this experience was that she dropped out of dance because the teachers were racist, when I interviewed her mother she provided a different reason for Talia no longer attending that school.

Her heart is really into ballet. She took ballet a while back and you know we got into a financial strain so you know we couldn't afford it any more. But she has a passion to dance. And I said I'm going to talk to my husband about that because when she's out there dancing it is her whole demeanor just I mean …

Without the available information that her parents simply could not afford to pay for dance, she made meaning of her leaving an activity that she enjoyed by stating it was because of the racist teachers. This is not to say that she did not experience some form of racism; however, the meaning that she created for no longer being able to attend ballet was not the reason from her mother's perspective.

The pulling from dominant discourses to make meaning of experiences can be problematic. This was especially the case of the girls within this study because many of the discourses that they pulled from to make meaning were negative, thus often limiting their ability to explore more deeply about a situation. This can be seen when Asha tried to explain why more Black students were not in her advanced classes.

Certain Black students take their stuff seriously and certain ones don't really care because they don't have parents at home to encourage them to do better. There are some really smart ones there, they just don't want to learn cause they think it seems kind of funny to be in the advanced classes. It's kind of stupid to be in advanced classes because your friends are not in that class.

Though slightly reinforcing this discourse of disengaged parenting, Asha's mother also sheds light on some of the complexity that contributes to the tracking of Black students.

The classes that she's in now, friends she had here, are not in her classes. Because in elementary school you're pretty much, whatever your level is, you're all grouped together, but when you're over in the middle school they group you according to your, basically academics. She's in all advanced classes and because, in my opinion, some parents don't push it enough to make sure their kids are in those classes over there, because she had the same problem. She was in them over here, but they tried to put her in regular ed classes over there. So it was a big thing. I even talked to a White parent who said she didn't understand why they didn't have more Black students in the gifted program over there, and they tried to do Asha the same way. I e-mailed, I tried to talk to the principal and finally we got it straightened out, but they wanted to go through this whole process, and I guess once they found out who I was and I knew the process they put her right on in the classes with no problem.

Though not as harsh as saying Black parents are bad, this narrative shows how even someone who is aware of obstacles that lead to the tracking of Black students out of advanced classes can still pick up the dominant discourse of Black parents not being as involved in their children's schooling as possible. It was more than Asha's mother pushing for her to be in the advanced classes that created the change in academic track. But rather it was largely her societal position as a teacher and her social and cultural capital that allowed her the confidence and knowledge about how to be an advocate for her daughter. However, without that understanding, it is easy to see how Asha and the other girls in this study can pick up the discourse of the bad Black parenting, or the disengaged Black student, to make meaning of some of these injustices in the world that they experience. I would also like to point out that the way that these discourses are situated, makes it seem like this lack of parental involvement or academic disengagement is something innate to the parents and students themselves, thus not requiring someone to explore how society is involved in creating and maintaining the status quo.

Before transitioning to the last theme, it is important to note specifically how the intersection of age influences the use of dominant discourses in the meaning-making process. Bakhtin (1981) argues that discourses can be authoritative and this form of discourse "demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it." (p. 342). To some degree, everyone regardless of age, sex, race or any other descriptor, is influenced and uses dominant discourses to make meaning of the world in which they live. To that point, everyone also has the ability to create new discourses to make meaning of their world. This ability to create new discourses often comes from acquiring knowledge and experiencing

new things. However, for young adolescents, their access to knowledge and experiences is often

controlled and bounded, thus, arguably, making young adolescents more likely to utilize

dominant discourse to make meaning of their world. Furthermore, with so many negative

discourses about young African American adolescent girls, it becomes even more important to

interrogate the dominant discourse that influences how young adolescents think about

themselves and the world around them.

Glimpses of critical thinking about race were occurring with the girls in the study

Much of the discussion thus far has centered on how the girls in this study are influenced

by discourses of Blackness and how they use these discourses to make meaning of their

Blackness and the world around them. This next section focuses on moments when girls

disrupted or questioned negative discourses. Sometimes these disruptions were really quick and

in the moment of conversation, becoming what I would like to call an *authentic moment of

disruption*. At other times the disruptions that girls mentioned were things that they articulated

that they were thinking for a while, thus becoming what I would like to call a *premeditated

moment of disruption*.

Authentic moments of disruption were often seen in Asha's conversations. In these

moments she would state an essentialized characteristic of Black young adolescents and then

would quickly realize what she stated was not necessarily true or innate to Black young

adolescents. Some of these statements included her saying that Black girls are loud, but then

following that up with, "Well, everyone is really loud." Or saying that Black girls have a lot of

drama, but then following that with there is also White girl drama at her school. The fact that

Asha was able to name characteristics of Black girls with ease but had to self check her

statements, reinforces how readily available these discourses are and how they subconsciously penetrate one's thinking. While Asha showed signs of authentic moments of disruption, things that Jamila stated often showed premeditated moments of disruption. A premeditated moment is seen when she discussed slavery:

I'm still wondering that. Like why they had to fight for everything and then like every time White people got anything it's just been handed to them. The civil rights, Black people getting beating, and slavery. That stuff just made me want to cry because it's like how many White folks did they show getting beating on the fields on a hot day. I mean how many White people did they show? None and that stuff is just not right. They thought they were better than us; that's why they said you're my slave, you're my slave, you're my slave, go in the field and work for me. I don't like slavery.

This was a powerful and insightful critique of slavery and the legacy of Black struggle and White privilege on Jamila's part. In this narrative, Jamila is critically questioning who was enslaved, why were they enslaved, and issues of White dominance. It was a moving narrative and represents a premeditated moment because slavery is something that she has thought about for a while and is continuing to process.

While framing this discussion of critical consciousness around authentic and premeditated moments of disruption discourses, I would like to state that the girls showed other signs of critical thinking about race and race relations that did not fall into this binary. This was seen in Asha's narrative when she discussed how during the presidential election White people thought they could still control Black people. Or it was seen when Jamila discussed her awareness that it was acceptable to use one form of language in one setting and another form of

language in another setting. What truly showed a glimpse of her critically thinking was that even though Jamila felt that she needed to work on her grammar, she did not think it was an indication of her intelligence. Nor did she allow other people to make her feel it was a sign of her intelligence.

Plus I need to work on my talking cause my talking is bad. A lot of people [tell me that I need to work on it]. They say girl what you be saying? Instead of saying who's there? I say who that is or something like that. Folks call me stupid and stuff.   A lot of people call me stupid- I don't know why. They say girl you bout stupid, I say look at my grades, I'm not slow.

Even Jasmine's confusion about race can be viewed as critical. It was not that she does not have a perception of how other people view Black girls.   In her opinion these views include "crazy" and "wild." Nor was she without her own perceptions on how Black girls and White girls differ, like by their language. Though clearly influenced by discourses of Blackness, she still articulated that she was confused on what it meant to be Black. What is critical about this choice is that inherent in her decision to state that she was not sure what it meant to be Black was a rejection of defining herself with the negative discourses influencing her conception of Blackness.   Even in the midst of all of these things that are stated and that she even takes up herself, she was not willing to define herself in negative terms.

Sometimes these glimpses of critical thinking were not in the context of disrupting discourses but simply in their understanding of the complexity of race. This intuitiveness was seen in a conversation that I had with Jamila. Though not included in her narrative, I asked her when teachers discuss slavery how do they teach it; I gave her the option of teaching it like it is just a subject or trying to make some type of personal connection. She stated:

[They] teach it as a subject cause I think they really wouldn't want to make us mad. "Like so what's she saying?" "Like, oh we should be back in slavery," something like that, cause most people they jump in portions [sic] like that. So I guess they just teach it as a subject.

It is interesting that without me even asking why a teacher would choose one form of pedagogy in addressing slavery in her classroom, she offered it to me in the context of her response. It truly shows Jamila's perceptiveness in understanding the complexity of discussing such sensitive topics. Not only did she have her own views about slavery but she was also able to see how her teacher might be uneasy when having such conversations.

In conclusion, from these examples just discussed, it was clear that the girls often questioned dominant discourses about Blackness and race relations. However, for the most part there was a limit on how far they would push these boundaries. So while the girls were able to realize that an essentialized characteristic of a Black girl was not true or unique to Black girls, such as Black girls are loud, or they were able to question structures of power, as seen by Jamila's critique of Black struggle, they would not further explore the untruthful claims they identified. Rather, they would just move on with the conversation, or stay left within the questioning phase, or more often than not, they would use another dominant discourse to make sense of the previous discourse that was disrupted. Nonetheless, these girls showed that they are conceptualizing and critiquing race and Blackness in complex ways.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In the existing academic literature, discussions of racial identity are largely limited to the study of adults and emerging adults' racial identity construction. Though an important body of literature, it often fails to examine how other socially constructed identities might influence the construction of racial identity. More so, even literature that does offer an intersectionality approach to identity construction often is limited to race, class, and gender identities. While also another important body of literature, these studies frequently leave youth voices and experiences silenced and thus minimizing the complexity in which identity construction occurs in their social world. In order to show this complexity my study explores how young adolescent African Americans are conceptualizing their racial identity and what influences this conception.

Theoretically, this study was guided by constructionist theory (Gergen, 1999) and situated within a non essentialist view of identity. This perspective of identity states that identities are fragmented, always in flux, constantly transforming, strategic, and positional. More so, identities are about "how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves" (Hall, 2008 p. 4). Understanding that identities are largely about representation and situated within discourses my guiding research questions were:

1) What are the larger socio-cultural discourses at play in the construction of African American young adolescent girls' identities?

   a. What funds of knowledge do African American young adolescent girls draw on in the process of constructing their identities?

b. What kinds of activities, in and out of school, do African American young adolescent girls engage in and what is the affect of this engagement in constructing their identities?

2) How do African American young adolescent girls make meaning of their own racial identity?

Four African American sixth grade girls were selected for this study. Methodologically this study was informed by intersectionality theory and narrative inquiry and the methods for data collection included interviews of my participants and their mothers, observations, girls' group activity meetings, and photo elicitation.

<div align="center">Revisiting Intersectionality Theory</div>

To be honest I am still grappling with intersectionality theory as a form of methodology. While I definitely value the need for a lens that explores the intricacy of interwoven identities, my uneasiness lies not in the theory but rather in how to capture the complexity that intersectionality theory requires of the researcher. Taking up the task of unmasking this complexity becomes even thornier when, as a research, I have my own discourses enacting upon me that are socio-historically situated and therefore influence the way that I see and think about race. With this in mind, I will enter this conversation by briefly discussing intersectionality theory in relation to my study, then moving to how I feel that my study contributes to intersectionality theory, and then closing by responding to questions about how does the intersection of identities play out in the social life.

While my study partially focused on how AAYAG make sense of one single social identity, racial identity, I still see this question as being compatible with the intersectionality

framework. My intersectionality perspective allowed and required me to understand that racial identity does not operate within a vacuum that is divorced from other intersecting identities but rather racial identity can only be explored through the interlocking connections of other identities. While I looked at race I discovered that the girls multiple identities such as youth, gender, sexuality, and class all influenced their perceptions of race and the discourses acting upon them.

While the girls never articulated the differences between Black boys and Black girls or rich kids and poor kids, it was clear that the way in which they discussed Blackness was often gendered and classed[5]. This was largely seen in the way that the girls talked about "ghetto" people. The word ghetto was racialized because it was only used in relation to Black people. It was gendered because it only was used in a context to describe girls such as, girls who wore colored weaves or were loud. Finally, it was classed because the girls always described ghetto people as coming from bad homes which has stereotypically been associated with low income Black families (Munn-Joseph, 2006). The girls' description of ghetto shows how the terms in which they defined ghetto were based on the intersection of multiple identities. This intersection of identities became a way to allow the girls to "other" themselves from girls within their own racial group and therefore to some extent allowed them to shelter themselves from accepting negative discourses about Blackness. For example, all of the girls articulated that being ghetto was not a good thing and as previously stated they felt a trait of ghetto girls was being loud. When discussing this Jamila was quick to state that though she was loud she was not ghetto

---

[5] Though the girls did not articulate a difference, Asha's and Jamila's mothers both mentioned that Black boys have it rougher in society than Black girls. In fact, Asha's mother stated that her parenting concerns would have been different if she had a Black son.

because she did not start drama. Understanding that she felt starting drama was also an attribute of girls who came from "bad homes", which within itself is largely connected to perceptions of the intersection of race and class, shows how "othering" herself from an identity that is largely situated in class allowed her to resist accepting the discourse of Black girls being ghetto for making meaning of her own race. This also shows the complexity in which identity construction occurs.

Before transitioning to how I feel my study contributes to intersectionality theory, I would like to make one concluding remark about the previous discussion. Though I discuss how the girls use the intersection of multiple identities to make meaning of discourses about Blackness and how they use their own intersecting identities as a way to resist discourses, I do not want to exit this conversation without acknowledging that these negative discourses about Blackness are socially constructed, problematic and strategic within themselves. Morris (2007) found in his study of middle school students that many teachers felt the need to reform the behaviors of Black girls, such as being loud, due to their perceived challenge to authority. However he argues that research indicates that these same behaviors are often encouraged for middle-class and White students as a way to learn skills that would allow them to successfully attain middle-class and upper-class jobs. In the context of looking at how multiply identities influence the construction of racial identity it is important to not lose sight in interrogating the discourses that are influencing how the girls make meaning of race.

One of the contributions that my study makes to intersectionality theory is by including youth identity into the discussion of intersectionality theory. Most research that takes an intersectionality perspective often focuses on the mantra of race, class, and gender. Hulko

(2009) found that while this trio is often expanded to include sexual orientation, faith, ethnicity, and nationality identities; age is often excluded.   Even within this observation of the exclusion of age, Hulko's main frame of reference was geared towards the absence of older women's experience. It's my belief that youth also represent a unique identity, one that needed to be included when exploring intersecting identities of AAYAG. Similarly to other marginalized groups, youth have often been objectified, their voices silenced, and they have been portrayed as irrational beings who lack the intellectual capacity to make logical decisions. Just as Black women's experience could not be captured solely in antiracist nor feminist discourses, I argue that AAYAG's experience cannot be solely captured through Black feminist discourse. The inclusion of youth identity creates a unique experience for AAYAG that must be included inside of an intersectionality perspective.

Finally, I would like to end with an attempted response to multiple questions that Nash (2008) poses in relation to exploring the challenge and complexity of using intersectionality theory in empirical work. He states

The theory [intersectionality] has not attended to questions like: do black women use their multiple identities to interpret the social world or do they deploy one at a time? What determines which identity is foregrounded in a particular moment, or are both always simultaneously engaged?...Answering questions about the fit between intersectionality and the lived experience of identity requires intersectionality to craft a theory of agency and to grapple with the amount of leeway variously situated subjects have to deploy particular components of their identities in certain contexts. (p. 11)

I would first like to start off by saying that to argue that a person can use a singular identity at any moment, to some degree, essentializes identity which is the same thing in which intersectionality theory is trying to move away from doing. In relation to my study, it is my opinion that the intersection of identities is so complex and interwoven that it is never completely possible to isolate an identity to make meaning of the social world. Furthermore, not only are identities such as race, class, gender, age, and sexuality socially constructed, but they are constructed in a way that confines and binds them to each other. Therefore, even if foregrounding a specific identity at a particular moment, other multiple identities are always still active in that moment.

<div align="center">Middle level education</div>

One of the strengths of middle level education is that it advocates for young adolescents. However, this advocacy becomes problematic for many minority students because the middle school philosophy and concept are grounded within a developmentalist perspective. Revisiting Beane (2005), he argues that that "few middle school advocates seem to understand that by emphasizing development alone, the middle school concept fails to attach itself to any large and compelling social vision that might elevate its sense of purpose, attract more advocates, and help sustain the concept against its critics" (xiv). While agreeing with this statement, I argue that not only does emphasizing development alone hurt the middle school concept within its self, but it also fails to meet the cultural needs of African American young adolescent girls. From this study it is evident that many of the issues that AAYG face are out of the scope of developmental explanations and are largely socially, historically, and culturally situated. Irvine (2003) contends that one of the limitations of research addressing the underachievement of African American

students is its failure to acknowledge the influence of culture in shaping the teaching and learning process. I think this disconnect between schooling norms and cultural norms was best articulated by Jamila when she stated

It's a different way you act when you're around certain people like college students or if you are trying for a college application or something like that. That's why me and my sister are different cause she acts the same way every time. My mama and daddy think I'm about crazy. That's why my mom said I don't let you go no place cause you know you be acting crazy. I had to calm down in school some, so when I get home I just want to let all that stuff out, like what I wanted to do at school.

To clarify, it is not that I am saying that a cultural norm for African American young adolescent girls is to act crazy. It is clear from this study that even though the discourses about Blackness are often essentialized, the way that Blackness actually takes shape in the social life is complex. But rather my use of this excerpt is to focus on Jamila's astuteness in understanding that in order to be successful within schooling; she knows that she cannot be completely herself. While she has this awareness, it is not to say that other African American girls whose cultural norms might differ from school norms possess this awareness. More so, this difference requires one to ask who determines the standards by which normality is defined and who benefits from this definition. Unfortunately, middle level education has not been a venue to discuss these critical questions and to explore cultural aspects of young adolescents in meaningful ways that might allow middle level educators to effectively advocate for all young adolescents and particularly young adolescent African American girls.

Part of this advocacy requires middle level educators to critically explore what do supportive learning environments look like for African American adolescent girls. While I cannot determine if the girls in this study were actually discriminated by their teachers, I do know that the ways in which they talked about their learning environments and interactions with their teachers did not live up to NMSA (2003) standards of creating an "inviting, supportive, and safe environment" (p. 12). On the contrary, my participants often discussed how their voices were silenced in the classroom by being overlooked by their teachers or not having a valid question answered. Though the practice of silencing can seem harmless, Fine and Weis (2003) state that it is important to analyze "whom silencing protects", "the practices by which silencing is institutionalized in contexts of asymmetric power relations", and "how muting students and their communities systematically undermines a project of educational empowerment" (p. 17).

Lastly, to support the needs of young adolescent African American girls, middle level educators need to provide ways for these girls to develop critical thinking skills. These skills are necessary in enabling the girls to critically critique negative discourse that they hear about Blackness. As hook (2003) states, in order to maintain a healthy self-esteem, "black folks" need to be educated for critical consciousness. She goes on to state that because we live in a society where, to varying degrees, everyone is cultivated to fear and hate blackness, the only way to construct a positive identity is to resist such ways of thinking.

<div align="center">Social studies education</div>

While my study did not focus on social studies education, it was a content topic that often came up in the context of the girls' conversations or interviews. The main reason that it found its way into conversations and interviews was because it was the only content subject in which the

girls identified that issues of race were incorporated. I would like to note that the absence of racial or cultural conversations from other disciplines is problematic within itself. Outside of researching African American poets, mathematicians, and scientist there are many ways to integrate conversations of race and ethnicity into other disciplines. In the context of English, a teacher could use a book like *The Skin I'm In* and center a series of meaningful conversations as the students progressed through the book. In relation to math, Zaslavsky (2002) argues that ethnomathematics is a way to explore world cultures. In this context students bridge learning about mathematics with learning to appreciate world cultures in mathematics and thus enabling students to critically critique their society. Finally, in relation to science, there are plenty of environmental justice issues that can be traced to housing patterns which within itself is connected to the intersection of race and class that could be incorporated into science curriculum.

In the context of social studies, outside of the way in which slavery was taught, one of the most problematic issues was the participants' inability to recognize that issues of race and culture are naturally embedded inside their social studies learning.   It seems like the cultural aspects of social studies are not being discussed or they are being discussed but not in a way that allowed the girls to recognize and explore cultural issues. This might be due to the fact that social studies teachers are often reluctant to engage in conversations of race with students (Bolgatz, 2006). In fact, according to Talia all she was currently learning in social studies were maps.   Outside of teachers being hesitant to discuss race another reason behind my participants disconnect might be due to the guiding Georgia Performance Standards for social studies. The guiding themes include historical understandings, geographic understandings, government/civic understandings,

and economic understandings.   With these being the themes it is easy to see how culture might be lost in the discussion. However as the National Council for the Social Studies argues,

> Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity. During the early years of school, the exploration of the concepts of likenesses and differences in school subjects such as language arts, mathematics, science, music, and art makes the study of culture appropriate. Socially, the young learner is beginning to interact with other students, some of whom are like the student and some different; naturally, he or she wants to know more about others. In the middle grades, students begin to explore and ask questions about the nature of culture and specific aspects of culture, such as language and beliefs, and the influence of those aspects on human behavior (NCSS, 1994).

In the context of educating African American young adolescent girls, these explorations provide meaningful opportunities to not only explore dimensions of other cultures but also explore their own culture.

In conclusion, in the context of girls' experience with slavery, social studies teachers need to find ways to create meaningful learning experiences for students that moves away from teaching basic facts but allow students the opportunity to truly question the system of slavery and oppression. In a research study exploring fifth graders experiences learning slavery Bolgatz (2006) found that "in allowing students the opportunity to grapple with controversy, the teacher opened the door to meaningful questions about slavery and freedom, and students demonstrated complex thinking about relations of power in United States history" (p. 259).

Limitations

All research has some form of limitations. One of the major limitations for this study is that I did not have the opportunity to observe the participants in their school settings. All accounts about the girls' schooling were based from information that they or their mothers conveyed throughout the study. While this data did provide insight into their schooling experience, it is presumably that just as the interviews with the girls' mothers contextualized how the girls made meaning of their race, observing the girls' school setting would have provided valuable information in exploring racial identity construction. In addition to making observations in the school setting, interviewing teachers about their pedagogical choices and collecting artifacts such as, textbooks and teachers' lesson plans would have allowed me to examine discourses being placed on the girls that neither they nor their mothers' were able to articulate. Likewise, it would have been valuable to conduct more observations in the girl's various community settings.

Another limitation was that not every girl was able to make it to every group meeting. Working with a group of young adolescents outside of a common setting, such as a school, camp, church or afterschool program proved difficult. Being that all four girls were not bound within one social context, yet alone county, it became hard to arrange meetings around the girls and their parents' schedules. Though I originally tried to set up dates and times, unexpected things like having to babysit or dance practice running overtime would come in the way of meeting up with the girls as much as I would have liked to meet for the study. Outside of the initial meeting there was always one girl missing from the group activity meeting. However, no participant ever missed a meeting twice. While I was always able to make up the activity with

the individual girl, I could not help but to think that the data that I could have collected from having the missing girl take part in the collective conversation would have provided richer data then the individual conversation. This was especially the case with Jasmine, who missed the book club meeting which next to the second individual interview with the girls, provided the most descriptive data. Likewise, it would have made the group conversation stronger as well because there were times that the girls pushed each other's thinking and contradicted each other's responses.

Lastly, one of my limitations centers around the fact that I configured my narratives after all of my data was collected. As in any analysis process, questions arise however I did not have the opportunity to address these questions with the girls.

<div align="center">Future Research</div>

In highlight of my limitations and findings within my dissertation, there are several areas for a future line of research. I believe the following endeavors have the potential to expand teacher educators', practicing educators', pre-service students', the education community at large, and advocates of young adolescents' understandings of working with African American young adolescent girls.

- First it would be beneficial to conduct a yearlong ethnographic study investigating how African American young adolescent girls negotiate various identities in a local school environment. This would allow me to observe actually peer and teacher interactions that I was not accessible to for this study. It would also provide a way to bound research participants. Finally, focusing on multiple identities might allow me to further explore the intersectionality component of identity construct.

- As stated earlier the book club meeting provided very rich data on how the girls made meaning of race. In light of this, I think it would be meaningful and powerful to establish a multi-racial book club as a way to create meaningful conversation about race between multi-racial peers. I think this line of research would prove powerful because it would first provide a potential model of how teachers can construct meaningful conversations that are often hard and uncomfortable to discuss in school. Furthermore, it is evident from this research that these conversations are occurring and influencing the ways in which the girls in this study are constructing their own racial identity. However, there is limited research that focuses solely on race related conversations across youth of various racial backgrounds.

- Finally, the parent piece of my study provided very rich data as well.   In the study many of the mothers discussed past racial event of their upbringing and discussed how that influenced their parenting choices for their daughters. Equally, as important would be to interview the fathers of African America young adolescent girls to see how their own life histories and beliefs about how African American fathers are perceived in society influence their parenting choices for their daughters.   I believe this would advance research because it will provide an opportunity to provide a counter narrative to the dominant discourse about Black fatherhood as being absent.

REFERENCES

Anderson, Elijah. 1996[1899]. Introduction. *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*.

Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Apple, M. (2004). *Ideology and curriculum*. New York: Routledge Falmer.

Atkinson, D. R., Morten, G., & Sue, D. W. (1989). A minority identity development model. In

Dr. Atkinson, G. Morten, & D. W. Sue (Eds), *Counseling American Minorities* (pp. 35-

52). Dubuque, IA: W. C. Brown.

Bair, S. D. (2009). The Struggle for Community and Respectability: Black Women School

Founders and the Politics of Character Education in the Early Twentieth Century. *Theory

and Research in Social Education, 37*(4), 570-599.

Bair, S. D. (2009). The Struggle for Community and Respectability: Black Women School

Founders and the Politics of Character Education in the Early Twentieth Century. *Theory

and Research in Social Education, 37*(4), 570-599.

Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas

Press.

Banks, J. (1991). *Teaching strategies for ethnic studies*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Bauman, Z. (1994). From pilgrim to Tourist - or a short history of identity. In S. Hall & P. D.

Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Bauman, Z. (2008). From pilgrim to Tourist - or a short history of identity. In S. Hall & P. D.

Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Beane, J. A. (2005). Foreword. In E. R. Brown & K. J. Saltman (Eds.), *The critical middle

school reader* (pp. xi-xv). New York: Routledge.

Bederman, G. (2005). Teaching our sons. In E. R. Brown & K. J. Saltman (Eds.), *The critical middle school reader*. New York Routledge.

Bettie, J. (2003). *Women without class: Girls, race, and identity*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Bolgatz, J. (2005). Revolutionary Talk: Elementary Teacher and Students Discuss Race in a Social Studies Class. *Social Studies, 96*, 259-264.

Bronfenbrenner, Urie (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Cahnmann, M. (2003). The Craft, Practice, and Possibility of Poetry in Educational Research. *Educational Researcher, 32*(3), 29-36.

Charmaz, K. (2005). Grounded theory in the 21st century: Applications for advancing social justice studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 507-536). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London: Sage.

Clark-Ibáñez, M. (2007). Inner-city children in sharper focus: Sociology o childhood and photo elicitation interviews. In G. C. Stanczak (Ed.), *Visual research methods: Image, society, and representation* (pp. 167-196). Los Angeles: Sage.

Clark, C. D. (1999). The auto driven interview: A photographic viewfinder into children's experiences. *Visual Sociology, 14*, 39-50.

Clotfelter, C. (2004). *After brown: The rise and retreat of school desegregation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

Collins, P. H. (1990). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Boston: Unwin hyman.

Cote, J. E. (2000). Was Mead wrong about coming of age in Samoa? An analysis of the Mead/Freeman controversy for scholars of adolescence and human development. In G. Adams (Ed.), *Adolescent development: The essential readings* (pp. 302-335). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 139-167.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review, 43*(6), 1241-1279.

Cross, W. E. (1971). The Negro-to-Black conversion experience. *Black World, 20*(9), 13-27.

Cross, W. E. (1991). *Shades of Black: Diversity in African-American identity* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Cross, W. E., & Vandiver, B. J. (2001). Nigrescence theory and measurement: Introducing the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS). In J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki & C. M. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural counseling* (2nd ed., pp. 371-393). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crotty, M. (2003). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. London: Sage Publications.

Du Bois, W. E. B. (1903). *The souls of black folk*. New York: Bantam Classic.

Eccles, J. S., Pintrich, P. R., & Wigfield, A. (1996). Development between the ages of 11 and 25. In D. C. Berliner & R. C. Calfee (Eds.), *Handbook of educational psychology*. New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan.

Eder, D., & Fingerson, L. (2003). Interviewing children and adolescents. In J. A. Holsten & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns* (pp. 33-54). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Erikson, E. H. (1950). *Childhood and society*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company Inc.

Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity and the youth crisis*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company Inc.

Ezzy, D. (2002). *Qualitative analysis: Practice and innovation*. London: Routledge.

Ferguson, A. A. (2000). *Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Fine, G. A., & Mechling, J. (1993). Child saving and children's cultures at century's end. In S. B. Heath & M. W. McLaughlin (Eds.), *Identity & inner-city youth" Beyond ethnicity and gender*. New York: Teachers college press.

Fine, M., & Weis, L. (2003). Silenced Voices and Extraordinary Conversations... Re-Imagining Schools. In. U.S. New York.

Foley, D. (1991). Reconsidering anthropological explanations of ethnic school failure. *Anthropology and Education, 22*(1), 60-86.

Foley, D. (2004). Ogbu's theory of academic disengagement: its evolution and its critics. *Intercultural Education, 15*(4), 385-397.

Foley, D. (2005). Elusive prey: John Ogbu and the search for a grand theory of academic disengagement. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 18*(5), 643-657.

Fordham, S. (2008). Beyond capital high: On dual citizenship and the strange career of "acting white". *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 39*(3), 227-246.

Fordham, S., & Ogbu, J. U. (1986). Black Students', School Success: Coping With the "Burden of 'Acting White'". *Urban Review, 18*(3), 176-206.

Foster, K. M. (2004). Coming to terms: A discussion of John Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory of minority academic achievement. *Intercultural Education, 15*(4), 369-384.

Freeman, D. (1983). *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The making and unmaking of an anthropological myth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Gallatin, J. E. (1975). *Adolescence and individuality: A conceptual approach to adolescent psychology*. New York: Harper & Row.

Gardner-Kitt, D. L., & Worrell, F. C. (2007). Measuring nigrescence attitudes in school-aged adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence, 30*(2), 187-202.

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Gee, J.P. (1996). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in Discourses* (2nd ed.). London: Taylor & Francis.

Gee, J. P. (1999). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method*. London: Routledge.

Gergen, K. J. (1999). *An invitation to social construction*. London: Sage.

Gergen, K. J. (2001a). Constructionism and realism: A necessary collision? In K. J. Gergen (Ed.), *Social construction in context* (pp. 7-24). London: Sage.

Gergen, K. J. (2001b). The place of the psyche in a constructed world. In K. J. Gergen (Ed.), *Social construction in context*. London: Sage.

Gergen, K. J., & Gergen, M. M. (2008). Social constructions in the study of public policy. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Handbook of constructionist research* (pp. 171-188). New York: The Guilford Press.

Gibson, M. A. (2005). Promoting academic engagement among minority youth: implications from John Ogbu Shaker Heights ethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education (QSE), 18*(5), 581-603.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Chicago: Aldine.

Grossberg, L. (1994). Introduction: Bringin' it all back home - Pedagogy and cultural studies. In H. A. Giroux & P. McLaren (Eds.), *Between borders: Pedagogy and the politics of cultural studies*. New York: Routledge.

Grossberg, L. (2008). Identity and cultural studies-Is that all there is? In S. Hall & P. d. Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (2008). The constructionist mosaic. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Handbook of constructionist research* (pp. 3-12). New York: The Guilford Press.

Hall, G. S. (1904). *Adolescence: Its psychology and its relations to physiology, anthropology, sociology, sex, crime, religion and education* (Vol. I). New York: D. Appleton and Company.

Hall, G. S. (1904). *Adolescence: Its psychology and its relations to physiology, anthropology, sociology, sex, crime, religion, and education* (Vol. II). New York: D. Appleton and Company.

Hall, G. S. (1906). *Youth: Its education, regimen, and hygiene*. New York: D. Appleton and Company.

Hall, G. S. (1923). *Life and confessions of a psychologist*. New York: D. Appleton and Company.

Hall, S. (2008). Who needs "identity"? In S. Hall & P. d. Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Hancock, A.-M. (2007). When multiplication doesn't equal quick addition: Examining intersectionality as a research paradigm. *Perspectives on Politics, 5*(1), 63-79.

Harrison, L. (2010). Black Adolescent Identity, Double-Consciousness, and a Socio-Historically Constructed Adolescence. *Developmentalism in early childhood and middle   grades education: Critical conversations on readiness and responsiveness*. K. Lee & M. Vagle (Eds.) New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Helms, J. E. (1984). Toward a theoretical explanation of the effects of race on counseling: A Black and White model. *The Counseling Psychologist, 12*, 153-165.

Helms, J. E. (Ed.). (1990). *Black and White racial identity: Theory, research, and practice*. New York: Greenwood.

Helms, J. E. (1994). Racial identity and career assessment. *Journal of Career Assessment, 2*, 199-209.

Helms, J. E. (1995). An update of Helms's White and people of color racial identity models. In J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki & C. M. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Helms, J. E. (2007). Some Better Practices for Measuring Racial and Ethnic Identity Constructs. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 54*(3), 235-246.

Hibberd, F. J. (2005). *Unfolding social constructionism*. New York: Springer.

Holland, D., Lachicotte, W., Skinner, D., & Cain, C. (1998). *Identity and agency in cultural worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

hooks, b. (1984). *From margin to center*. Boston: South End Press.

Hulko, W. (2009). The time- and context-contingent nature of intersectionality and interlocking oppressions. *Journal of Women and Social Work, 24*(1), 44-55.

Irvine, J. J. (2003). *Educating Teachers for a Diverse Society: Seeing with the Cultural Eye.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Jaffe, M. L. (1998). *Adolescence*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Johnson, B. (2005). *Du Bois on reform: Periodical-based leadership for African Americans* Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.

Kernodle, T. L. (2008). I wish I knew how it would feel to be free: Nina Simone and the redefining of the freedom song of the 1960's. *Journal of the Society for American Music, 2*(3).

Kimmel, D. C., & Weiner, I. B. (1995). *Adolescence: A developmental transition* (2nd ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Kroger, J. (2004). *Identity in adolescence: The balance between self and other* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dream keepers: successful teachers of African American children* (1st ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Lei, J. L. (2003). (Un)Necessary Toughness?: Those "Loud Black Girls" and Those "Quiet Asian Boys.". *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 34*(2), 158-181.

Lesko, N. (1996a). Denaturalizing adolescence: The politics of contemporary representation. *Youth & Society, 28*(2), 139-161.

Lesko, N. (1996b). Past, present, and future conceptions of adolescence. *Educational Theory, 46*(4), 453-473.

Lesko, N. (2001). *Act your age: A cultural construction of adolescence*. New York: Routledge Falmer.

Lynn, M. (2006). Race, Culture, and the Education of African Americans. *Educational Theory, 56*(1), 107-119.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.

Martin, D. B. (2000). *Mathematics success and failure among African-American youth: The roles of sociohistorical context, community forces, school influence, and individual agency*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

McCall, L. (2005). The complexity of intersectionality. *Signs: Journal of Women n Culture and Society, 30*(3), 1771-1800.

Mead, M. (1928). *Coming of age in Samoa*. New York: Morrow Quill Paperbacks.

Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into Practice, 31*(2), 132-141.

Moran, J. P. (2005). The invention of the sexual adolescent. In E. R. Brown & K. J. Saltman (Eds.), *The critical middle school reader*. New York: Routledge.

Morris, E. W. (2007). "Ladies" or "Loudies"?: Perceptions and experiences of black girls in classrooms. *Youth & Society, 38*(4), 490-515.

Munn-Joseph, M. S. (2006). Trouble Don't Set Like Rain: Minority Status and Black Parents' Educational Decisions. *Journal of School Public Relations, 27*(4), 397-419.

Muss, R. E. (1962). *Theories of adolescence*. New York: Random House.

Muss, R. E. (1988). *Theories of adolescence* (5th ed.). New York: Random House.

Nash, J. C. (2008). Re-thinking intersectionality. *Feminist Review* (89), 1-15.

National Council for the Social Studies. (1994). *Expectations of excellence : Curriculum standards for social studies*. Washington, D.C.: National Council for the Social Studies.

NMSA. (2003). This we believe: Successful schools for young adolescents. Ohio: National Middle School Association.

Ogbu, J. U., & Wood, P. W. (2002). Book Review. "Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb: A Study of Academic Disengagement.". *Journal of Education, 183*(2), 85-95.

Ogbu, J. U. (2004). Collective identity and the burden of "acting white" in black history, community, and education. *Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education, 36*(1), 1-35.

Ogbu, J. U. (2008). The history and status of a theoretical debate. In J. U. Ogbu (Ed.), *Minority status, oppositional culture, and schooling* (pp. 3-28). New York: Routledge.

Ogbu, J. U., & Simons, H. D. (1998). Voluntary and involuntary minorities: A cultural-ecological theory of school performance with some implications for education *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 29*(2), 155-188.

Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Phinney, J. S. (2008). Bridging Identities and Disciplines: Advances and Challenges in Understanding Multiple Identities. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development, 2008*(120), 97-109.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. *Qualitative studies in education, 8*(1), 5-32.

Reed, A. L. (1997). *W. E. B. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line* New York: Oxford University Press.

Richardson, L., & Pierre, E. A. S. (2005). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 959-979). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Rutherford, B., & Billig, S. H. (1995). Eight Lessons of Parent, Family, and Community Involvement in the Middle Grades. *Phi Delta Kappan, 77*(1), 64-66,68.

Saltman, K. J. (2005a). The construction of identity. In E. R. Brown & K. J. Saltman (Eds.), *The critical middle school reader* (pp. 237-234). New York: Routledge.

Saltman, K. J. (2005b). The social construction of adolescence. In E. R. Brown & K. J. Saltman (Eds.), *The critical middle school reader*. New York: Routledge.

Samuels, J. (2007). When words are not enough: Eliciting children's experiences of Buddhist monastic life through photographs. In G. C. Stanczak (Ed.), *Visual research methods: Image, society, and representation* (pp. 197-224). Los Angeles: Sage.

Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research:A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* New York: Teachers College Press

Shields, S. (2008). Gender: An intersectionality perspective. *Sex Roles, 59*(5), 301-311.

Skeggs, B. (2001). Feminist ethnography. In P. A. Atkinson, A. J. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland & L. H. Lofland (Eds.), *Handbook of ethnography* (pp. 426-442). New York: Sage.

Spelman, E. V. (1988). *Inessential woman: Problems of exclusion in feminist thought*. Boston: Beacon.

Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2001). From Racial Stereotyping and Deficit Discourse toward a Critical Race Theory in Teacher Education. *Multicultural Education, 9*(1), 2-8.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Tatum, B. D. (1997). *Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria: And other conversations about race*. New York: Basic Books.

Vandiver, B. J. (2001). Psychological Nigrescence Revisited: Introduction and Overview. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development, 29*(3), 165.

Vandiver, B. J., Fhagen-smith, P. E., Cokley, K. O., Cross, W. E., Jr, & Worrell, F. C. (2001). Cross's Nigrescence Model: From Theory to Scale to Theory. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development, 29*(3), 174.

Vaughan, C. A., Foshee, V. A., & Ennett, S. T. (2010). Protective Effects of Maternal and Peer Support on Depressive Symptoms during Adolescence. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 38*(2), 261-272.

Visweswaran, K. (1997). Histories of feminist ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology, 26*, 591-621.

Weinberg, D. (2008). The philosophical foundations of constructionist research. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Handbook of constructionist research* (pp. 13-40). New York: Guilford.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Williams, J. (1987). *Eyes on the prize: America's civil rights years 1954-1965*. New York: Penguin.

Worrell, F. C., Cross, W. E., Jr., & Vandiver, B. J. (2001). Nigrescence theory: Current status and challenges for the future. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 29*(3), 201-213.

Worrell, F. C., Vandiver, B. J., Schaefer, B. A., Cross, W. E., & Fhagen-Smith, P. E. (2006). Generalizing nigrescence profiles: Cluster analyses of cross racial identity scale (CRIS) scores in three independent samples *The Counseling Psychologist, 34*(4), 519-547.

Zaslavsky, C. (2002). Exploring World Cultures in Math Class. *Educational Leadership, 60*(2), 66-69.

APPENDIX A

Research Question Data Source

Research Questions	Data Sources

1. What are the larger socio-cultural discourses at play in the construction of African American young adolescent girl's identities?
    a. What funds of knowledge do African American young adolescent girls draw on in the process of constructing their identities?
 	
    b. What kinds of activities, in and out of school, do African American young adolescent girls engage in and what is the affect of this engagement in constructing their identities?
	• Interviews (girls and mother)
	• Field Notes/ Observations
	• Group meeting

2. How do African American young adolescent girls make meaning of their racial identity?	• Interviews (girls and mother) • Group meeting

APPENDIX B

Girls' First Interview

I will remind the girls the purpose of the research and let them know that these questions that I am asking are to get a better understanding of who they are as a person. There is no right or wrong answer. I will remind them if they do not feel comfortable answering a question they can tell me to pass it and at any point during the interview they can ask me to stop the interview.

Can you tell me your name, age, and your grade?

How would you describe yourself?

What do you want to be when you grow up? Why?

What do you do in your spare time?

What are your favorite television shows? What is so good about this show?

Do you relate to any of the characters? If so, which ones and why?

What is your favorite type of music to listen to?

Who are your favorite music artists?

Do you have a favorite song out right now? Why do you like it?

Do you have a favorite magazine that you like to read? Can you tell me about it?

Do you have a favorite author that you like to read? If yes, what is so good about this author's books?

Can you tell me the typical things you do during the week now that you are out of school?

How does that compare to when you are in school?

What is your favorite out of school activity?

Are you involved in any programs? Like dance, girl scouts, sport teams?

If so, can you tell me about them?

If so, whose idea was it to put you in these programs?

If so, do you like being a part of these programs?

If so, what types of things do you learn in these programs?

How do you think these programs shape who you are as a person?

Describe your friends.

How often do you get to see your friends?

What sorts of things do you like to do with your friends?

What are some of the things you like to talk about with your friends?

Can you talk to me about your family?

What sort of things do you do with your family?

What are some things that you like to talk about with your family?

Describe the neighborhood that you live in?

Do you interact with a lot of other kids in your neighborhood

Who do you look up to most? Why

APPENDIX C

Girls' Second Interview

I am now going to ask you questions that specifically talks about being African American and being a girl. Remember if you do not fill comfortable answering a particular question you do not have to. Also if you would like to stop the interview you can at any time.

Has there ever been a time when you have thought about your race?

If so, can you tell me a time when you have thought about your race?

I want you to think back to our elementary school experience and current school experience. Was race ever discussed in your school by your teachers? If yes in which ways? For example do you have Black history program at school?

In your school, is there a race that most students represent or is there a big mixture of races?

Did the racial mixture look the same in the classes that you were in as the entire school's mixture?

When in school do you hang out with students of various races or do you hang out with one particular group?

How do you determine who you hang out with in school?

Do your non-school friends tend to be of the same race or various races?

Do you ever talk about race related things with your friends? If yes, in what kinds of ways?

Do your parents ever talk about race at home? If so what types of things do they say?

What sorts of things, people, or experiences do you think shapes the way you think about race?

Do the music artists or songs you listen to ever talk about race? If so can you give me examples of the sort of things they say? How does this make you feel? Do you think these things are true?

Do the music artists or songs that you listen to ever talk about girls? If so can you give me examples of the sort of things they say? How does this make you feel? Do you think these things are true

What impact do you think your race has on you?

What impact do you think being a girl has on you?

What does it mean to be African American to you?

If I asked you what does it mean to be an African American girl, do you think that would change your response. If so, how and if not, why not?

Has there ever been a time when you were proud of being black? If yes can you tell me about a time?

Has there ever been a time when you were not proud of being a girl? If yes can you tell me about a time?

Do you know of any stereotypical views about black girls? If yes can you name a few?

How do you think these stereotypical views get out there in the world?

Do you think any of them are true?

In the last interview I asked who did you look up to and why? I want to now ask you are there any role models that you look up to superficially because they are black or a woman?

Does it matter to have a Black role model, a female role model, or a Black female role model?

Do you have any questions for me?

Is there anything else you would like to add that you did not have a chance to ask?

APPENDIX D

Parent Interview

What people, if any, have been most influential in shaping how you view your racial identity?

What type of impact did they make?

What experiences, if any, have been most influential in shaping how you view your racial identity?

What type of impact did they make?

Do you think that your race influences who you are as a person? If so in which ways?

Do you think that race has an impact on who your daughter is as a person? If not why not?

If so in which ways?

What things/experiences/people do you think influence your daughter's racial identity?

In what ways do you think they influence your daughter's racial identity?

(If they name negative influences) Do you feel the need to counter these negative influences? If so why? If so in which ways do you counter these negative influences?

Do you think your daughter's race influences how other people think about your daughter?

Do you think that your daughter's race influences how she thinks about herself?

Do you try to engage your daughter in various activities; school and non school related?

How did you choose what activities you want your daughter to engage in?

Can you tell me a little about what you want your daughter to gain out of these experiences?

Are there any activities that you try to engage your daughter in specifically because she is Black or because she is a girl?

If so, can you tell me a little about your need to create these experiences for your daughter? Also what do you hope she will gain from these experiences?

Do you think that your identity as an African American influences your parenting?

What hopes do you have for your daughter?

What concerns do you have for your daughter?

Do you do strategic things to counter these concerns?

Do you think as a parent of an African American girl that you have different concerns from parents of other racial groups? Why or why not?

If so, in which ways does this influence your parenting?

APPENDIX E

Circles of My Multicultural Self

This activity highlights the multiple dimensions of our identities. It addresses the importance of individuals self-defining their identities and challenging stereotypes.

Place your name in the center circle of the structure below. Write an important aspect of your identity in each of the satellite circles -- an identifier or descriptor that you feel is important in defining you. This can include anything: Asian American, female, mother, athlete, educator, Taoist, scientist, or any descriptor with which you identify.
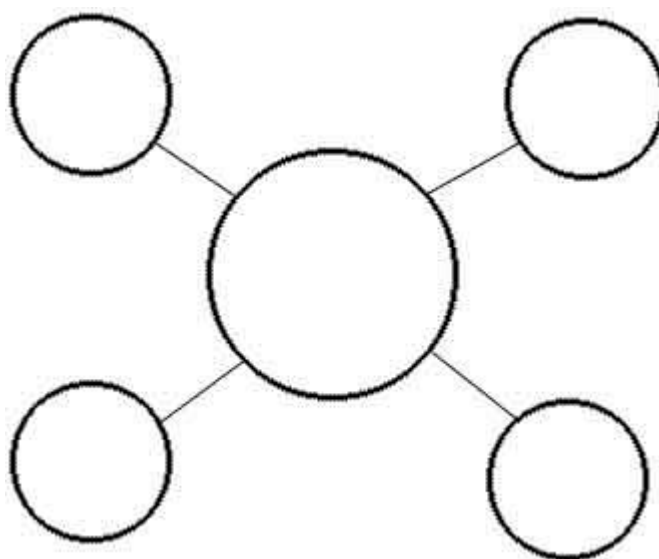
1. Share a story about a time you were especially proud to identify yourself with one of the descriptors you used above.

2. Share a story about a time it was especially painful to be identified with one of your identifiers or descriptors.

3. Name a stereotype associated with one of the groups with which you identify that is not consistent with who you are. Fill in the following sentence:

I am (a/an) _____ but I am NOT (a/an)_____.

(So if one of my identifiers was "Christian," and I thought a stereotype was that all Christians are radical right Republicans, my sentence would be:

I am a Christian, but I am NOT a radical right Republican.

APPENDIX F

I Am Poem Protocol

Write an I Am Poem

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)