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The Image Betrays More than It Reveals: Inter(ior) Views from Women of Color on Identity and Social and Academic Experiences in Higher Education

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***THE IMAGE BETRAYS MORE THAN IT REVEALS*:**

INTER(IOR)VIEWS FROM WOMEN OF COLOR ON IDENTITY AND

SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A Dissertation in Education
with a Concentration in Curriculum Studies

by

Amy J. Hauenstein

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
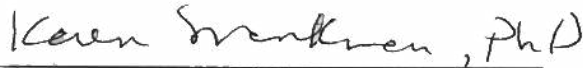of the Requirements
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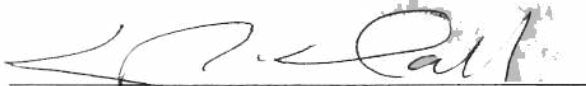
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation proposes a further conceptualization of intersectional identity as a fundamental topic in education reform research. Overlaying the theoretical lenses of Critical Race Theory and intersectionality, a modified narrative inquiry methodology was used to investigate the self-perceived identities among seven women of color, who are alumnae of an all-girls secondary school, in their current context of higher education. Analysis of data from in-depth, open-ended interviews, a focus group interview, and a fictional writing sample illuminated the role of meaning-making capacity in determining the extent to which contextual influences shape self-perceptions of gender, race, and other emergent identities at their intersection. This study explored the meaning-making capacity of its participants and the implicit frameworks of understanding around intersecting identities, revealing epistemic accounts that can help address the relationship between knowledge, power, and political change. Implications for research, education, and practice are discussed.

Keywords: identity construction, education reform, higher education, single-sex schools, undergraduate women of color, democratic education, equity, praxis, Critical Race Theory (CRT), intersectionality, Reconceputalized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (RMMDI), narrative inquiry, white supremacy, anti-racist feminism

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

ix

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Dedication

To my parents, Larry and Carol Hauenstein… for their endless encouragement and for forever being my greatest champions. The mountains I've climbed have been because you always told me I could and caught me every time I've fallen.

To my loving husband, Jason Gocek… for shouldering the load of life, giving me the time to write and for always believing this would get done.

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To my "Kittens"… you were the first to touch my heart and open my eyes to the world you have inherited and you inspired me to believe that we can do better for you and for the women who come after us.

I love you all dearly and couldn't have done this without you.

May we be forever dazzled by "the surprise of what is not yet possible in the histories of the spaces in which we find ourselves" (Rajchman, 1991, p. 163).

Chapter 1: Introduction

"School tells me I got to be buttoned up and businessman-like. My Mama and Grandmama tellin' me I got to take care of the kids and the family. My friends all worried about being sexy and the boys down the street. Just when do I get to do me? Where am *I* in all of this? It's like changing my damn costume a-hundred times a day."
~ Alice, age 17 (May 2012)

Alice's frustration in her quest to find herself reveals the impact that social and academic experiences and the dominant discourses found within them have upon identity construction. As such, I am interested in how the cumulative nature of our social and academic experiences affects identity construction, and in turn, how our implicit knowing impacts the self-authorship of the narrative "Who am I?" (Magolda, 2001). I am curious if our identity narrative advances and/or limits our academic and professional goals and what implications that has for college and career readiness, as well as how our own knowing of our core self might impact how we navigate current social and political structures.

Drawing on research from the fields of education, sociology, social and cultural anthropology and, more specifically, from intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991, 1995; Hartsock, 1989; McCann & Kim, 2002; Ong, 2005), this dissertation analyzes the literature on the intersections of gender, racial, and other emergent identities at their intersection for purposes of understanding the social and academic experiences that impact the self-authorship of the identity narratives of women of color (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000). This dissertation unpacks how the identity (re)construction of seven women of color[1] influences postsecondary educational attainment, career readiness, and womanhood. Emerging discoveries

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[1]This study zeroed in on the social and academic experiences of seven women of color who self-identity as (5) African American women, (1) Dominican woman, and (1) Nigerian woman. At the time of data collection, all were juniors enrolled in four-year postsecondary institutions who graduated from an urban, single-sex secondary school.

elucidate how "the patterning of racial advantage and inequity is structured in domination and its continuation represents a form of tacit intentionality on the part of white powerholders and policy-makers" (Gillborn, 2005, p. 485). I concur with Gillborn (2005) that "it is in this sense that education policy is an *act* of white supremacy" (p. 485) and that through the "illusion of change, [or the strategies of] symbolic inclusion masks how the everyday institutional policies and arrangements that suppress and exclude African Americans as collectivity [have remained] virtually untouched" (Carby, 1992; DuCille, 1994; as cited in Collins, 1996, p. 9).

Contextualizing Intersectional Identity Construction within the Institution of Education

"Who am I?" is an age-old question that philosophers, psychologists, social scientists, and theorists have wrestled with for the greater part of written history. It is a question that is neither confined to Western nor Eastern thought, neither fixed to one historical era nor bound to one gender, race, class, or religion. Our identity is often thought to be uniquely ours, but is it really? Who am I, and who decides who I am? These questions are at the heart of the present research, which takes on a social constructionist position on identity (Weber, 1998) and further challenges the essentialist position by employing a framework of intersectionality, honing in on gender, race, and class because they are inseparable and experienced simultaneously (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Anzaldua, 1999; Crenshaw, 1991; Freedman, 2002; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Lorde, 1984; McCann & Kim, 2002; Mead, 2007; Weber, 1998; Wright, Weekes, & McGlaughlin, 2006).

When we recognize that self-understanding or identity meaning-making is produced through cultural, social, and political discourses, we begin to uncover identity as being multiple, complexly structured, and ever shifting (Abes et al., 2007; Code, 2000; Fraser & Nicholson, 1990; Haraway, 1991; Harding, 1991; Harding & Hintikka, 2003; Hartsock, 1998; Jones &

McEwen, 2000; Wheedon, 1987). It is also important to acknowledge in this discussion that "fixed identity categories are both the basis for oppression and the basis for political power" (Lesko, 2000, p. 163). To disrupt these fixed identity categories, we must ask, "Where do identities live? In individual subjects? In communities? In practices? In relations?" (Talburt, 2000, p. 7), and what are the implications of identity meaning-making then for educators, reformers, and educational institutions?

Understanding my own identity began to change when I started to see the institution of education through the lenses of gender, race, and class. As a feminist[2], a scholar of curriculum studies, and a teacher in single-sex schools, I became even more interested in exploring how the socially situated identity intersections of gender, race, and class operate within educational policy and practices. This led me to think about my education reform efforts and the way I view change—both local and systemic—and has since led me to confront the powerful influence of White supremacy on education policy and practice. By Ansley's (1997) rendering, White supremacy does not

> Allude only to the self-conscious racism of white supremacist hate groups. I refer instead to a political, economic, and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings. (p. 592)

---

[2] *Feminism* is a continually evolving construct (Frieze & McHugh, 1998), but most feminists are "united by a belief that unequal and inferior social status of women is unjust and needs to be changed" (Jaggar, 1983, p. 322).

This shift away from seeing White supremacy as an extreme notion that only hate groups embody toward understanding that it is quietly embedded in the fabric of our nation has also led me to think about my whiteness, privilege, and conscious and unconscious participation in societal inequities (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; hooks, 1989; Leonardo & Manning, 2017) and the way my own identity shapes my personal and professional life (Frankenberg, 1993; Sleeter, 1993).

As a White, middle-class woman, my racial identity has been societally normed, affording me rewards and privileges without my conscious acknowledgement for most of my life. Perhaps more grotesque was my own ignorance and full buy-in to the institution of education as the great liberator. Without question, my practice has rewarded members of historically oppressed racial groups most often when they have enacted and (re)enforced the policies of the dominant society (Sykes, Schneider, & Plank, 2012). In the past, with the purest of intention, my view of success was to assimilate underrepresented minorities to the educational institutions I worked within. It was not until I began my graduate studies and began working in diversely populated schools that I began to confront my own politics of race, gender, and class.

Gloria Anzaldua (1990) wrote:

Racism is a slippery subject, one which evades confrontation, yet one which overshadows every aspect of our lives. And because so few (white) people are directly and honestly talking about it, we… have once again had to take on the task. Making others "uncomfortable" in their Racism is one way of "encouraging" them to take a stand against it. (p. xix)

As I began reading Black feminist works, listening more than talking, and hearing more than judging, I became wildly uncomfortable in my own racism. Vital to this research is my commitment to "engage in a continuous process of reflecting on [my] own assumptions, motives,

and epistemological starting points" (Crawford, 2013, p. 257) and to directly, honestly, and at times uncomfortably, talk about and listen to narratives embedded with racism in an effort to confront systemic inequalities.

Drawing from Antonio Gramsci, Audre Lorde, Eli Clare, Sandra Lee Bartky, and other critical theorists, Alexis Shotwell (2011) wrote in *Knowing Otherwise,*

> Political transformations often highlight new information and understanding involved in an individual's change; they can also create a changed context for one's hopes and assumptions. Thinking about the always socially situated work of striving to create the conditions for complex flourishing requires a thick understanding of these aspects of our experience. (p. x)

Taking a stand against racism and other forms of oppression and contributing to the creation of *conditions for complex flourishing of this socially situated work* is of utmost importance to me.

Statement of the Problem

As our world becomes more complex with the expansion of media and the internet (Atkin, 1985; Gaines, 1998; Hall & Thirston-Brown, 2011; McRobbie, 1991), school (Eder, 1995; Gilligan, 1990; Hall & Thirston-Brown, 2011; Hyde, Fennema, & Lamon, 1990; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Thorne, 1995), advancing language and culture (Connell, 1987; Margolis 1985; Marshall, 1991; Mazzarella & Pecora, 2001; Probyn, 1993; Richardson, 1989), etc., so does our understanding of our identity (Hall & Thirstonrown, 2011; Lubiano, 1992; Nicholson, 1997). As an anti-racist feminist curriculum studies researcher, I see identity formation as a complex social (re)construction that is complicated by social constructs, such as gender, race, and class, that play out both within and outside of schools (Bartky, 1990; Fordham, 1988; Hall & Thirston-Brown, 2011; Leadbeater & Way, 1996; Miller, 1991; Sears, 1996; Ward, 1990; Weis & Fine, 2000). In

Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and their Effects on Children, Rutter, Maughan, Mortimor, Ouston, and Smith (1982) wrote, "For almost a dozen years during a formative period of development children spend almost as much of their waking time at school as they do at home" (p. 1). Both home and school prove to be incredibly impactful contextual influences in the development of self (Abes et al., 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Meeus, Oosterwegel, & Vollebergh, 2002; Rodriguez, Jones, Pang, & Park, 2004; Root, 1998; Tatum, 2004), and we need to pay attention to and understand how the explicit and implicit social messaging of both spaces impacts life and learning.

Most would agree that the triumphant and tragic moments of our lives shape and define who we are and how we see the world, but what about our day-to-day interactions? What about those daily, ephemeral moments that too soon pass into months? What about the places "in the background" (Dreyfus, 1985, p. 231), like home and work and school, where we mostly just exist without much thought given to the influence of the everyday practices, assumptions, habits, and customs? And what if those locations, policies, and practices are laced with and quietly normed by the contemporary manifestation of White supremacy (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000a, 2000b; Essed & Goldberg, 2002; Gillborn, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Parker, 1998)? I hold with Dreyfus (1985) that implicit moments register as indelibly in the construction of identity as do defining moments:

> All of our knowledge, even our attempt to know the background, is always already shaped by what might be called our implicit ontology, an "ontology" which is in our practices as ways of behaving towards things, and people, not in our minds as background assumptions which we happen to be taking for granted. (p. 234)

The literature overwhelmingly shows that the individuals with whom we acquaint ourselves, the families with whom we share meals, the mores of contextual influences, such as the institutions and communities that we inhabit, also greatly shape who we are (Abes et al., 2007; de Beauvoir, 2014; Bourdieu; 1986; Butler, 1990; Cerulo, 1995; Code, 1998; Collins, 1989; Cuádraz & Uttal, 1999; Davies & Harre, 1990; Fivush & Haden, 2003; Fraser, 1989; Gilligan, 1993; Glenn, 1999; Greene, 2007; Haraway, 1991; Harding, 1991; Harding & Hintikka, 2003; Harris, 2015; hooks, 2009; Hurtado, 1989; Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1993; Jensen, 2011; Lather, 1991, 2007; Lorde, 1980; Miller, 1991; Noddings, 1984; Parker, 1978; Proweller, 1998; Salomone, 2003; Saltman & Gabbard, 2003; Shotwell, 2011; Smith, 1990; Ward, 1990; Weis & Fine, 2000; Wing, 1997; Wise, 2010; Yon, 2000; Zinn & Dill, 1994).

Shotwell (2011) proposed that the "implicit is a crucial yet under-interrogated element in knowledge" (p. 5), and I argue that the implicit knowing we learn from contextual influences is a crucial element in identity construction and eminently important as we rethink public school and higher education spaces. In addition to schools, Jones (1997) included contextual influences, such as family background, peer culture, social norms, institutional norms, and stereotypes as important meaning-making structures. According to Shotwell (2011), implicit understanding names our background, our taken-for-granted understanding of being in the world:

> The implicit provides the framework through which it is possible to form propositions and also to evaluate them as true or false and is thus instrumentally important. Implicit understanding is also non-instrumentally important. It not only helps provide the conditions for propositional work, it also occupies its own epistemic and political terrain, and is vital to flourishing. That is, living well involves substantial implicit content,

perhaps unspeakable but central to the felt experience of manifesting dignity, joy, and

contingent freedoms. (p. x-xi)

The implicit becomes an internally generated sense of self, influenced heavily by external

contextual influences and, at times, conflicting with the aspiring sense of self (Abes & Jones,

2004; Kegan, 1982, 1994). If we believe that identities live in individual subjects, in

communities, in practices, and in relations, it is important to then to examine how both the

implicit and explicit backgrounds of students (i.e., social and academic experiences) impact their

identity narrative. I examine how might the narratives be different when young women of color

attend a single-sex school? Additionally, I ask how might those experiences and narratives

translate or evolve into their social and academic experiences in a postsecondary school setting

and beyond?

Understanding identity as both an internally generated sense of self and one impacted by

external expectations is critical to this study. Indeed, on Sadowski's (2006) viewing, a student's

social, personal, and academic failure or success is not contingent upon "external factors, but on

questions of identity" (p. 1). Similarly, Shotwell (2011) asserted that

Racialization, racism, and racial formation involve significant implicit understandings;

the nonpropositional is important to forming the background of "race." Similarly, the

norms through which gender is formed and enforced can be seen as implicit…. Implicit

understanding helps produce our experience of knowing as a coherent one. It might play

an especially crucial role when our understandings are challenged, when they shift or

change. While it is clearly important to social justice work to change laws, how people

speak, and what gets said, such transformations rely on implicit frameworks of

understanding and may also create new constellations of tacit knowing. (p. 5)

An important location of implicit knowing and meaning-making worthy of examining exist within the social and academic experiences of all young women. One way we can understand the identity construction of women of color is to listen to and explore the complex experiences that led to and shaped their understanding of who they are.

Historically, the literature on the academic experiences of women of color[3] has focused on the macro-structural forces in the age of accountability (Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Drakeford, 2015; Fine, 1991; U.S. Department of Education, 2012). More recently, there has been a shift toward uncovering the exploitation and criminalization that further marginalizes students of color (Collins, 1997; Fenning & Rose, 2007; George, 2015; Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Irvine, 1990; James, 1996; Losen, 2011; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Morris, 2015, 2016; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Tuck, 2012). A unique context to this study is that the participants are all graduates of an urban, single-sex, public school. There is very little research focused on young women who attended single-sex schools in the United States. The body of research that does exist on single-sex schools is primarily quantitative and focuses almost exclusively on academic success, vis-à-vis test scores (DeBare, 2004; Salomone, 2003; Stabiner, 2002; Williams, 2016). Moreover, there have been minimal efforts to explore the postsecondary school experiences of women of color who are graduates of urban, single-sex public schools (Morris, 2016). Perhaps most importantly, the partial studies that exist on these topics are all void of one important component: the student experience in these contexts narrated by students themselves.

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[3] A note on terminology: "Women of Color" is a political term used to represent all women of non-White heritage (Makers, n.d.).

Scope and Significance

This dissertation is rooted in my desire to better understand how the social and academic experiences of single-sex schools may or may not influence student identity construction and postsecondary achievement and, in particular, how women's implicit knowing (Shotwell, 2011) and self-authorship (Abes et al., 2007) are impacted by dominant social and political discourses. As a higher education administrator and education researcher, I want to better understand how the institution of education, as well as the environments and policies educators create, often in the name of change and equity and under the "comforting myths that self-avowedly 'democratic' states tell about themselves" (Gillborn, 2005, p. 487), impact student development, achievement, advocacy, truth-telling and knowing, and ultimately political change. Shotwell (2011) held that one way to think about political transformation is epistemological: how and where we gain access to new knowledge about things, new standards for justification, or different practices of knowing. Schools are locations ripe with opportunity for political transformations, but I question whose politics and who those transformations are currently benefiting. This dissertation is an incipient effort to bridge the gap between the social and academic experiences of women of color who have attended single-sex schools and their experiences in higher education by widening the scope of advocacy to better understand their lives through their own voices. These young women of color, after all, deserve our attention and consciousness.

The current discourse regarding the problems in public schools, college readiness, access, completion, and career readiness for students from under-resourced communities is all too often missing the voice of the very individuals experiencing the education policy and practices in question. Perhaps worse, the voices of women of color are often co-opted in a ventriloquist fashion by the neo-manifest destiny voice of racism and sexism and the interrelated, mutually

supporting systems of domination. Harding (1991) and Smith (1987, 1990) have told us that the quality of knowledge changes with the position of the knower, and there are some things knowable only from particular knowledge positions. This study contributes to the growing body of social science research,[4] employing intersectionality in an effort to lift the voices of the participants, *as those who know*, from the position of student-scholar.

Research Question(s) and Statement of Purpose

This dissertation has an advocacy-oriented vision, aimed at intentionally and explicitly combating the paternalistic nature of deficit-model equity research by raising the profile of women of color in postsecondary education. It is decidedly activist with an intention to inform and inspire those who work toward a more democratic public education system in theory and praxis—whether students, scholars, activists, policy makers, or citizens. The participants of this study are undergraduate women of color, all of whom graduated from an urban single-sex public school.

This study's focal question is:

- How do female college students of color describe and make meaning of their identities in the context of postsecondary education?

Additional sub-questions include:

- How do female college students of color make sense of their social and academic experiences in higher education in light of their experience attending a single-sex secondary school?

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[4] For a thorough discussion of the expanding social science research employing intersectionality, please see McCall (2005).

- What is the role of meaning-making capacity in the construction of race and gender identities and their interaction with other dimensions of identity as they may emerge (e.g., class, religion, sexuality, etc.)?

- What role does the meaning-making capacity of female college students of color play in shaping their understanding of their social and academic experiences and identities, past, present, and future?

- How has this study shaped my beliefs about my identities and social and academic experiences? What does this mean for me as an education scholar-reformer?

The purpose of this study was to amplify the voices of young women of color through the theoretical lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995) and the framework of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991, 1995, 1998; McCall, 2005) to fully embrace each individual's experiences necessary to understand and explore the differences within their social and political construction(s) of gender, race, and class (McCann & Kim, 2002) and to assess if or how one's secondary school identities might impact postsecondary education attainment (Abes et al., 2007; Magolda, 2001). As such, this study explored the meaning-making capacity (Abes et al., 2007) and the implicit frameworks (Shotwell, 2011) of understanding around intersecting identities for both the participants and me, and it looked for epistemic accounts that can help address the relationship between knowledge, power, and political change (Butler, 1990, 1991; Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1998; Fraser, 1987; Fraser & Nicholson, 1990; hooks, 1989).

This dissertation is intended to be used for advocacy purposes of rethinking the "institutional possibilities… that open and foreclose in varying contexts" (Butler, 2001, p. 416) within public school spaces and higher education institutions so that our reform efforts might

lead to more supportive, productive, democratic spaces for young women of color, where learners may challenge the dominant realms of institutional identity, self-truth, and knowing. This study also addressed my own role in this system of inequality (Chavez, Guido-DiBrito & Mallory, 2003; Frankenberg, 1993; Shotwell, 2011) and allowed me to work through my own implicit, affective, tacit, and embodied experience of the world—in an effort of solidarity (Shotwell, 2011) and to move the marginalized to the middle by getting out of the way.

Researcher Subjectivity

As a former middle and upper-school humanities teacher, I saw one of the most important aspects of schooling as a central context of identity meaning-making for adolescents. Having taught in single-sex schools (both an all-boys and an all-girls school) and in a coeducational setting—including an all-girls school that went "coed"—I saw what appeared to be marked differences in identity meaning-making within each gendered learning environment. As a residential faculty member at an all-girls boarding school, my relationship with the girls extended beyond the classroom into mentorship, coaching, and, in some cases, into assuming the role of a surrogate parent. Then, I interpreted differences in identity construction in single-sex schools between students of privilege and students in poverty, especially among young women, by listening to their narratives, reading their academic work, and developing meaningful relationships with them. Still, I continued to question how much the gender makeup (solely) of a school/classroom influences the construction of self in adolescents or whether the other identity constructions represented in the classroom (race, class, nationality, etc.) were equally influential. Better understanding these influences may lead to the rethinking of schools as places of possible political and, more specifically, democratic action. Furthermore, as a teacher with a passion for the humanities and liberal arts, I questioned how the trend toward more technical and career-

oriented curriculum (i.e., STEM) might impact and shape the intersecting identities of adolescents and how that context might impact their future. These questions and perceptions have influenced my knowing, and therefore, they are important to disclose (Harding, 1991, 2004).

My own lived experiences have helped me to see the great value in single-sex education, but I am fearful we are missing the mark. From my current social location (Frankenberg, 1993; Harding, 2004) as a White, educated, middle-class, straight, cisgendered, able-bodied, first-generation, college-educated woman, I insist we empathetically see and genuinely listen to the social and academic experiences of *all* women—in particular, women at the margins—because there we will find "possibilities for all educational reform efforts and overall societal transformation" (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010, p. 22). I and other education researchers and practitioners fear our schools and school reform efforts are being developed and implemented from a singular White, patriarchal, cisgendered, capitalist, neoliberal viewpoint (Giroux, 2000, 2004a; Saltman, 2012; Williams, 2016). Our reform efforts must reject this singular view. Haraway (1991) "insist[ed] on a better account of the world... in order to live in it well and in critical, reflexive relation to our own, as well as others, practices of domination and the unequal part of privilege and oppression that make up all positions" (p. 187). This dissertation exemplifies my insistence on that as well.

I am very aware of the sometimes contentious and often unflagging pushback for a White, middle-class woman with a history of teaching in independent schools to undertake research on gender, race, and class in urban, public school settings. However, I refuse to be paralyzed by these differences; it's these very differences that have, for me, pronounced the realities of gender identities and how they intersect with race and social class. White privilege

and liberalism often see themselves in the role to liberate or lead or save or educate whatever group is deemed oppressed by their locations or social context (Frankenberg, 1993). Throughout my research, I have remained conscious of this patronizing approach to reform and have refused to take on such a role with the young women of this study. I took up the charge set forth by Uttal (1990) to "really see the relevancy of the dynamics of race, class and gender in [my] own work or how [I] might benefit from incorporating varied perspectives in [my] own work" (p. 430). By interlocking my position of privilege with the varied perspectives of other women, my intention was to create a more thorough analysis of the dynamics of social inequality.

In part, this dissertation was my allied attempt to contribute to illuminating the reality that has for too long been obscured (Harris, 2015). As Tamara Winfrey Harris (2015) wrote, "it is important that we yell our real experiences above the din of roaring negative propaganda. No one can define Black women but Black women" (p. 12). As such, my intention was to quiet my voice in order to amplify and make space for the voices of those at the center of this "situationally marginalized" population (Harper, 2015): young, urban women of color who are now navigating postsecondary education institutions and who have lived and experienced the day-to-day practices, theoretical underpinnings, and ideological pressures of an urban, all-girls, STEM secondary school.

In my current role as a higher education administrator and as a director of a professional graduate program, I am committed to better understanding the experiences of all students. I am in a position where the decisions I make can influence policy and practice. There is no better way of learning how to support students than hearing from the students themselves. My stance as a feminist, anti-racist activist has been to fight against the patriarchal voice of White supremacy that dominates much of the current conversation on public policy, including public education

policy and practices (Frankenberg, 1993; hooks, 1984, 1994; Wise, 2010). These young women deserve to be heard for themselves as a part of "the long process of making visible the experiences of [all] women" (Rich, 1977, p. xiv) for advocacy purposes within education and ultimately for a more just society.

Conclusion

I stand with Noddings (1984) in "looking for a qualitative, different sort of action" (p. 10), action that isn't subversive but direct and intent on disengaging the ideological crisis and the normative values that have created it at its root. Public school spaces and college campuses are shaped by larger forces and not just by those who are "in" them (Harper, 2015). Often, my privilege has allowed me to remain safely non-political. However, I will no longer sit idle, allowing those most affected to disproportionately shoulder the burden of change. With that said, there is much to learn from the viewpoint of those who are "in" education spaces and who may be victimized by multiple layers of oppression or who might have found a way to navigate the White capitalist system; consequently, their triumphs may help others (Harding, 1991; Smith, 1987; 1990). As Brittany Packnett recently said at the 2017 Students For Ed Reform (SFER) National Conference, "we don't need any more allies; we need accomplices in the fight for justice." I am here as an accomplice.

The grand aim of this research was therefore "to rectify the effects of dominant exclusionary discourses and discriminatory policies and practices" (Kohli & Burbules, 2012, p. 91) for advocacy purposes of rethinking public-school spaces, perhaps as spaces for the rebirth of democracy: "[r]e-envisioning schools as public spheres where students are encouraged to exercise critique as a democratic right that moves students to the center of the educational process" (Proweller, 1998, p. 35). I acknowledge that unearthing the ideology of these particular

public-school contexts will not interrupt them, but it is at least an occasion to illuminate what is not working so that we might (re)view them and (re)generate a more just community. By rendering visible the discursive sites that gendered and raced knowledge have produced and regulated, we can begin to resist and create counter-hegemonic narratives that create entry points for (re)visioned ideologies where we might form "meaningful coalitions, networks and alliances with other groups/organizations… that are also committed to eliminating oppression" (Calliste, Dei, & Aguiar, 2000, p. 167).

Anti-racist feminist discourse and practice requires us to name and to not forget our histories while imagining more just and inclusive conceptions of community (Calliste et al., 2000). As a first-generation doctoral candidate from working-class roots with big dreams my *her-story* is engrained in my core sense of self. Maxine Greene (2007) argued "for a centrality of imagination because of its power to enable persons to reach towards alternatives, to reach beyond; … even the thought of new possibility and the courage to pursue it can open eyes" (p. 2). There is power in imagining and narrating a (re)imagined future and in (re)visiting our past selves in story (McAdams, 1985, 2003; McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2006), and this study seeks to unlock that power.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Understanding the contexts of identity meaning-making is a key cornerstone to comprehending social, political, and educational reform (Cerulo, 1997; Cuádraz & Uttal, 1999; Kegan, 1994; Magolda, 2001; McCann & Kim, 2002). Unpacking identity construction in the context of a school framed by patriarchy, neoliberalism, and privatization and corporatization is critical to comprehending the complexities of the academic and social experiences of young women of color for the purpose of creating and sustaining systems and programs that empower them as they enter and complete postsecondary education. The recent explosion of charter schools has included an expansion of single-sex schools (Williams, 2016), most often in urban areas. With a push for single-sex schools as a means for educational reform, especially in perceived as "failing" urban schools (Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002; Williams, 2016), this is problematic, as there is almost no *current* research as to whether single-sex schooling *in its current form* is beneficial for underserved, under-resourced youth.

As Caplice (1994) stated,

As with any issue that implicates the possibility of invidious gender [or racial] discrimination, this is an emotion-laden subject…. [T]here is desperate need for a generous and open-minded look into the potential benefits of single-sex education, both as a method of educational reform and as an expression of educational diversity. (p. 227)

Historically, single-sex schools have been the stomping grounds for the privileged. Single-sex schools have traditionally been afforded mostly to one group of people—wealthy Whites (DeBare, 2004; Salomone, 2003; Williams, 2016). As such, there has been limited research in the United States on whether single-sex schooling might be beneficial to males and/or females, and the vast majority of research that exists is dated by 20-plus years (Blair & Stanford, 1999;

Mael, Alonso, Gibson, Rogers, & Smith, 2005; Smithers, & Robinson, 2006; Williams, 2016). In a 2005 U.S. Department of Education report, *Single-Sex versus Coeducational Schooling: A Systemic Review,* researchers Mael, Alonso, Gibson, Rogers, and Smith noted that in the over 2,200 published studies on single-sex schooling, fewer than 90 quantitative studies and four qualitative studies met standard criteria for validity. There are even fewer studies exploring how public single-sex schools might impact college access, the postsecondary social and academic experiences of graduates, and/or college completion for women of color.

The existing literature on academic and social experiences for women of color is focused on three prevailing themes: underrepresentation (Astin, 1975, 1982; Clewell & Anderson, 2001; Ellis & Chen, 2013; King, 1999); intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; Morris, 2007); and discriminatory practices, whether overt or covert, including legislation enacted as a response (Allen, 1988; Banks, 2009; DeBare, 2004; Johnson, Brown, Carlone, & Cuevas, 2011; Morris, 2016). The collective research centered upon these themes converges upon the educational and social experiences for women of color as non-normative. The analysis is somewhat simplistic in that it often revolves around demographic data and frequencies and how the experiences of this specific population differ from the experiences of persons not of this population.

This review first evaluates relevant literature on identity construction of young women of color and the power relations within. To provide context for the participants' social and academic experiences, the second section of this chapter explores the history, purpose, and efficacy of single-sex schools. Lastly, this literature review synthesizes how the social and academic experiences of women of color are reflected in the current body of literature.

Identity Construction and the Authoring of Self

As we move through time and experience, we not only construct new identities but also sometimes (re)construct our past identities or make sense of them given our new perspective (McAdams et al., 2006; Shotwell, 2011). According to Dewey (1928/1959), identity construction occurs "not in isolation but by interaction with the conditions which contain and carry subject matter" (p. 122). Schools, then, should be thought of as locations and contexts that greatly affect identity construction (Bourdieu, 1991; Eder, 1995; Gilligan, 1990; Hyde et al., 1990; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Thorne, 1995).

Mead (1956) held that individuals construct identities in relation to the social context in which they reside and, therefore, scholars must examine the social contexts in which certain norms exist as the individuals within may express and reflect social norms or behaviors. "We divide ourselves up in all sorts of different selves with reference to our acquaintances" (Mead, 1956, p. 207). More modern works have refocused attention from interpersonal interactions and individual behaviors to the collective as a space for identity meaning-making (Cerulo, 1997). Cerulo (1997) wrote that "movements of the past three decades have shifted attention to issues of group agency and political action" (p. 386) but also noted that postmodern scholars of identity "urge careful consideration of the complex, often contradictory, nature of collective experience" (p. 392; see also Butler, 1990; Collins, 1991; Flax, 1990; Fuss, 1989; Garber, 1992; Haraway, 1991; hooks, 1984; Minh-ha, 1989; Tierney & Dilley, 1998).

The influence of the collective as it applies to female identity is illustrative for Donna Haraway (1991):

There is nothing about "being" a female that naturally binds women. There is not even such a state as "being" female, itself a highly complex category constituted in contested

sexual scientific discourses and other social practices. Gender, race or class

consciousness is an achievement forced on us by the terrible historical experiences of the

contradictory social realities of patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism. (p. 179)

As such, the authoring of identity is a dynamic, sometimes hostile, ongoing process, and it "can

serve as an entry point for the study of power, status, and agency" (Johnson et al., 2011, p. 339).

Identity construction has been used as a lens by a number of researchers in education who are

concerned about under-representation in various professional fields, in particular STEM fields

(Abes et al., 2007; Aschbacher et al., 2010; Barton, 1998; Brandt, 2008; Brickhouse, Lowery, &

Schultz, 2000; Brickhouse & Potter, 2001; Brown, 2004; Brown, Reveles, & Kelly, 2005;

Carlone, 2003, 2004; Carlone & Johnson, 2007; Gilbert & Yerrick, 2000; Johnson et al., 2011;

Malone & Barabino, 2009; Rahm, 2007; Reveles, Cordova, & Kelly, 2004; Tonso, 2006).

Understanding the complex nature of identity is essential to planning and policy-making for the

possible expansion and implementation of single-sex schooling and for advocacy purposes of

rethinking public-school spaces and higher education institutions as supportive and productive

contexts for all women, including young women of color (Abes & Jones, 2004; Gee, 2000;

Johnson et. al, 2011; Tierney & Dilley, 1998).

Connecting academic access and success to identity construction may help us not only to

understand how to better support young women of color to persist in postsecondary education,

but also to question how systems function to reproduce the status quo and highlight areas of

possibility for challenging it (Abes et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2011). It is important then that we

look at experiences of women of color across lives and contexts (Williams, 2016), beginning in

elementary and secondary school, through college, and in the early stages of careers for the

reason that everyone legitimates their identities differently within the complexities of oppression (Bourdieu, 1991; Collins, 2000).

Power, resistance, and the social construction of identities. Vital to the study of identity construction is analyzing the convergence of power and resistance so as to confront, complicate, or, if possible, to dispel oppression. Power is an integral production of all discourses and "wherever there is power there is resistance" (Foucault, 1977/1990, p. 95). In place of "identity development" (Erikson, 1963), Foucault uses "the concept of subjectivity [asserting] that self-identity, like society and culture, is fractured, multiple, contradictory, contextual, and regulated by social norms" (Zembylas, 2005, p. 937). As a reflection of this perspective, this study used identities and subjectivities (in the plural forms) interchangeably (Mayo, 2000).

One's subjectivities are *historicized,* and they interact through language with the social world (Foucault, 1977), suggesting that we are inexplicably in the process of being and (re)becoming in the search for and resistance to power. Bourdieu (1991) argued that language is also where power is formed and performed based on race, gender, and social-class identity. However, in educational environments positioned as value-neutral or identity-neutral, particularly in relation to gender and race, understanding the negation of power is important and something that Foucault's universalist approach to power neglects to address. To *become is historical* (Foucault, 1977; Ibrahim, 1998), but it should not be essentialized, as it is our embodied subjectivities that are embedded in and performed through distinct language, culture, history, and memory (Dei, 1996; Essed, 1991; Giroux & Simon, 1989; Ibrahim, 1998; Rampton, 1995).

A similar stance is posited in the opening of *The Souls of Black Folks*. DuBois (1903) expressed the need to resist power in order to evolve but hesitated to disrupt the idea of essentialism:

> Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All nevertheless, flutter around it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? They say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, *How does it feel to be a problem?* [emphasis added] I answer seldom a word. (p. 37)

DuBois' (1903) fervent call for resistance to power as a means for new identity recognizes that the Black experience in America is a constant contradiction of *embodying a historicized being while (re)becoming*. This notion of having to "be" two identities at once or hold a double-consciousness is entrenched throughout the racialized history of the United States. DuBois is also an early voice on the framework of gender or feminist "sameness/difference,"[5] with equally careful consideration for the relationship that language plays in identity construction. Dubois rightfully asserted that deeply embedded oppression can also be uncovered through critically analyzing the language of people and about people (Fairclough, 2010).

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[5] A significant body of literature from the social sciences, law, science, and medicine have attended to the question: Are the (most often binary) gender/biological sexes the "same" or "different" (Scott, 1988)?

DuBois (1903) wrote not only about the performative nature of living a double-consciousness but also about living within a society with double-standards. In *The Training of Negroes for Social Power,* DuBois (1903) held that "responsibility without power is a mockery and a farce" (p. 409). He argued that the words of law minus their enforcement are also superficial and should not be viewed or applauded as radical change. He later made a strong social and cultural argument that the intra-race class and gender stratifications and "bald imitation of the white environment" (DuBois, 1995, p. 77) continue to perpetuate shame and embarrassment that diminishes the share of "control of law and police, of economic power, of guiding standards and ideals, of news propaganda" (DuBois, 1995, p. 78). Transformative (re)becoming through education, culture, law, and language must be more than a performative act assimilating the dominant ideology.

The function of the dominant ideology is to coerce compliance under the illusion of choice (Gramsci, 1971). Judith Butler (1991) similarly cautioned us that "power produces what it claims to represent" (p. 2) and that the cultural and political *production of identity* is merely a way of "normalizing categories of oppressive structures" (p. 13). Awad El Karim (1999) expanded on Bourdieu's (1990) assertions about the institution of education by positing that "schools sanction certain identities and accept their linguistic norm by doing nothing more than assuming them to be the norm; we as teachers should remember that these identities are raced, classed, sexualized, and gendered" (pp. 366-377). By defining what a student is or should be, we are limiting identities and forcing conformity most often through the structures, programs, and policies so regularly positioned as inviting and embracing diversity (Awad El Karim, 1999).

Given the plurality of oppressive structures within society and schools, identities should be considered a heterogeneous construct. Seidman (1996) described identities as composites of

myriad sociocultural labels and/or practices but suggested that the notion of identity can be constituted both through and within discursive practices and power relations. These power relations may be a combination of home and community-based discourse intersecting with school-based discourse (Marcia, 1980); this blending of discourses may (re)create, (re)produce, and/or limit identity meaning-making for young women of color (Epstein & Straub, 1991).

Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) described identity as an "ethnography of personhood" and suggested that people act "as social producers and as social products" (p. 42) through an ongoing process with which identity forms and develops. Johnson, Brown, Carlone, and Cuevas (2011) employed a fluid, process-oriented approach to the concept of identity to highlight resistance to subordinate location(s); they term this approach as "identity as the authoring of a self within a context" (p. 344). Authoring involves identity-related performances of self for others (Johnson et al., 2011). Sharing the notion of the social construction of identity making, remaking, and performing is paramount to this study.

The location of gender identity construction. As all of the participants in this study are women of color who identify as female, the identities they authored are influenced by gender identity construction. As such, gender identity is central to this study and takes to heart what Judith Butler (1990) asked us to consider, namely that

> gender is the discursive/cultural means by which "sexed nature" or "a natural sex" is produced and is established as "*prediscursive*," or prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts by arguing that "sex itself is an already gendered category." (p. 10)

Because of this inscribed determination, gender is an even more complex cultural (re)construction that comes equipped with its own "determined and fixed… biology-is-destiny formulation" (Butler, 1990, p. 11).

This understanding of gender is a heteronormative stabilizing mechanism. If male equals masculine and female equals feminine, gender is attached as well as an idealized and compulsory heterosexuality. As Butler (1990) pointed out,

> The construction of coherence conceals the gender discontinuities that run rampant within heterosexual, bisexual, and gay and lesbian contexts in which gender does not necessarily follow from sex, and desire, or sexuality generally, does not seem to follow from gender—indeed, where none of these dimensions of significant corporeality express or reflect one another. (p. 185)

The idealized words, acts, gestures and desires, according to Butler (1990), are merely superficial *performances* made to feel internal by interwoven discursive practices. In essence, our gender identity is an impersonation of our prediscursive gendered sex. This is a significant distinction because if gender is performative and expressive,

> then there is no pre-existing identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction. (Butler, 1990, p. 192)

Illustrating Butler's perspective that gender is exclusively performative, Bronwyn Davies (1989) posited that imbibing

> the discursive practices of their society, children learn that they must be socially identifiable as [either male or female]. Positioning oneself as male or female is done

through discursive practices and through the subject positionings which are available

through those (linguistic) practices. (pp. 1-2)

Central then to this performative function is that language can construct multiple identities

(hooks, 1994) in multiple contexts (Collins, 1990; hooks, 1989; Mirza, 1992).

Black Feminist scholars have drawn attention to the language and discourse in identity

and feminist scholarship as well as within individual subjects as a location of resistance to power

(Anzaldua, 1990; Collins, 1990; hooks, 1989; Hull, Smith, & Scott, 1983; Lorde, 1984). James

(2001) and Yon (2000) concurred with Gosine's (2002) assertion:

The reality [is] that racialized, gendered, heterosexist, and ageist arrangements of

knowledge and power that prevail within the broader society influence the production of

multifaceted subjectivities. At the same time, because of their agency, the people who are

objectified by such arrangements of knowledge and power continually test, push, and

redraw the boundaries of such hegemonic discourses. (p. 87)

With great intention, this dissertation more generally and this review in particular are grounded

in inclusive discourse, ever mindful of the participants' multifaceted subjectivities, "social

perspectives… and historic moments" (Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1993, p. 113).

Another prevalent theme of the literature from the Black Feminist perspective holds that

gender identity also emerges from exclusionary processes within social and cultural experiences,

including within the discourses of White feminism (Callander & Wright, 2000; Collins, 1990;

Crenshaw, 1991; Gay & Tate, 1994; hooks, 1989; Lorde, 1984; Morris, 2015, 2016) and cannot

be separated from the complex ways in which gender and race intersect (Collins, 2009;

Crenshaw, 1991; McCall, 2005; Wright et al., 2006). Pat Parker (1978) elucidated the notion of

exclusionary processes regarding White feminists (and Black Feminists who were unwilling to

recognize sexuality differences) with a line in her poem "Have You Ever Tried to Hide":

"SISTER! your foot's smaller / but it's still on my neck."

The location and intersection of racialized-gender identity. Through the lens of intersectionality, race and gender cannot and should not be separated. Joy James (1996) alerted us of another potential distortion: not using a constructivist approach. She stated that "projecting identity beyond race without first dismantling racist structures suggests that one has managed to stand outside of race as a social construction, that is, to stand outside of society" (James, 1996, p. 199). In the same vein, James wrote that racism is endemic and is so heavily embedded in U.S. history and U.S capitalist hegemony that it cannot and should not be studied in isolation (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Omi & Winant, 1994; Tate, 1997).

Racialized-gender identities also intersect in non-linear ways with other social constructs, such as class and sexuality, and continue to impact one's self-authorship and social and cultural location in society (Abes et al., 2007). As Ashly Suzanne Patterson and Susan Archer Mann (2015) argued,

> The values of feminist theory to Black women is diminished because it evolves from a white racial context that is seldom acknowledged. Not only are women of color in fact overlooked, but their exclusion is reinforced when *white* women speak for and as *women.* The authoritative universal voice—usually white male subjectivity masquerading as non-racial, non-gendered objectivity—is merely transferred to those who, but for gender, share many of the same cultural, economic and social characteristics. When feminist theory attempts to describe women's experiences through analyzing patriarchy, sexuality, or separate-spheres ideology, it often overlooks the role of race. Feminists thus ignore how their own race functions to mitigate some aspects of sexism and, moreover, how it

often privileges them over and contributes to the domination of other women. Consequently, feminist theory remains *white,* and its potential to broaden and deepen its analysis by addressing non-privileged women remains unrealized. (p. 269)

Many women of color who were scholars in the 1980s and 1990s questioned feminist scholarship with regard to whether gender could solely serve as a category of analysis for understanding women's subordination (Cole, 1986; Cuádraz & Uttal, 1999; Davis, 1981; Dill, 1983; Giddings, 1984; hooks, 1984; Lorde, 1984, 1988; Moraga & Anzaldua, 1981; Segura, 1984; Smith & Stewart, 1983; Woo, 1985). This is particularly salient for women whose lives cannot be fully understood without illuminating the interaction within the issues of race, class, and gender (Anderson, 1988; Collins, 1990; Cuádraz & Uttal, 1999; de la Torre & Pesquera, 1993; Giddings, 1984; Hurtado, 1989; Moraga, 1983; Smith & Steward, 1983; Zavella, 1989; Zinn & Dill, 1994). As Baxter and Lansing (1983) stated, "Black women see themselves as a special interest group fighting to overcome the twin barriers of racial and gender discrimination" (p. 108). Confronting the world of sexism and racism, women of color experience the world differently from those who are not Black and female (Gay & Tate, 1998).

Black Feminist or Womanist[6] thought evolved in scholarship with aims to counter the exclusionary discourses and combat inequities with "(1) the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims; (2) the centrality of personal expressiveness; (3) the ethic of personal accountability; and (4) concrete experience as a criterion of meaning" (Joseph, 1995, p. 465; also see Collins, 1994). Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013) also speak to the need to find the space for women of color to speak their individual and collective truths. They pointed to the

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[6] "Black feminism is sometimes referred to as Womanism because both are concerned with struggles against sexism and racism by Black women who are themselves part of the Black community's efforts to achieve equity and liberty" (Omolade, 1994, p. xx).

paradoxical dimension of the sameness/difference rationales [for Black women]…. Black females are both too similar to Black men and white women to represent themselves and too different to represent either Blacks or women as a whole. Although Black male and white female narratives of discrimination were understood to be fully inclusive and universal, Black female narratives were rendered partial, unrecognizable, something apart from standard claims of race discrimination. (pp. 790-791)

Feminist research often places women of color as *other* (Lorde, 1988), and Henderson (1993) argued in her essay, "Speaking Tongues," that "otherness" is also a theoretical location for the subjectivities of women of color (p. 17); however, she refuses to see *other* as solely marginal. In fact, she found within the construction of the discursive other the perfect power struggle to privilege one in relation to another.

The Matrix of Domination. To complicate identity construction even further, it is crucial to understand the complexity of the push and pull of power and resistance, especially for women of color. Collins' (1990) work focused on the multiple levels of oppression and how systems of privilege and oppression are interwoven. She referred to the intersecting systems of oppression that affect girls' lives differently as the "Matrix of Domination" (Collins, 1990, p. 228). The Matrix of Domination states that based on one's social location, a person can be oppressed in some ways and privileged in others *and* for every act of oppression there is an interwoven act of domination. Ferber, O'Reilly Herrera, and Samuels (2007) stated, "The Matrix of Domination is a useful tool for understanding the ways in which different social locations interact with each other, that is how race, gender, class, etc. work together to privilege or oppress" (p. 2). No matter where we fall in the matrix, we all fit somewhere in the continuum of this oppressive societal structure.

Zinn and Dill (1996) extended this analysis to institutional systems or structures they call "systems of domination." They argued for the importance of distinguishing that the structures of gender, race, and class that "create disadvantages for women of color…. [also] provide unacknowledged benefits for those who are at the top of these hierarchies" (Zinn & Dill, 1996, p. 327). Locating identities within the matrix of domination is essential if we desire to understand the systems of domination and the structural and institutional constraints for those who are oppressed. Likewise, uncovering the implicit privileges in these systems is just as informative. Not unlike the epistemological discussion of identity above, it is important to acknowledge here that "girls' experience of gender, race, class, and their personal-social identity (i.e., how they view themselves) can only be expressed and understood through the categories available to them in discourse" (Davies & Harre, 1990, p. 46).

Collins' (1989, 2000) authoritative work on Black Feminist epistemology posited that its distilled principles and standards include the use of lived experience as a criterion for meaning, the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims, and that the ethics of caring and the ethic of personal accountability are essential to integrate as well because "when shared and passed on [they] become the collective wisdom of a Black woman's standpoint" and, in turn, they become "a set of principles for assessing knowledge claims" (p. 256). Collins (2000) pointed out that "as opposed to examining gender, sexuality, race, class, and nation as separate systems of oppression, the construct of intersectionality references how these systems mutually construct one another" (pp. 47-48). It is only then that the complexity can begin to be understood. For these very salient reasons, this study adopted an intersectional framing.

Intersectionality. Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) is credited with coining the term "intersectionality" in a case of law founded on discriminatory practices in the workplace. The textbook definition of intersectionality is as follows:

> The view that women experience oppression in varying configurations and in varying degrees of intensity. Cultural patterns of oppression are not only interrelated, but are bound together and influenced by the intersectional systems of society. Examples of this include race, gender, class, ability, and ethnicity. (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. 1245)

Intersectionality holds that the classical conceptualizations of oppression within society, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and religion-based bigotry, do not act independently of one another; instead, they interrelate, are tied to each other, or are connected to each other, creating a system or forces of oppression that reflect the "intersection" of multiple forms of discrimination (Glenn 1999; West & Fenstermaker, 1997; Zinn & Dill 1996). Collins (1995) made an important distinction about the relationship between the concepts "interlocking (or simultaneity) of oppressions" and "intersectionality":

> First the notion of interlocking oppressions refers to the macro level connections linking systems of oppression such as race, class, and gender. This is the model describing the social structures that create social positions. Second, the notion of Intersectionality describes micro level processes—namely, how each individual and group occupies a social position within interlocking structures of oppression described by the metaphor of Intersectionality. Together they shape oppression. (p. 492)

Scholars examining inequality and access have found both the theory of intersectionality and interlocking oppressions particularly useful in examining how individual experiences are linked to social structures (Alvarez, 1995; Anderson & Collins, 1992; Anzaldua, 1990; Bettie,

2003; Cole, 1986; Collins, 1990, 1998; Crenshaw, 1995; Cuádraz, 1996; Cuádraz & Uttal, 1999; DuBois & Ruiz, 1990; Glenn, 1986, 1999, 2002; hooks, 1984; Hurtado, 1989; King, 1988; Lorde, 1984, 1988; McCall, 2005; Min-ha, 1989; Morris, 2007; Pyke & Johnson, 2003; Rollins, 1985; Smith & Stewart, 1983; Zinn & Dill, 1996). Warner (2008) put forth that intersectionality is non-linear in its construction and pointed out that "social identities such as race, gender, and class interact to form qualitatively different meanings and experiences" (p. 454). Social identities do not intersect at a static point but rather are ever-changing, often responsive to context, and reliant on self-awareness or content (Abes et al., 2007; Abes & Jones, 2004; Magolda, 1999a, 1999b, 2009).

Crenshaw (1998) held that one of the main tensions in identity politics is "not that it fails to transcend difference… but rather the opposite—that it frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences" (p. 1242). Crenshaw, thought of as one of the seminal voices on intersectionality, highlighted "the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed" (p. 1245).

Intersectionality invites the recognition of difference and all its nuances and complexities as a more truthful and authentic telling of identity (Cuádraz & Uttal, 1999), as does this study. Johnson et al. (2011) asserted that intersectionality affords us more "nuanced, accurate ways to consider the experiences of individuals and thus to deduce the tacit instructional structures that shape those experiences" (p. 343); they held that intersectionality allows for advanced understanding of three things:

1) *all* of the various dimensions related to structures of power, privilege, and oppression (for instance, race, class, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression);

2) the dynamic interplay *between* each of the dimensions, the meaning behind each

permutation of these dimensions; and

3) the *new social space* created by each permutation and its related experience. (p. 343)

This research adopted an intersectional framing in an attempt to avoid the feminist pitfall

of continued blindness, of using a universal voice, and to hold true to illuminating intragroup

differences. Audre Lorde (1984) wrote that "the continued blindness between us can only serve

the oppressive system within which we live" (p. 64). This dissertation worked to produce and

highlight a counternarrative to the dominant discourse in an effort to further uncover the societal

oppressions leading to local and systemic inequity.

The Location of Intersectional Identity Construction in Single-Sex Schools

The seven participants in this study are graduates of an urban, all-girls, non-sectarian,

public, STEM charter school. Reviewing the literature on single-sex schools provides critical

context for the secondary school social and academic experiences of the young women of this

study. In aggregate, research from sociologists, social psychologists, and developmental

psychologists has indicated that identity construction/development is a dominant force during the

years of adolescence. For these reasons, it is important to this study to examine the history,

purpose, and the critiques of single-sex schools, in particular schools for girls.

Single-sex schools: History and purpose. The conversation around gender equity in

public schooling took root in the education policy of the 1970s. In 1972, Title IX became the

landmark law prohibiting discrimination based on sex in education institutions receiving federal

funding. In 1975, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare issued regulations, under

Title IX, banning single-sex classrooms and programs. However, throughout the 1970s and

1980s, the U.S. Supreme Court consistently ruled that single-sex schools did not violate Title IX.

The 1996 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that struck down the all-male admissions policy of the Virginia Military Institute re-enlivened the public conversation, especially when policy that would develop single-sex public education for disadvantaged girls was proposed and ultimately enacted that same year (Salomone, 2003).

In 2001, President George W. Bush's administration enacted a bipartisan federal education policy, known as *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB)—a reconfiguration of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which was part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty. One result of NCLB was changes to the Title IX code, allowing public schools the right and even granting incentives to create single-sex classes or single-sex schools. By 2006, the U.S. Department of Education loosened its laws even more to diminish the prohibition of single-sex schools even further. According to the National Association for Single Sex Public Education website (2016),

> In March 2002, when NASSPE was founded, only about a dozen public schools offered single-gender classrooms. In the 2011-2012 school year, at least 506 public schools in the United States offered single-sex educational opportunities. About 390 of those schools are coed schools which offer single-sex classrooms, but which retain at least some coed activities. In some cases, the only coed activities were lunch and one or two electives, so the distinction between a single-sex school, and a coed school with single-sex classrooms, can become a matter for debate. By our count, 116 of the 506 schools qualified as single-sex *schools,* meaning that students attending any of those schools have most or all of their school activities in a setting which is all-boys or all-girls. All but five of those 116 schools were single-sex campuses. (para. 1)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was enacted to address the same challenges of economic competition and educational disparity and inequality that are of concern for single-sex school proponents. The Obama Administration expanded upon NCLB to fund initiatives known as *Race to the Top* (U.S. Department of Education, 2009) and, more recently, the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). While NCLB, *Race to the Top*, and *Every Student Succeeds* were all designed to close achievement gaps, they have continued to defund public schools by allowing for corporate charter school development and flatten the imagination of the citizenry by militant standardization (Giroux, 2015; Saltman, 2012). Today, urban public schools are often incentivized with new equipment and additional corporate or billionaire funding to privatize while remaining tied by charter to the public sector (Apple 2001; Lipman, 2004; Means, 2013; Ravitch, 2010; Saltman, 2012; Taubman, 2009). Urban single-sex public schools are most often charter schools (Williams, 2016).

The neoliberal critique: Single-sex charter school expansion. Schools are mirrors of the values held by society (Ravitch, 2010). The storied and evolved legacy of American public education is that access to education, skills, and societal values are a fundamental right and serve the public good (Apple, 2006; DuBois, 1903; Mann, 1848). As Grioux (2000) stated, "Schools are an important indicator of the well-being of a democratic society" (p. 83), and the policy and practice within them regularly highlight the vast inequalities and exclusions prevalent in a neoliberal consumer culture (Di Leo, Giroux, McClennen, & Saltman, 2014; Giroux, 2012).

Education policy and practice has focused nearly exclusively on three data points: economics (budgets and cost savings) (Willis, 2007); underperformance of students and teachers (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006); and the perceived international *crisis* of falling behind in the global market (Apple, 2001; Giroux, 2004b; Lipman, 2004, 2011; Taubman, 2009). Reform in

the past 40-plus years has been rooted in what Foucault (1977) called "governmentalities," (p. 103) or what was described by Steger and Roy (2010) as "neoliberal governmentality," which approaches

> governance based on particular premises, logics, and power relations. A neoliberal governmentality is rooted in entrepreneurial values such as competitiveness, self-interest, and decentralization. It celebrates individual empowerment and the devolution of central state power to smaller localized units. Such a neoliberal mode of governance adopts the self-regulating free market as *the* [emphasis added] model for proper government. (p. 12)

Neoliberal governmentality, or the notion that what is good for the free market is good for (and can and should be applied to) all, has been applied to education reforms in the 21st century (Giroux, 1991).

Political and economic structures within the United States are driving educational policy to focus primarily on quantifiable standards, accountability, and high-stakes testing (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 2004a; Harvey, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Taubman, 2009). Giroux (2013) warned that

> under a market-driven society, inequality performs a legitimate function. Serving as a neutral descriptor for market fundamentalism's love affair with a narrow and insidious notion of self-development, hard work, and individual responsibility, inequality disavows structural relations of power, systemic pressures, or institutional forces. (p. 104)

Similar to identity, power and privilege are in delicate balance, and for every dominant group, there must be a counter-oppressed group (Collins, 1990; Zinn & Dill, 1996). Because the self-interests of the ruling class are protected and promoted through economic policy (Williams, 2016), the most vulnerable in our society are likely to remain underserved when neoliberalism is

allowed to play out (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). What is often missing from conversations about neoliberal influences within charter schools can be best positioned with Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony. Gramsci pointed out that "hegemony is a form of rule in which the ruled consent to the exercise of power" (as cited in Garner, 2007, p. 279). Gramsci asserted that hegemony works as an ideological *common sense* that subtly coerces subordinate classes through institutional norms, the media, social structures, etc. into consenting to economic power hierarchies that continually produce unequal economic and power relations.

Hegemonic rule: privatization and corporatization of public charter schools. The Gates Foundation, Edison Schools, KIPP, and the D.C. Public Education Fund are just a few of the private groups now managing public charter schools. In 2009, the Center for Research on Education Outcomes at Stanford University, which tracks student performance in 25 states, conducted a large-scale study showing that only 17 percent of charter schools provided a better education than traditional schools, and 37 percent actually offered children a worse education. Yet their expansion continues. According to this study, as of 2009, more than 4,700 charter schools had enrolled over 1.4 million children in 40 states and the District of Columbia. The U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics (2017) website reported that "[b]etween fall 2004 and fall 2014, overall public charter school enrollment increased from 0.9 million to 2.7 million. During this period, the percentage of public school students who attended charter schools increased from 2 to 5 percent" (para. 1). Privatization also continues to increase, and in turn, so does hegemonic rule (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 2004a).

Charter schools often come with their own neoliberal manifestos (i.e., written policy and handbooks, banners and mottos, and creeds), creating and establishing *common sense norms* by heavily dictating what day-to-day practice looks and sounds like (Hancock & Garner, 2009;

Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lipman, 2004; Williams, 2016).

Gadamer (1989) wrote that "there can be no speaking that does not bind the speaker and the

person spoken to… this process is simply to concretion of meaning itself" (p. 396). The language

norms created through policy and procedure matter explicitly and implicitly (Shotwell, 2011).

Michael Apple (1994) held that "[p]olicy documents are not ephemera. They have real effects.

They do make a difference symbolically and materially" (p. 350). The larger social forces

shaping societal inequities have been at work shaping charter school policy (Bonilla-Silva,

2001), and the dominant discourse in both all-girls and all-boys charter schools often has been

the patriarchal narrative confirming and validating the hegemonic *mythical norm* (Williams,

2016). In 1980, Audre Lorde described America's mythical norm as "white, thin, male, young,

heterosexual, Christian, [and] financially secure" (p. 362), and not much has changed in the 21st

century. The language used in such policy and practice has a real and lasting impact (Bonilla-

Silva, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2000).

   Corporatized neoliberal patriarchy. The functional social reproduction of gender, where

boys are socialized to be self-reliant and focused on achievement, while girls are socialized to be

nurturing and responsible (Barry, Bacon, & Child, 1957; Chodorow, 2000, 1989; Eisenstein,

1979; Gilligan, 1993, 2011; McIntosh, 1988) is now playing out differently. The qualities, soft-

skills, and attributes once "delegated to, conditioned in, and rewarded in women" (Noddings,

2005, p. 24) are now being cast out of schools for girls (Darling-Hammond, 2010) and even

further out of schools for boys (Williams, 2016); consequently, they are being replaced with the

patriarchal, obedient, aggressive, and competitive traits of the corporatized neoliberal

marketplace (Noddings, 2005; Williams, 2016). Noddings (2005) argued that "the myth of

oppositeness and male superiority require that men be protected from developing attributes that

have been projected onto women," and therefore, "roles projected onto and expected of women—like being attentive to and protective of vulnerable things—are not valued alongside of valor and acquisition of power for the self, as projected onto men, especially white men in the United States" (pp. 26-27). The discourses available to students can be revolutionary and innovative, or they can be reminiscent of faculty model automation, preparing to plug kids into the existing social model for the benefit of the existing social structure (Di Leo et al., 2014; Giroux, 2004a, 2013; Saltman, 2012; Williams, 2016). The privatization and corporatization of single-sex charter schools could be bending those narratives toward the latter, while our private and independently funded schools often pride themselves on the former.

  The social and academic critiques: Single-sex school versus coeducation. Fred Mael (1998) reviewed research literature and studied evidence supporting both sides of the "single-sex versus coeducation" argument and ultimately concluded the following:

> More research is needed to clarify if the advantages of single sex schools are independent of their size, student-teacher ratios, or religious philosophies. Much more research is needed into the differing dynamic of all-male, all-female and coed classrooms, as well as the interaction between leader behavior, male and female group dynamics and… also needed are longitudinal studies focused on long-term socio-emotional effects of school type. (p. 118)

Mael (1998) also held that more investigation into *which* student populations would most benefit from single-sex schooling is necessary before making any conclusion.

  In 2006, Smithers and Robinson reported that "findings on the superiority of coeducation in terms of social development are contradictory" (p. 9). Overall, their previous study (1999) found that students from single-sex schools scored higher than their coed counterparts on

standardized government tests. Robinson and Smithers (1999) argued that a limitation to this research is that there are both notable single-sex and notable coed schools, but they are successful for reasons other than the composition of gender within their student body; they contended that gender makeup is only one factor in which positive development is an effect. Linggard et al. (2001) and Kenway and Willis (1986) concurred that when factors such as selection bias, socioeconomic status, and school characteristics (size, structure, private versus public) are controlled, the difference between students in single-sex or coeducational schools is neither significant nor conclusive. However, the literature has shown that "the major factor that conditions the strength of single-sex effects is class" (Riordan, 2002, p. 14), and when class is controlled, the effects for middle-class or otherwise advantaged students are typically insignificant, and the effects for poor and working-class students are consistently significant (Riordan, 2002; Salomone, 2003; Williams, 2016).

Mael et al. (2005) have completed the most comprehensive review of single-sex research to date; their mixed methods research study, *Single-Sex Versus Coeducational Schooling: A Systematic Review*, reviewed some qualitative literature but relied heavily on statistical analysis of quantitative data regarding single-sex education at the elementary and secondary school levels for the U.S. Department of Education. Mael et al. noted that "research in the US on the question of whether public single-sex education might be beneficial to males, females or a subset of either group (particularly disadvantaged youths) has been limited" (p. xi). Mael et al. reported further that the

> research based on same-sex versus coed schooling, in general, while copious, is rife with
> methodological shortcomings. Too few researchers report descriptive statistics or effect
> sizes. Many studies have conceptual or interpretive flaws, and few studies address

important "moderators"'—ethnicity, religious values, financial privilege, prior learning

and other variables that may have differential effects for single-sex schooling. (p. xvii)

However, while there is a lack of evidence supporting the advantageousness of attending either

single-sex or coeducational schools in the socio-emotional domain, Mael et al. found strong

support for positive outcomes in academic achievement (Harker, 2010; Lee & Bryk, 1986, 1989;

Lee & Marks, 1990; Mael, 1998; Riordan, 1990, 1994, 2002), self-concept (Miller-Bernal, 2000;

Riordan, 1990, 1994; Salomone, 2003), and indicators of future success for students and

expectations of students (Devine, 1996; Lee & Bryk, 1986; Lee & Marks, 1990; Marsh, 1989;

Steinberg, Brown, & Dornbusch, 1996), *particularly* for low-income and working-class girls

attending single-sex schools (Riordan, 2002).

Still, Williams (2016) cautioned us that "even the most well-intentioned single-sex

initiatives open the door to rampant gender stereotyping" (p. 17). Blanket notions of the

populations being served and policies and practices built around how to best meet the needs of

these "others" exist in single-sex schools as well. In 2014, Bettie wrote about the "necessary

betrayal" of *othering* in critical analysis (p. x), and gender stereotyping in school policy is no

different. Similarly, she said that educators within schools are often "warm people with the best

of intentions… who were working very hard at their jobs" but went on to note that the "social

systems, processes, and ideologies present in our culture… inform their actions" (Bettie, 2014, p.

x).

Single-sex schooling and intersectional identity construction. According to Riordan

(2002), "Single sex schools do not greatly influence the academic achievement of affluent or

advantaged students, but they do for poor disadvantaged students" (p. 18). Riordian (2002)

definitively asserted that the research is

[e]xceedingly persuasive in demonstrating that single-sex schools are effective in

providing both greater equality and greater achievement, especially for low-income and

working-class students, most particularly for African American and Hispanic-American

boys *and* girls…. [This] argument centers on the notion of an academic culture that is

endemic to single-sex schools and cannot be produced in one or two classrooms within an

otherwise coeducational school…. The major factor that conditions the strength of single-

sex effects is social class, and since class and race are inextricably linked, the effects are

also conditioned by race and sometimes by gender. (pp. 13-14)

Proponents of the notion that single-sex schooling is beneficial for low-income or at-risk

students (Hopkins, 1997; Riordan, 1994) have shored up their position by citing the added ability

to address low expectations, diminish discipline problems, combat negative stereotypes, and

provide student and adult role models (McCluskey, 1993; Riordan, 1994; Singh, Vaught, &

Mitchell, 1998).

Self-esteem. Research has suggested that both girls and boys report improved self-esteem

in single-sex settings (Bracey, 2006; Mael, 1998). Studies have shown that girls expressed

positive attitudes, exhibited less anxiety, asked more questions, and had more confidence in math

and science single-sex classrooms (Arbor, 1998; Baker, 2001; Campbell & Evans, 1997;

Crombie, Arbarbanel, & Trinneer, 2002; Lee & Bryk, 1986; Streitmatter, 1997; Stutler, 1997;

Thompson & Ungerleider, 2004; Vockell & Lobonc, 1981), and they reported that "the single-

sex environment made the girls feel empowered and smart" (Baker, 2002, p. 19). Lee and Bryk

(1986) went so far as to say that girls show greater interest in *all* academics in a single-sex

environment. Similarly, Younger and Warrington (2002) advocated that single-sex classes

strongly contribute to academic achievement, improved self-esteem, and sustained learning of

both boys and girls. On the other hand, several studies have shown that boys indicated liking and feeling safer in coeducational classrooms, signifying that in single-sex classrooms, heightened feelings of intimidation, competition, and aggressiveness exist (Askew & Ross, 1990; Jackson, 2002).

Interpersonal relationships. Youth culture can be highly social and can affect adolescent intellectual and interpersonal development. Proponents of single-sex schools have argued that coeducational settings heighten social pressures and distract students from work (Charania, 2010; Coleman, 1961; Goodlad, 1984; Salomone 2003). Coed schools have been described as "jungles of dating and social maneuver" (Mael, 1998, p. 104), where social hierarchies and coupling are top priorities (Finn, 1980; Koepke, 1991; Lee & Bryk, 1986; Riordan, 1985, 1990). Teacher-student relationships have also been considered in the single-sex versus coeducation debate. The literature has provided evidence that in single-sex environments, girls are more likely to have accomplished female role models as teachers, to garner more attention from their teachers, and to find peers with similar interests, goals, and ambitions, resulting in improved adult and peer interpersonal relationships (Finn, 1980; Lee & Bryk, 1986; Mael, 1998; Mahoney, 1985).

Single-sex schooling and sexism. Institutional analysis of educational policy and feminist sociological theory have been the most widely used lenses in scholarship on gender and education (Charles, 2010; Epstein, 1988; Lee, Marks, & Bryk, 1994). Much of the existing critical research on gender and education-related scholarship in the United States portrays coeducational learning environments as grounds for socializing both boys and girls for a gender-stratified society with unequal social and economic roles (Adams, 2009; Epstein, 1988; Lee et al., 1994; Martin, 1990; Tyack & Hansot, 1990). "In its contemporary form… [single-sex education] may actually help young women surmount discrimination and stratification in the

larger social arena" (Epstein, 1988, as cited in Lee et al., 1994, p. 95; also see Koehane, 1990;

Lockheed & Klein, 1985). At least, that is the aim and purpose.

Lee, Marks, and Bryk (1994) suggested that "the engenderment function within a

classroom is likely to be especially salient in schools that are organized by gender, which

suggests that single-sex schools could be especially important agents of change" (p. 98). Lee et

al. held that because gender becomes a normalized culture within single-sex schools that the

gender "playing ground" is equalized—albeit, artificially and momentary. However, with solid

curriculum based on equity, single-sex schools could become strong agents for social change

(Cole, 1993). Lee and Marks (1992) cautioned, however, that single-sex schools have been

predominantly private schools that rely on tuition to thrive and to some degree may cater to the

values of their clients, who may desire a traditional structure that may still foster unequal social

arrangements.

In addition, some feminist scholars who oppose single-sex education believe that

separating the sexes only yields both sexes being further engrained into patriarchal value systems

(i.e., competitiveness, sexism, and individualism) rather than actually confronting and

combatting the true issues of inequity (Kenway & Willis, 1986; Lee & Marks, 1990; Mael, 1998;

Williams, 2016). With the increased pressure for global competiveness, neoliberalism, capitalist,

and consumer-values, schools may also be adding to this divide (Apple, 1996; Di Leo et al.,

2014; Giroux, 2013, 2012, 2000; Reitz, 2013; Saltman, 2012; Saltman & Gabbard, 2003;

Watkins, 2004). Scholars of feminist consumerism have asserted that institutionalized neoliberal

influences also contribute to and perpetuate gender inequality by reproducing misogynist and

harmful aesthetic standards and practices of beauty (Johnston & Taylor, 2008; Williams, 2016).

Making Meaning of Intersectional Identities in the Context of the Social and Academic

Experiences of Women of Color

Overlaying the literature on the complex nature of constructing identities with the literature on the influence and impact of single-sex schools leads us to a place where we can better contextualize the narratives of the young women in this study. Sociologist Ronald Corwin (1965) argued that "to understand education it is necessary to study broad social forces and overt organizational pressures from outside" (p. 49). Before reviewing this literature, it must be noted that scholarship on girls and women of color is often rooted in White feminist "outside" works, for, as Zinn, Cannon, Higginbotham, and Dill (1990) wrote:

> Despite white, middle-class feminists' frequent expressions of interest and concern over the plight of minority and working-class women, those holding the gatekeeping positions at these journals are as white as those at any mainstream social science or humanities publication. (p. 31)

In concert with this statement, Dillabough (2006) made three important distinctions regarding gender and education for women and girls of color:

1) women and girls' education is formulated within a colonial narrative where the 'other' emerges as the marginal identity to be gazed upon;

2) colonial models of education reproduce the cross-cultural domination of women and girls through conformity to values and ideas embedded in white narratives of educational success; and

3) education research fails to recognize the key question of difference—that Black and minority ethnic girls' experiences and family life are distinct from white cultural narratives and therefore cannot be measured in relation to it. (p. 24)

Despite these shortcomings, we must examine the current research on the social and academic experiences of women of color in K-12 and postsecondary schooling. Additionally, it is important to note that the body of literature that exists on the social and academic experiences of young women of color largely takes a non-normative approach, positioning the experiences of this population as different from persons not in this population (i.e., the White experience).

In all levels of education, "[r]ace, gender, and class combine to shape the education experiences of Black girls, creating unique obstacles for them" (Morris, 2007, p. 490). Underlying this conversation are the consistent findings that women of color continue to be increasingly underrepresented at each successive educational and career level:

> The difficulties of transitions between academic stages (i.e. primary to secondary, secondary to postsecondary, community college to four-year institution, college to graduate school/careers) and transitions from minority serving institutions to predominantly White institutions are largely overlooked; so is the critical role that social climate including issues of isolation, identity, invisibility, negotiating/navigating, micro-aggressions, sense of belonging, tokenism—plays in women of color satisfaction and retention…; and the positive, as well as negative, effects of words and actions by faculty who serve as mentors, role models, teachers, and authorities on the intelligence and abilities of their students. (Ong, Wright, Espinsoa, & Orfield, 2011, p. 30)

These factors also "shape adult perceptions of Black girls," and in turn, they influence how practices are implemented with the intention to mold young women into a particular model of womanhood (Morris, 2007, p. 4). As privileged White women, these factors can compromise our implicit knowing of the other if we allow them to. It was critical to this study to create a context

for the experiences of girls and women of color in both K-12 urban education and postsecondary education.

K-12 social and academic experiences of girls of color. The body of literature on the K-12 social and academic experiences of girls of color is scant, and what does exist tends to be grounded in a deficit model: "The fundamental problem with the deficit is that it overlooks the entrenched structural factors such as race, class, and gender that have significant effects on the lives of young people of color" (Hall & Brown-Thirston, 2011, p. 76). Analyses of the social and academic experiences for girls of color in grades K-12 primarily addresses behavioral and performance-related statistics (U.S. Department of Education, 2012) that are often correlated or hypothesized to stem from socioeconomic factors (Cole-Robinson, 2006; Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997; Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982).

Existing studies that specifically identify girls of color in relation to other groups have suggested that they can be used to provide an overall assessment. Many studies, for example, may delineate performance and behavioral issues among several categories, including ethnic and gender distinction. Thus, some data concerning the experience specifically for girls of color can be gleaned from these studies, although the overall study is intended to provide a more holistic assessment. Other studies have focused on cultural discontinuity and its impact on academic performance and achievement (Boykin, 1983; Gay, 2010; Irvine, 1990; Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarek, & Curran, 2004) but have offered little insight into the experiences specific to girls of color. Even fewer studies have offered perspectives from the students themselves.

A growing body of research directly responds to a disturbing finding by the Office for Civil Rights (2012): Students of color are "three and a half times more likely than their white

peers to get suspended from school" (Murphy, Acosta, & Kennedy-Lewis, 2013, p. 587).

Categorically, 11% of African American girls are suspended out of school compared to just 3%

of White girls (Blake, Butler, Lewis, & Darensbourg, 201; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Murphy et

al., 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Several subsequent studies have shown that the

use of exclusionary discipline is pervasive, widely disproportionate with students of color, and

most often tied to zero-tolerance policies (Bowditch, 1993; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Gregory,

Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Losen, 2011; Mendez & Knowff, 2003; Murphy et al., 2013; Nichols,

Ludwin, & Iadicola, 1999; Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Backhman, 2008). As these

punishments continue to increase in frequency, so does the overrepresentation of percentages of

African American students, primarily males (Gregory, 1996; Shaw & Braden, 1990; Taylor &

Foster, 1986), as recipients of such punishment (Advancement Project/Civil Rights Project,

2000; Massachusetts Advocacy Center, 1996).

Indeed, the most common exclusion is through out-of-school suspensions (Mendez &

Knowff, 2003), and middle-school students of color, according to Losen and Skiba (2010), are

the most likely recipients of this type of exclusion. Harsh disciplinary strategies, such as corporal

punishment, are more likely to be imposed on African American students (Gregory, 1996; Shaw

& Braden, 1990). Several studies show that exclusion policies and practices are highly subjective

and disproportionately affect urban students of color (Fabelo et al., 2011; Gregory & Weinstein,

2008; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Rocque, 2010; Skiba et al., 2002; Thornberg, 2007; Vavrus &

Cole, 2002). Other studies have worked to dissect how race and gender might influence girls'

explanations of their compliant and noncompliant behaviors (Bowditch, 1993; Cole-Robinson,

2006; Dupper & Bosch, 1996; Sheets, 1996; Thornberg, 2007; Vavrus & Cole, 2002; Waldron,

2010).

Thematically, a large portion of existing research frames the experiences of K-12 girls of color in stereotypes and silences their diverse experiences beyond the deficit narrative; while these are important topics to understand, the negative examples are one of many truths of their educational experiences. These very examples as told for the students themselves and positive educational experiences are largely not reflected in the current body of literature. Two of the most observable factors found in recent research related to the academic experiences of girls of color in grades K-12 are the specific issues of truancy (Fantuzzo, Grim, & Hazan, 2005; Henry, 2007; Henry & Huizinga, 2007a; McAra, 2003) and teen pregnancy (with the research on these phenomena primarily focused on grades 6-12) (DiCenso, Guyett, & Griffith, 2002; Norris & Ford, 1994; Raine, Minnis, & Padian, 2003; Sangi-Haghpeykar, Ali, Posner, & Poindexter, 2006). To understand potential conditions and factors associated with truancy, Henry and Huizinga (2007b) conducted a longitudinal study of truancy in the Denver public school system that identified truant behavior among at-risk students over a period of four years. Their study included schools in districts with the top one-third highest crime rates that were located in "socially disorganized neighborhoods" (p. 506). The purpose of the study was to "explore associations between truancy and several salient school-related risk and protective factors among a sample of youth who grew up in socially disorganized neighborhoods of Denver, CO" (p. 505). Students were categorized according to both gender and ethnicity for the purpose of the study so the specific experience for girls of color in regard to truancy could be assessed. The study found that males were more likely to be truant than females, and African American males had a higher propensity of truancy than other ethnic groups, followed by non-African American males, then African American females. Hispanic females were also seen to have a higher incidence of truancy than White females, although this margin was less pronounced than for African

Americans. Moreover, "the two most robust predictors [of truancy] were school performance and involvement with delinquent peers" (Henry & Huizinga, 2007, p. 515).

Concerning teen pregnancy, Sangi-Haghpeykar, Ali, Posner, and Poindexter's study (2006) explored the specific impact that pregnancy can have on teens who become pregnant while still attending primary education. Their study focused on Hispanic teens. When compared to non-Hispanic Whites, both U.S.-born and non-U.S.-born Hispanic women were less likely to receive social support for contraception use (Raine et al., 2003), desired larger families, and often had religious objections to using birth control (Norris & Ford, 1994). When identifying the methods of contraception available, Daniels, Daugherty, and Jones (2006) highlighted that the pill is often the most successful at preventing pregnancies, but this method often involves foresight of sexual activity and parental consent. This study noted that condoms are more widely available, but social pressures may discourage their use. Thus, the decision to avoid using contraception is often a complex choice involving personal belief, contraception availability, and social factors and is not necessarily contingent upon simply a lack of education (Daniels, Daugherty, & Jones, 2006; DiCenso et al., 2002).

Critical to this discussion are the consequences of these behaviors and actions on education and on personal well-being (Cole-Robinson, 2007). Hall and Thirston-Brown (2011) explained:

> Adolescent mothers can be subjected to a level of physical and psychological stress that stems not only from pregnancy, but also from an overload of motherhood responsibilities. Studies have reported that the unmarried high school mom is twice as likely as her peers to drop out, forgo college, and earn less money. (p. 10)

Several studies have identified factors that both positively and negatively impact women of color and education, such as engagement in extracurricular activities (Cherng, Turney, & Kao, 2014; Hughes, Cao, & Kwok, 2016; Williams, Greenleaf, Albert, & Barnes, 2014), single- or dual-parent homes (O'Malley, Voight, Renshaw, & Eklund, 2015; Shoshani & Steinmetz, 2014; Sullivan, Klingbeil, & Van Norman, 2013), gang activity (Chesney-Lind, 2013; Dill & Ozer, 2015; Kassab et al., 2014; Vickery, 2015), association with others who engaged in "delinquent behavior" (Henry & Huizinga, 2007), and perceptions of support from the academic system (Cole-Robinson, 2007).

Studies employing intersectionality have explored how educators perceive girls of color and their academic experiences. Morris (2007) conducted a study involving the perceptions of educators toward African American K-12 girls. Through coded analysis of an educator survey and interview responses, Morris found that while performance scores were high, educators in a private school setting tended to perceive African American girls collectively as loud, assertive, and defiant, with some educators attempting to instill more "ladylike" qualities into the group (Morris, 2007). This judgment of social behaviors, Collins (2000) argued, is contradictory to Black female socialization: "Many black families encourage their daughters to use their voices to stand up for themselves and others" (Murphy et al., 2013, p. 600; see also Fordham, 1993; O'Connor, Lewis, & Mueller, 2005). Furthermore, Morris (2007) held that the "adultification of Black girls" (p. 514) leads teachers to see them as too controlling or aggressive for their young age. Based on his findings from the educator survey and personal interviews, Morris reported that assertiveness of girls of color "taint perceptions of Black femininity… making these girls appear inadequately feminine—lacking control over themselves, yet trying to establish control over others in inappropriate ways" (p. 511). The Morris (2007) study ultimately analyzed how

educators' perception of girls of color may be based on implicit stereotypes being placed upon this group that, at best, highlights a propensity toward a lack of cultural inclusion and, at worst, implies racism.

Waldron's (2010) study included 14 diverse girls and looked at *girl fights* and how students' perceptions of them are connected to issues of gender, race, class, and sexuality. Waldron (2010) held that "African American girls perhaps feel less constrained by the dominant, White, middle-class view of femininity as docile and compliant" (p. 28). This study also lent insight into how girls speak of other girls' violence.

Other studies on the K-12 social and academic experiences of girls of color have focused on support programs. College and career readiness programs in secondary and postsecondary schools focused on low-income students and/or students of color most often include academic enhancement activities, like college essay writing and practice interviews, which report an increased likelihood of college acceptance and job placement (Villalpando & Solorzano, 2005). While this focus has shown some benefit, many other factors are associated with effective college preparation, including student and parent awareness of financial aid opportunities and barriers. A 2006 study found that uninformed parents overestimated total college costs by up to 228 percent (Goldrick-Rab, 2006). It is also important to note that few, if any, empirical studies have been completed on the intersection of gender and ethnic culture in college preparation programs (Hirschman, 2016). Increasingly, however, these programs are attempting to develop "cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 81) or non-economic resources that enable social mobility, which proponents believe will increase people of color's effectiveness, yet many students report being unfulfilled by the way some programs conceptualize culture. For example, some programs simply offer sporadic, formal activities like trips to museums with ethnic displays or music

concerts that are deemed ethnic (Tierney, 2002). While cultural capital might be an important area of study for preparation programs, more sophisticated and experience-based understandings of culture are needed to make college choice models more effective (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987).

One of the most important and well-documented elements of college-to-career readiness programs is the involvement of parents in the process. Numerous studies have demonstrated that parental involvement in readiness programs is linked to higher academic achievement, a sense of well-being, attendance, grades, and satisfaction (Holcomb-McCoy, 2010; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). However, the notion of parent involvement does not always consider "[i]ntracultural and individual variances in attitudes and behaviors within a cultural group" (Hall & Thirston-Brown, 2011, p. 54). Work schedules, language barriers, logistics, and personal insecurities may all contribute to a perceived lack of parental involvement (Hall & Thirston-Brown, 2011; Jackson & Remillard, 2005; Lightfoot 2004; Villenas & Deyhle, 2002).

Recent studies on college choice among Latino and Latina students have affirmed that parents' cultural and social capital may also be determinants of college access and the decisions eventually made by the students (Perez & McDonough, 2008). While the focus of the Perez and McDonough (2008) study is not about application or acceptance rates, the authors revealed that access to high school counselors is a strong predictor for college attendance for low-income populations. A 2011 study, using data from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002, found that the number of high school guidance counselors and the number of contacts they had with students were excellent predictors of college application rates, demonstrating the importance of this support system (Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, & Holcolm-McCoy, 2011). It is telling, therefore, that counselors in urban schools are currently serving a disproportionate number of minority students, many of whom are at risk for failure (Bryan, 2005). Family-school-

community partnerships are viewed as a fertile area for addressing these concerns, as revealed in recent literature (Bryan, 2005).

Many students of color have the experience of being first-generation college attendees, and thus it is crucial to examine the social and educational experiences of this important and growing population (Bui, 2002). A 2002 study using interviews and surveys to gather the experiences of first-generation students of color found that they were more likely to be attending college to provide financial help to their families later in their career (Bui, 2002). They also reported higher levels of stress during their freshman year and had higher attrition rates than other student populations (Ceja, 2006; Choy, 2001). Qualitative studies using interviews to collect data found numerous references to inadequate attention to such pragmatic matters as stress and financial pressure in institutional support programs for people of color (Linder, Harris, Allen, & Hubain, 2015).

The institutional, family, and community-based support systems that exist for students of color are often studied from a correlational, longitudinal, or cross-sectional approach, and therefore, they frequently have focused on high rates of failure, attrition, and poor outcomes (Perna & Jones, 2002). More optimistic and perhaps useful approaches involve direct interviews with students of color who have successfully navigated the system. In a recent study of this kind, students reported that their guidance counselor had only advised them to apply to in-state public colleges, even though many had achieved grades and scores that met or exceeded more stringent criteria (Harper, 2015). Many also reported being academically, though not intellectually, unprepared for college. Cabrera and La Nasa (2001) found that a combination of family-based, school-based, and community-based preparation practices were more predictive of college-qualifications than socioeconomic status, a powerful finding highlighting the importance of these

institutions. The three critical tasks associated with enrolling in a four-year college were found to be graduating from high school, meeting minimal college qualifications, and applying to colleges (Cabrera & La Nasa 2001). Interviews with students of color concerning the activities and roles of their school counselors resulted in recommendations that guidance counselors attempt to play the roles of team facilitators, advocates, and collaborators, rather than simply providing physical resources like applications and forms (Bemak, 2000).

Other support systems are examined to a small degree in the current literature as well. While family-based support is known to be a crucial predictor of academic success, what exactly does it entail? A 2007 study based on interviews with 16 low-income Latino and African American families found that many parents discouraged college attendance through false beliefs about cost, chances of acceptance, and the practical value of a degree (Auerbach, 2007). Other parents responded by offering to help pay for applications, encouraging academic discipline, and communicating the hardships of low-income parenting in productive and encouraging ways. A 2005 study found that school-home-community partnerships worked so well in encouraging application to and attendance of college because they were able to pool resources, removing some of the prohibitive stressors associated with college for many people of color, such as those concerning financial burdens (Bryan & Holcolm-McCoy, 2005). Such partnerships also promise a far higher degree of multicultural competency than what is offered by any standalone support system.

The newest and most enlightening research into the educational outcomes and experiences of students of color comes from direct interviews and anecdotes of marginalized populations. Several studies have used Critical Race Theory to design methodologies for collecting experiences of students in higher education. One study interviewed 29 graduate

students of color and found high rates of experiencing tokenization, endemic racism, disappointment, frustration, anger, and racial battle fatigue (Hubain, Allen, Harris, & Linder, 2016). Another study, published in 2015, found that undergraduates and graduates in STEM subjects found mentoring to be a crucially beneficial experience, yet one that is still fraught with frustrations and a lack of cultural competence among mentors (Blevins, 2015; Patton, 2009). Graduate STEM programs are perhaps the least likely of all educational contexts to feature women of color as students or mentors. A range of studies has shown a troubling recent trend of Latina students feeling a sense of un-belonging on college campuses and dropping out at increasing rates. A 2013 study investigating this phenomenon found that the key components to maximizing engagement among Latinas were learning spaces that were safe, affirming, and productive (Cooper, 2013). Importantly, many politically active Latinos and Latinas reported the perception that education itself may play an oppressive role, further frustrating the goal of resisting oppression in the larger society (Cammarota, 2004). This perception comes from many different causal factors, including biased reporting of American history, obedience demands made by teachers from different races, and parental perceptions of school (Cammarota, 2004).

Postsecondary academic and social experiences of women of color. Like the research on single-sex education, the body of literature on the postsecondary (undergraduate) social and academic experiences of women of color is equally disconnected, and it is "limited and fails to adequately address the emotional, social, and mental well-being of students" (Green, Pulley, Jackson, Martin, & Fascing-Varner, 2016, p. 1). Similar to the K-12 research, the postsecondary research is often part of a more holistic study of all populations, whereas women of color are merely a subset to be accounted for. While there is new and emerging literature on the social and academic experiences of women of color, the field remains largely focused on college access,

readiness, and paths to higher education, as well as graduation rates (Perna & Jones, 2002).

Some of the more recent literature also has focused on belongingness and persistence (Booker,

2016; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Thomas, Wolters, Horn, & Kennedy, 2013).

College access and admission for women of color. The literature concerning college

access and acceptance rates for women of color is usually found in comparative studies that

explore acceptance rates according to gender and ethnicity. According to Turner (2002), the

overall trend is that women of color have much higher high school graduation rates than previous

generations, with an increase of 63 percent over women of color 50 years ago. Subsequently, this

has also resulted in an increase in college acceptance rates among women of color (Perna &

Jones, 2002).

Several studies focusing on gender have found that African American women perform

much better than their male counterparts in both college enrollment and obtaining a degree

(Dyce, Aflbold, & Long, 201; Harper, 2014; Perna, 2000; Perna & Jones, 2002). This is notable

because the separation between African American men and women who attend college is

substantially greater than any other ethnicity (Harper, 2014). In studies that evaluate attendance

rates according to ethnicity, the literature has found that Caucasian women have the highest

attendance rate by percentage, followed by Asian-American, African American, and Hispanic or

Latina women (Dyce et al., 2013).

This body of literature is generally focused on two areas: quantitative research that

identifies statistical variation and qualitative studies that analyze the causes for disparity. Similar

to the studies on delinquency, many of these qualitative studies have posited that disparities

result from socio-cultural and economic influence (Perna & Jones, 2002). Perna and Jones

(2002) made the correlation that because African American and Hispanic or Latino households

have lower income levels than Caucasians (on average), a primary disadvantage is that they are less able to afford higher education. In addition, the common thread within the literature on acceptance rates for college is that students who come from single-parent families are the most disadvantaged, with African American households representing the largest number of single-parent families when compared with other ethnicities (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009; Perna, 2000). However, these disadvantages should not be regarded simply as socio-cultural or economic problems, as they may also be rooted in teacher behavior and the school environment itself (Bernal, 2002). Students who demonstrate behavioral problems may receive a lack of support from school administration and staff. Students may identify this lack of support and become alienated from school, leading to lower graduation rates or lower grade point averages that make them noncompetitive in college admissions (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). Lower admission rates can also be regarded as a relatively social phenomenon, as certain social relationships, such as pressure to seek employment over higher education, can also lead to a decrease in acceptance rates if it is supported by peers.

College completion for women of color. Similar to college acceptance rates, the literature concerning graduation rates has provided quantitative statistics that comparatively evaluate graduation rates according to gender and ethnicity, although many studies often expand on these statistics and explore employment opportunities for women of color who have recently graduated with a college degree (Booker, 2016). The overarching data on college graduation rates tends to mirror acceptance rates: Notable similarities include that a much higher percentage of African American women graduate from a four-year college or university than African American men and that Caucasian women have the highest graduation rates, followed by Asian, African American, and Hispanic or Latina women (Perna & Jones, 2002). Giddings (1984) held that

"black women have a history of striving for education beyond what their gender or their color seemed to prescribe" (p. 7).

Unlike studies that have focused on either K-12 or college admissions, studies on postsecondary graduation rates have placed less emphasis on socioeconomic factors. This is presumably because the primary economic barrier to obtaining a college degree is predicated on the ability to attend college and, therefore, is generally discussed more when the conversation turns to college admission rates (Carter, 2008). The overall findings, however, have revealed that while women of color are graduating at higher percentages than previous generations, they are still subject to fewer opportunities and lower wages than their male counterparts, which is an issue present for all women, particularly for women of color (Booker, 2016; Espinosa, 2011). In addition, there are several studies (Espinosa, 2011; Higginbotham & Weber, 2002) that evaluated the types of employment being sought by women of color after graduation. One significant finding was that women of color, primarily African American women, are more likely to start their own businesses than White women (Espinosa, 2011).

Conclusion

Albeit scarce, the literature on the social and academic experiences of women of color is focused on three predominant themes: underrepresentation (Clewell & Anderson, 20001; Ellis & Chen, 2013) and overrepresentation in school punishment (Advancement Project/Civil Rights Project, 2000); intersectionality and cultural conflicts (Crenshaw, 1991; McCall, 2005; Morris, 2007); and discriminatory practices, including legislation enacted as a response (Banks, 2009; Johnson et al., 2011; Morris, 2016). The literature is truly telling in only one aspect: little research has been done to connect the dots throughout grades K-12 to college completion for women of color. The academic and social experiences of girls and women of color have not been

given the attention they deserve, and when they have been the focus of inquiry, the deficit model lens has been applied. Decisions regarding policy and practice are being made with partial, outdated, and incomplete information. Decisions are being made *for* women of color and not *with* them. The student voice is missing almost entirely.

The experiences of women of color in postsecondary, predominately White institutions has also been largely neglected. The study of the identity processes of women of color in higher education will help us to find ways to support similar women. Allowing currently enrolled postsecondary women of color to narrate the dimensions of their school experiences is an approach to understanding their social and academic challenges and successes.

Unpacking the dynamics of inequality and identity construction within the context of secondary education, postsecondary education, and beyond are essential pieces that should inform curriculum scholars on how to develop responses and programs that are meaningful and impactful. However, practitioners must not be limited to the constraints of our own imagination. We need to dedicate time, space, and capacity to (re)view the world through others' truths. Only then can we see a world that is close to whole so that we can (pre)view a more inclusive one. Greene (1995) wrote:

> We also have our social imagination: the capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society, on the streets where we live, on our schools. As I write of social imagination, I am reminded of Jean-Paul Sartre's declaration that "it is on the day that we can conceive of a different state of affairs that a new light falls on our troubles and our suffering and that we decide that these are unbearable" (1956, pp. 434-435). (p. 5)

Identity and experience should be informing the design of educational reform responses and programs. We should be working to create contexts to collaboratively lead programs *with the students who use them*. Identity and experience should inform educational responses and programs so that we might interrupt and disrupt systems of domination and oppression and *imagine a future that is otherwise* (Greene, 1995).

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework, Methodology, and Methods

The previous chapter synthesizes the existing bodies of literature that are foundational to this study. In it, I examine the body of scholarship with regard to identity and intersectional identity construction, single-sex schooling, and the social and academic experiences of women of color. In this chapter, I detail the methodology used to conduct my research and analyze my data.

Qualitative Research

As I have stated, I am interested in how the cumulative nature of educational experiences impact identity construction with a focus on students who hail from communities of untapped potential, in particular, women of color, their social identity meaning-making processes, and the role that authoring their identities plays in shaping how they understand themselves and the world around them. Flick's (2007) explanation of the purpose of qualitative research helps to underscore its value for this project:

> Qualitative research is intended to approach the world "out there" (not in specialized research settings such as laboratories) and to understand, describe and sometimes explain social phenomena "from the inside" in a number of different ways. (p. x)

Three of the qualitative approaches Flick (2007) proposed are to analyze the experiences of individuals or groups, interactions and communications in the making, and/or documents or similar traces or artifacts. All three approaches were used in this study. Creswell (2013) held that "qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). Both Flick and Creswell argued that qualitative research is no longer "simply not quantitative" (Flick, 2007, p. x) but rather is often conducted to get at the question, "What is going on here?" (Flick, 2007, p. 4). Flick and Creswell's positions strongly underpin my purpose in trying to learn from the narratives of my

participants, which involve three types of holistic data collection as prescribed by Patton (2002): "(1) in-depth, open-ended interviews; (2) direct observation; and (3) written documents" (p. 10).

Theoretical Framework

In addition to defining this study through a qualitative paradigm, Schram (2006) asserted that it is critical to articulate the theoretical framework that guides a research agenda. For this study, I utilized two established social science theories as the lens with which to understand the identity construction of young women of color in the context of postsecondary school. Critical Race Theory (CRT), broadly, and intersectionality, more specifically, served as foundational theoretical frameworks for this study. I used the Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity to make sense of the participants' self-authorship and meaning-making capacity of their identities.

Critical race theory: A theoretical lens. Critical race theory was developed as a means of improving the supposed neutrality of law (Crenshaw, 1988). Many lawmakers have implied that all laws should be created in a way that makes them applicable to all people in a fair way. This means that a law is fair regardless of the person to whom it is applied. While this may be the intention of many lawmakers, it is often not the case. A wide range of laws unfairly affects a segment or segments of the population because of various race-related factors (Crenshaw et al., 1995). Therefore, laws, including the U.S Constitution, are inherently not neutral or *colorblind* (Gotanda, 1991). Colorblind rhetoric and policies are the overly simplistic methods of attempting to create equality in politics through race-neutral principles in lieu of race-conscious principles (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Culp, 1994; Gotanda, 1991; Tate, 1997; Wise, 2010).

Critical Race Theory also emerged as a scholarly and political movement in education, sharing Critical Legal Studies' "viewpoint of law's role in the construction and maintenance of

social domination and subordination" (West, as cited in Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. xi).

Additionally, the legal system has been deeply involved in resolving issues in the education

system. "Legal doctrine must be understood as part of an ideological narrative about how race is

understood, a narrative that can legitimate racial power by representing it as neutral and

objective" (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. 4). Many policies and changes to the education system have

been shaped by the decisions of court systems and the actions of lawyers and legislators. For

example, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) conducted detailed analyses of the institution of

education by looking at the disparities between middle-class White students and Black and

Latino students. Using critical analysis methodologies, they developed insights that could be

used to engage the legal and educational systems to affect change and improve the outcomes of

students (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

As such, CRT provides a valuable framework for analyzing institutionalized and

individual issues of racial oppression in education (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). Evans-

Winters and Esposito (2010) posited that Critical Race Theory has "five tenets that have the

potential for informing educational research, curriculum, and policy formation" (p. 15). They

argued that CRT:

1) Holds that race and racism are central, endemic, permanent and fundamental in
   defining and explaining how U.S. society functions,

2) Challenges dominant ideologies and claims of race neutrality, objectivity,
   meritocracy, color-blindness and equal opportunity,

3) Is activist in nature and propagates a commitment to social justice,

4) Centers the experiences and voices of the marginalized and oppressed, and

5) Is necessarily interdisciplinary in scope and function. (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010, pp. 15-16)

Race is integral to U.S. history, national identity, and ideology, as well as politics and education (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw et al., 1995; hooks, 1989; Hull et al., 1983; King, 1988; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Losen, 2011; Morris, 2016; Perna & Jones, 2013; Powers, 2007; Smith, 2008; Smith & Stewart, 1983; Tate, 1997; Tuck; 2012; Vickery, 2015; Williams, 2016; Wise, 2010). Similar to and in conjunction with the legal system, color-blind policies in education have focused on passing legislation that functioned the same for all groups, regardless of race. By attempting to neutralize race in policy, the reduction of affirmative action policies and the new policies put in place no longer account for the disparities between racial groups (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Williams, 1997). While color-blind policies can be seen as a way of thinking with strong positive motives, colorblind rhetoric and policies result in causing significant harm by diminishing, silencing, and even erasing key aspects of racialization (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Shotwell, 2011; Williams, 1997; Wise, 2010).

Many experts, including anti-racist feminists, have agreed that education plays a critical role in understanding race relations and the perceptions of different races (Ackerman-Barger & Hummel, 2015; Aleinikoff, 1991; Apple, 1996; Banks & Banks, 2009; Bell, 1990; Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Crenshaw, 1988; Cummings, 2010; Gotanda, 1991; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Nieto, 1994, 2000). In *Racism without Racists,* Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2003) further clarified why keeping race central in the conversation is critical:

Being an antiracist begins with understanding the institutional nature of racial matters and accepting that all actors in a racialized society are affected materially (receive benefits or disadvantages) and ideologically by the racial structure. This stand implies taking

responsibility for your unwilling participation in these practices and beginning a new life

committed to the goal of achieving real racial equality. (p. 15)

This is not a new train of thought in social equity debate(s). What is relatively new, though, is

the correlation of race with the attention on ever-changing standards and metrics of achievement

(Apple, 2001). Smith (2008) surmised that although new attention to the education gap between

races has closed significantly, this could cause other issues. As the gap closes, the perceptions of

differences between races change (Tate, 1997). This could lead to a weakening of the efforts to

improve equality as people lose sight of the clear examples of the differences between races. It is

a catch-22, but without the defined gap between people, fewer people will be inclined to address

issues of inequality in policy and in practice (Smith, 2008).

The illusion of closing the gap has also led to a resurgence of color-blind rhetoric (Smith,

2008). Colorblindness in education has caused significant harm to students of different races

(Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Omi & Winant, 1994; Tate, 1997). By

removing the context of race, students are thought of as equals. While this mode of thinking is

often regarded as one of the end goals of equality, it has created situations that position students

to underperform. Oftentimes, for example, students do not have similar educational backgrounds

that would allow them to compete academically on an even level across the education system.

Without accounting for these differences, administrators cannot create systems where everyone

can develop the same level of skill (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Colorblindness, in an

attempt to make the system fair and equal, actually creates an unfair system by expecting

everyone to perform the same without accounting for the differences that cause the performance

gap between groups to begin with (Castro Atwater, 2008; Wise, 2010; Yosso & Lopez, 2010).

The call we need to make is for equity not equality.

Education scholarship has begun to employ the use of CRT frameworks and methodology to combat colorblind policies and practices (Ackerman-Barger & Hummel, 2015; Alexander, 2012; Anderson, 1989; Awad El Karim, 1999; Bernal, 2002; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997). Still, colorblindness has seen extensive implementation to make the academic environment more fair and competitive (Reason & Evans, 2007). The implementation of colorblind policies is intended to serve as a means of removing the influence of other conditions such as race and gender from the learning environment. While the intention is laudable, these policies cause significant disadvantages for specific groups (Yosso & Lopez, 2010). White students often have the advantage in these cases, but there is an increase in "color-blind campuses that perpetuate White transparency and racially cognizant environments that reveal and challenge notions of color-blindness" (Reason & Evans, 2007, p. 67). Some campuses are taking a deeper look into the effects of colorblind policies and are working to remove them, as many see that they disadvantage the very students that they were intended to protect (Yosso & Lopez, 2010).

Two important aspects worth contemplating are that race is a social construct that often positions the person who claims to feel the effects of racism as irrational (Aleinikoff, 1991; Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Crenshaw, 1988; Gotanda, 1991; Smith, 2008; Wise, 2010; Zinn & Dill, 1994) and that it intersects with other aspects of a person's identity (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1988; Cummings, 2010; Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Williams, 1997; Zinn & Dill, 1994). This places race at the center of social justice issues, as it is a large part of how people identify and divide themselves into different groups (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Feminists and anti-racist feminists have applied intersectionality as a critical part of CRT. Since intersectionality identifies the

connection between intersecting conditions found in a single person, event, or context, the oppression is being addressed with a CRT focus on the intersection of race and other issues. Intersectionality allows analysts to describe the inseparable connection between race and other conditions found in CRT analyses. As a result, race is a critical component that cannot be removed if analysts are to accurately assess and resolve issues.

Critical race theorists often have described critical bonds between race and other factors, making a case for intersectionality to be included in all educational analyses (Tate, 1997). This is another reason why color-blind policies are ineffective and harmful when trying to address the needs of different groups and the needs within groups. Without a commitment to intersectionality, intragroup differences are often ignored, making proposed solutions unlikely to adequately resolve the issue for all parties. Different narratives form based on each groups' individual experiences and collective practices (Ladson-Billings, 2000). As these narratives develop, addressing the concerns of each group becomes more difficult. Instead of removing race from the analysis, it should become a prominent part that includes an analysis of how the differences between groups can affect the outcome of initiatives (Gordon, 1990; Scheurich & Young, 1997). Placing race at the center of the analysis ensures that the issues specific to different groups are accounted for and addressed (Gordon, 1990).

Critical Race Theory can be used as a tool in education, as well as an instrument for "rooting out inequality and injustice" (Trevino, Harris, & Wallace, 2008, p. 8) by focusing the efforts of social justice advocates on areas where people suffer due to disparities between racial groups. Many of these areas remain unnoticed, which facilitates an expanded divide between racial groups. Critical Race Theory allows activists to focus on problems that can be better understood and resolved with a stronger understanding of how race affects these situations. By

analyzing situations from the viewpoints of all the races involved, resolutions to these issues will be more effective and can be implemented in an equitable way (Alenikoff, 1991; Apple, 2006). A significant part of this intersectional research effort must focus on the narratives that different groups form to describe the issues that they face (Nieto, 2000).

Intersectionality: A theoretical lens. Intersectionality[7] plays a significant role in education research, as well as education practice (Lynn, Benigno, Williams, Park, & Mitchell, 2006). It is an integral part of understanding how groups are affected by a variety of societal ills (Hull et al., 1983). Women of color are an example of a group that faces issues that cannot be separated; under the concept of intersectionality, social constructs and oppression are inextricably linked (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1993; hooks, 1984). Intersectionality has seen extensive development as a concept through feminist and anti-racist feminist scholarship, where gender is moved to the middle. In many cases, women have faced added injustices by being "doubly bound" (Gay & Tate, 1998, p. 170) by facing sexism *and* other forms of oppression, such as racism. The influence of being a woman and another social construct (i.e., race, class, religion, sexuality, etc.), often have become critically connected (Lorde, 1980). As a result, addressing one issue without addressing the others fails to resolve the problems women face. Only by resolving all the issues together can women find satisfactory solutions.

Without essentializing, feminists have used intersectionality to explain and examine the issues facing women across all groups while putting them in the context of how they affect women as individuals and, perhaps, as a group (McCall, 2005). This study was mindful of the four "raced-and-gendered realities" posited by critical race feminists Evans-Winters and Esposito (2010):

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[7] For more discussion on intersectionality and identity, please also refer to pages 32-34 of this study.

1) Girls of African descent are at the bottom of the social totem pole in society; thus, there is an urgent need for a theoretical framework that serves to expose, confront and eradicate race, class and gender oppression in our families, communities and schools.

2) Currently, not enough is being done by scholars in the field of education on the policy front or pedagogically to unabashedly develop and implement classroom practice and curriculum that directly relates to the needs of Black girls.

3) In the postmodern era, Black girls' psyches and bodies are being subjected to subjugation in the media, racist and sexist school policies that serve to exclude and silence Black girls, and social and legal policies that dehumanize rather than foster the quality of life of many low-income and working class young women.

4) Young women's existence at the margins presents both constraints and possibilities for all educational reform efforts and overall societal transformation. Therefore, research with and on behalf of Black girls benefits the whole of society. (p. 22)

Critical Race Theory has been not just redefining the way legislators and legal experts understand and examine issues in the context of race—it has been employed by social scientists as well (McCall, 2005). Critical Race Theory and intersectionality are connected, where intersectionality is essential to CRT; intersectionality focuses on the critical connection between two or more conditions, whereas with CRT, these connections are specifically between race and at least one other condition. Anti-racist feminists often make use of intersectionality *and* CRT in attempts to explain the issues women face, as many involve race as one of the mitigating conditions (Crenshaw et al., 1995).

Layering lenses for education research: Applying Critical Race Theory and intersectionality in this study. Combined, CRT and intersectionality are important liberatory frameworks for the analysis of how education policies and practices are developed and implemented and how education differs based on race (Banks, 2004). When analyzing school systems, analysts often find a distinct difference between the performance of minority groups and their White counterparts, most often found to be connected to heavily racialized and deeply embedded White norms (Williams & Land, 2006; Wise, 2010). To understand the reasons behind this, applying the concepts of CRT and intersectionality focuses the discussion on the elements that are affected by race.

Without concepts like CRT and intersectionality, lawmakers and educators might continue to make changes that have negative effects on specific groups (Banks, 2004; Morris, 2016). The decisions made by administrators and teachers are often influenced by their perceptions of the needs of different races (Morris, 2007). These perceptions are influenced by life experiences, which are primarily limited to their own racial groups (Lynn et al., 2006). As a result, decisions may be skewed or uninformed about other groups (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Therefore, methods for analyzing decisions in the context of other races is important (Daiute, 2014; Nieto, 1994; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). These methods enable people with little experience with the needs of other races to develop purposeful education strategies and policies more effectively (Nieto, 2000; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

Critical Race Theory allows for the close examination of society and culture in relationship to educational policy and practice, while intersectionality studies how interrelated systems impact people, including race and gender. Layering these theories as a framework for this research made it easier to discover both actionable and useful comprehensive results

(McCall, 2005). A qualitative study combining these theories can provide powerful insight into the lives of those living the experiences. As a qualitative researcher using CRT and intersectionality as an inquiry paradigm to frame my research, my intent for this educational reform research was to propose a different agenda, one imagined as an ongoing exchange, not only about the social and academic experiences of women of color in postsecondary education and urban public single-sex schooling, but also one that continually, through narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993), centers on the experiences of young women of color themselves. When educators better understand the experiences of their minority students, they can more effectively meet the needs of these students (Ackerman-Barger & Hummel, 2015). Equally important, when White educators understand their own dominant framing of experiences and their implicit knowing and become more comfortable with race-based stress, they can begin to better understand the experiences of their students of color (DiAngelo, 2004; Leonardo & Manning, 2017). To do so, both teachers and students need tools to deconstruct their experiences and create common language systems.

One purpose of this study was to inform the practices of secondary and postsecondary practitioners who serve student populations, perhaps in student services and academic affairs capacities. An exemplary social science student affairs model for understanding and employing a study framed by CRT and founded on the notion that the social construction of non-linear intersectional identity differs in multiple contexts (e.g., secondary and postsecondary schools, single-sex and coed schools, home, church, etc.) is Jones and McEwen's (2000) Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (MMDI). Most other student development models focus on identity or context but not on the interactive nature of both. In addition, this model includes a

utility the authors described as a filtering property to discuss the complexities of contextual influences on one's internal sense of self.

Employing the Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity in this study. Jones and McEwen (2000) held that "no one dimension [of student development] may be understood singularly; it can be understood only in relation to other dimensions" (pp. 409-410). This model (Figure 1) helps scholars and practitioners make sense of the complex nature and tensions of the intersection of core elements (one's personal awareness and self-agency) with the contextual (the social/political/historical) in identity construction: "The model of multiple dimensions in identity describes the dynamic construction of identity and the influence of changing contexts on the relative salience of multiple identity dimensions, such as race, sexual orientation, culture, and social class" (Abes et al., 2007, p. 3). The added value of the MMDI is that it "provides a framework for how multiple identities contribute to the complexity of *individual dimensions* [emphasis added]" (Abes & Jones, 2004, p. 612), taking into account a value-laden core sense of self and the influence of the varying contexts in which a person experiences life (Abes & Jones, 2004): "The salience of each identity dimension to the core sense of self is fluid and depends on contextual influences" (Abes & Jones, 2004, p. 613). This model offers a process appropriate for a CRT and intersectionality framework and for understanding the self-perception of identity dimensions, as well as the relationship between social identities and the core identity (Abes et al., 2007) of college-age young women of color[8] who once experienced the context of a single-sex school. It accounts for a pliable sense of self, as well as the acknowledgement of variable contexts.

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[8] The women of this study are completing their "junior" year of college, having currently been enrolled full-time for four years. They intend to complete college in five years.
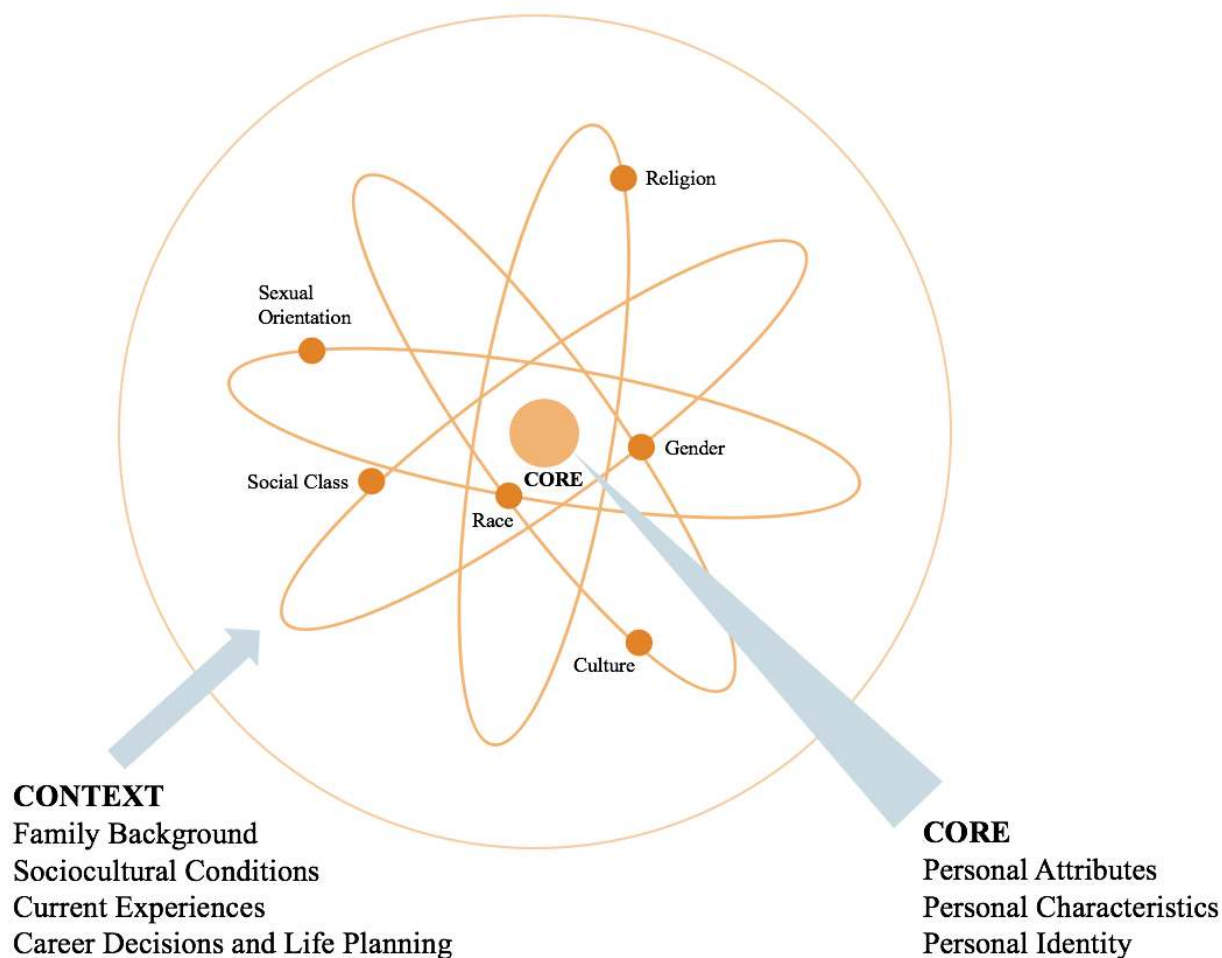
Figure 1. Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (Jones & McEwen, 2000).

In 2007, Abes, Jones, and McEwen updated the Model of Multiple Dimensions of

Identity to include a meaning-making framework (Magolda, 2001) to help elucidate what they

call "self-authorship[9]" to "more thoroughly include the relationship between social identities and

the core of identity" (p. 6). This new focus on the relationship of the contextual influences and

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[9] Grounded in the Piagetian constructivist tradition, requiring complexity in all three domains (interpersonal, intrapersonal, and cognitive), self-authorship occurs through "an ability to construct knowledge in a contextual world, and ability to construct an internal identity separate from external influences, and an ability to engage in relationships without losing one's internal identity" (Magolda, 1999a, p. 12).

core identity takes a stronger account of biological, social, and cognitive developments of students and their ability to accept or reject external messaging. While the non-linear intersectional social identity dimensions of the original model (Jones & McEwen, 2000) are still evident in the Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (RMMDI) (Figure 2), the added complexity of a meaning-making filter is included to highlight the interconnectedness of contextual influences, meaning-making, and self-perceptions of one's social identities.

Self-Perceptions of Multiple Identity Dimensions, such as race, social class, sexual orientation, gender, religion

Meaning-Making Filter
Depending on complexity, contextual influences pass through to different degrees

Contextual Influences, such as peers, family, norms, stereotypes, sociopolitical conditions
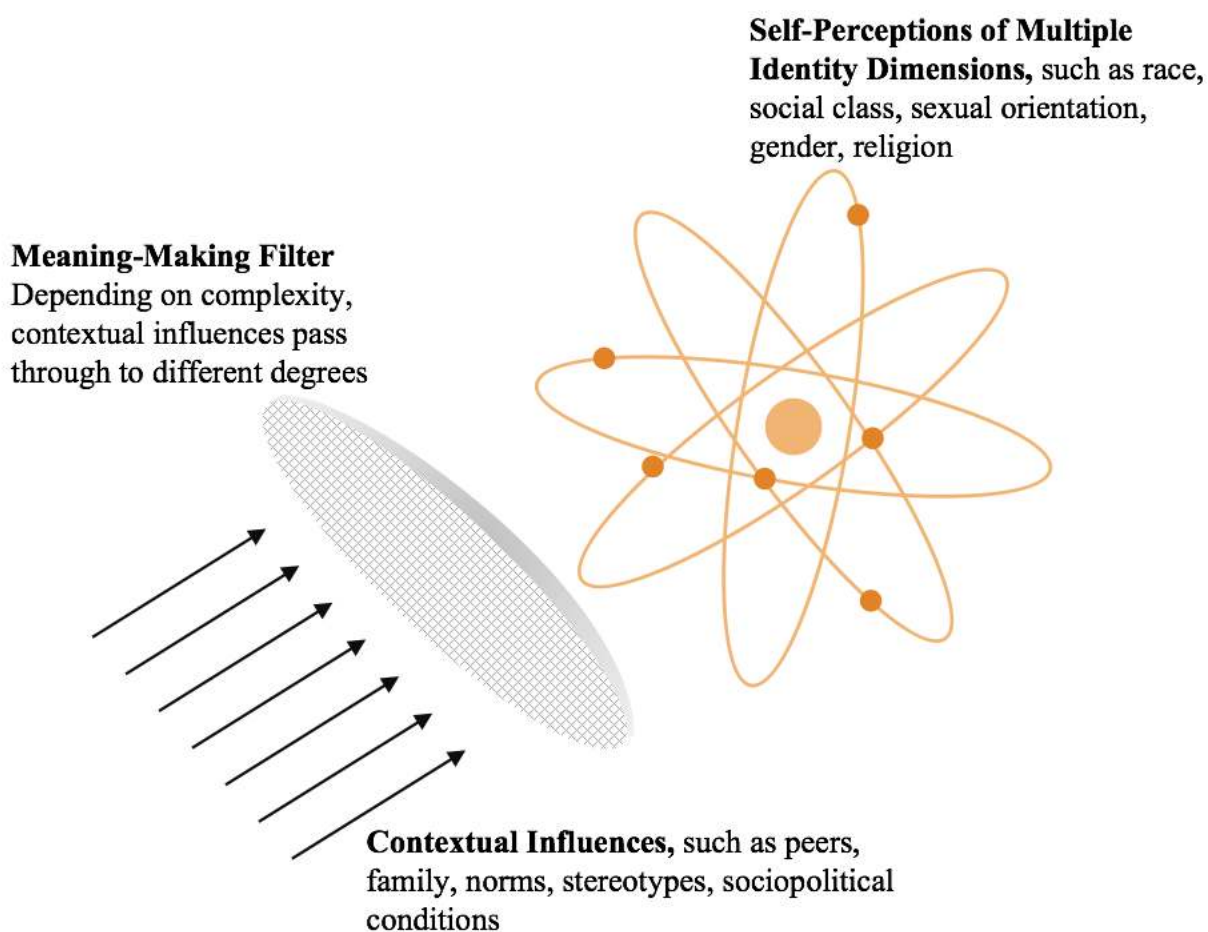
Figure 2. Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity.

According to Abes et al. (2007), the Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity

> portrays in two dimensions the interactive nature of the relationship among components
>
> of the identity construction process: context, meaning-making, and identity
>
> perceptions…. How contextual influences move through the filter depends on the depth
>
> and permeability of the filter. The depth (thickness) and permeability (size of openings)
>
> of the filter depend on the complexity of the person's meaning-making capacity. (p. 6)

The RRMDI clearly recognizes that the socially constructed identity categories (e.g., race, social class, sexual orientation, gender, religion) that influence, impact, and inform each other do not interact in linear ways, *and* contextual influences (e.g., peers, family, norms, stereotypes, sociopolitical conditions) pass through an individual's filter at varying degrees (Abes et al., 2007; Collins, 1989; Crenshaw, 1991, 1995; Ellis, 2001; Fasching-Varner, Mitchell, Martin, & Bennett-Haron, 2014; Green et al., 2016; Magolda, 1999; Pollard & Welch, 2006; Roberts, 1998). The process of meaning-making was at the heart of this study and the focus of data analysis with important distinctions squarely in view. As Magolda (2009) wrote, "our meaning-making structures are a combination of elements over which we have control (objects) and elements that have control over us (subject)" (p. 624). Self-authoring then, is when we are able to take others' expectations as object and separate ourselves and construct an inner voice to mentally organize those expectations (Magolda, 2009), for "before the cultivation of this internal voice, one's personal voice is an echo of the voice of external authority" (Magolda, 2009, p. 628).

The RMMDI model also allows for the development of agency as expressed by self-authorship or the "ability to construct knowledge in a contextual world, and ability to construct

an internal identity separate from external influences, and an ability to engage in relationships without losing one's internal identity" (Magolda, 1999a, p. 12). It is important to note that this model focuses on the process of how we make meaning instead of the specific outcomes and meanings we make; this study coupled this model with a modified version of narrative inquiry to equally privilege the self-perceptions and meanings the participants made. This interlinked approach provided a comprehensive and flexible structure for analysis.

Methodology: Narrative Inquiry Case Study

Magolda's (2009) view was "to understand students in their diverse social contexts and locations requires building theory in practice, intentionally and systematically gathering and interpreting how students make meaning of their experience" (p. 636). This qualitative study was idiographic and inductive (Gibbs, 2007), and it employed a modified approach to narrative inquiry to the extent that I was interested in the storied nature of the human experience (Sarbin, 1986) and how "the *I* tells a story of the self, and that story becomes a part of *Me*" [emphasis in the original] (McAdams et al., 2006, p. 3). McAdams (1985, 1997) argued that *narrative identities*, or the stories people construct and tell about themselves to define who they are for themselves and for others, function to organize and make coherent a whole life, a life that might otherwise be fragmented or oppositional. Narrating identity meaning-making is formulated and can be carried across the adult lifespan (Freeman, 2009; McAdams, 2013; Singer, 2004), and our (re)telling of our story is also a way for imagining the world as it might be otherwise (Bruner, 1986, 2002; Daiute, 2014; Greene, 2001; Maruna, 2001; McAdams, 2013). Adding further nuance, Connelly and Clandinin (2006) explained that "the most profound differences in kinds of narrative inquiry are captured in a distinction between living and telling" (p. 478), where the stories and space between can prove to be revelatory (to oneself and others), safe, validating, and

even therapeutic (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). Being heard through a coherent story of ones' own life also has a strong correlation and connection to psychological well-being (Baerger & McAdams, 1999; Lykes, 1983; Richardson, 1997; Riessman, 2002; Singer & Salovey, 1993).

This study's modified approach to narrative inquiry stops short of qualitatively re-storying the participants' lives and instead analyzes their life stories to tease out the contextual influences of the social systems, processes, and ideologies of their identity meaning-making and self-authorship. While I intentionally used the participants' exact words to tell part of this story, I also acknowledged that my mediation bends the telling to some degree. I echoed Grossman, Kurgar, and Moore (1999) when in commenting on their own study, they warned that the findings are "*a* description, not *the* description" (p. 118) of the research group at a particular time and in a particular place. I believed that the "situatedness" of knowledge of the participant as well as the located knowledge of the researcher contributed to the research product (Haraway, 1991; Stanley & Wise, 1993), and therefore, it cannot be universal or essentialized (Wing, 1997). As I discuss in the methods section later in this chapter, I took multiple measures to ensure my telling and analysis captures the participants' voices, or their living and their telling, in light of Connelly and Clandinin's (2016) rendering of narrative inquiry.

Designing the study: Dynamic narrative research. This study utilized Daiute's (2014) dynamic narrative research design. Dynamic narrating is summarized as "a concept emphasizing the interactive, communicative, purposeful nature of narrating, leading to strands of meaning researchers can identify to enhance findings about human problems, understandings, and behaviors" (p. 29). This approach

extends knowledge about mundane narrating to the design of research acknowledging

that people *use* narratives (they don't pour meaning into them) to relate to social,

physical, and symbolic environments (people don't narrate only for interviewers or

themselves), to employ features of the genre to create meaning (people don't just speak

through narratives to meaning in some other place; meaning evolves with the narrative

such that narrator and audience are changed in the process), and to engage tension

between culturally accepted stories and alternatives leading to social change. (Daiute,

2014, p. 29)

Daiute noted that "narrative inquiry focuses on stories and/or the storied nature of discourse by

analyzing themes, structures (such as turning points), or interactions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011;

Riessman, 2007) and requires the researcher to look beyond the surface of the text (Riessman,

2007)" (pp. 10-11). Daiute concurred that narrating, and thus knowledge and identity creation

(Foucault, 2001), is dynamic and situated socially and culturally (Bahktin, 1986), and that

narratives are rarely separate from the dominant discourse. Thus, they require carefully planned

and systematic design.

Daiute (2014) provided concepts and activity-meaning system design suggestions and

tools for emerging research. An "[a]ctivity-meaning system depicts an environment of everyday

life—a cross-context slice of life—wherein relationships across different points of view by

different actors in the system interact in some way" (Daiute, 2014, p. 38). In this meaning

system, Daiute (2014) encouraged activities that allow for participants "to narrate in different

relational stances to audiences, by shifting the focal character across first person to third person

to fictional, or omniscient" (p. 51). Consistent with qualitative methods, in Daiute's (2014)

dynamic approach to narrative inquiry, data collection was carried out through two open-ended

interviews (first-person stance), one focus group interview (first and third person), and one fictional story writing exercise (omniscient). Additionally, I used a personal (researcher) reflective journal (Merriam, 2002). This study took the form and tools of a case study because all its participants attended the same single-sex, urban, public high school. This case study is ethnographically informed due to having spent eight months in the school, observing and interviewing these students, during their junior year while I conducted a class project[10] in 2012. Participants were invited to share experiences from both contexts: their secondary and postsecondary school experiences *and* their experiences as participants in both studies (Messina, 2013).

Methods

A central purpose of this study was to uncover the endemic nature of sexism and racism and to focus on the actual experiences of the girls' lives in order to ferret out *where* the discourses regarding women of color are embedded, *how* the discourses work, and *what* educational opportunities these discourses open up or delimit for women of color. Because different subjectivities disrupt our understanding as much as they inform them (Grossman, Kruger, & Moore, 1999), this study utilized Daiute's (2014) dynamic approach to narrative inquiry design and analysis.

Sample selection. This study employed purposeful sampling, a method "based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). Daiute (2014) rightly asserted that a case study approach to sampling allows for ways to seek "common,

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[10] For a 2012 class project, I interviewed these seven students, two of their teachers (language arts and art), and two administrators (the school principal and college/guidance counselor). I also collected school materials (e.g., a handbook, marketing brochures, and newsletters), as well as kept field notes.

diverse, and interacting meanings relevant to an issue within and/or across individuals and groups" (p. 249).

My case study sample included seven young women of color who attended the same urban, public, single-sex school. Through the DePaul University Institutional Review Board-approved recruitment and consent process, each young woman agreed to fully participate in this study and chose her own pseudonym. All seven women were participants in one of my class projects during their eleventh-grade year of high school in 2012. DePaul's Institutional Review Board waived the need for consent and allowed me to use my notes and transcripts from that project as a secondary data set for this research. I have remained in a mentor/mentee relationship with each of the participants since then, which allowed me access to invite them to participate in my current study. Our continued relationship also allowed me to engage them in a way appropriate to this study because I have a strong sense of their history and they know me well. Each woman subsequently went on directly from secondary school to enroll full-time in their respective postsecondary education institutions. Three are currently enrolled full-time in a four-year, predominantly White institution (PWI) (i.e., college/university) in and near their home city. Two are currently enrolled part-time in a four-year PWI in their home city and are working part-time. One is enrolled full-time in an out-of-state, historically Black college or university (HBCU). One participant has successfully completed two years at a PWI but has recently withdrawn from school entirely with an intention to return when financially able.

Introduction to participants. To provide context to the findings, I introduce the participants, all of whom chose pseudonyms as part of the consent process. Regarding their current higher education institutions, this study refers to the all-girls secondary school as "The American Academy" and refers to all of the postsecondary schools by the generic term

"university." Except for the one participant who is currently attending a southern HBCU, all the participants were raised, attend college, and continue to live in a major Midwestern city. The HBCU undergrad currently lives in a Southern major city and intends to return to her childhood home upon graduation.

The descriptions in Table 1 were provided by participants themselves in writing during the commencement exercise of the initial interview session through the "Who Am I" questionnaire (Appendix A); these narratives include the specific order and capitalization in which each identity factor was disclosed by the participant. Additional identities may have emerged throughout the interview process but are not included here. Those noted below are strictly from the very first inquiry about their self-authorship.

Table 1.

Introduction to Participants

Participant (pseudonym)	Age	"I am a(n):
Alice	22	Black woman; Christian; sister; daughter; college student; hard worker; Midwestern urban context [city name removed to protect confidentiality]
Shandra	21	Dominican; American; naturalized citizen; athlete; woman; business major; student; girlfriend
Diana	23	Single mom; African American; woman; college student; daughter; fighter
Kerri	22	African American woman; student; Christian; sister; survivor of gun violence; powerful leader
Lana	22	African American woman; student; sister; daughter; heterosexual; Midwestern urban context [city name removed to protect confidentiality]; athlete; leader
Ria	23	African; American; Yoruba; Black woman; mentor; community organizer; writer; lover; student; dancer
Zora	22	African American; cisgendered woman; non-practicing Christian; feminist; bisexual; student; advocate

Instrumentation and data collection. Because I was interested in the self-authorship of identity and its influence on education, gathering and eliciting narratives was essential to my inquiry (Daiute, 2014). It is from this perspective that my data collection strategy emerged.

Interviews. Semi-structured interviewing is a method that can be consistent with feminist ideas (Garko, 1999; Sprague, 2005). Given my history with the participants, our rapport reduced power disparities in the interviews (Oakley, 1988; Campbell & Wasco, 2000). "[D]iscourse is an activity… [and] narrating functions as a tool to mediate individual and societal interactions, so

researchers can begin activities where participants have the opportunity to narrate flexibly to interact and reflect on the issues of interest" (Daiute, 2014, p. 20). Daiute (2014) elaborated further on the relevance of time and space in interviews employing dynamic narrative inquiry:

> Activity-meaning-making systems make visible and audible the network of relationships and interactions in which each narrative occurs. Researchers highlight narrative use when they ask interviewees to narrate for different relevant purposes, from different perspectives (such as in the first person and in the third person), for different audiences and different contexts. Inviting narrator-audience relations with different genres and across time, and across positive and negative experiences are design strategies that have offered evocative information beyond what is expressed from single points of view. (p. 42)

For all of these reasons, I used a diversity of trusted instruments and techniques during my interviews to elicit expressions from multiple points of view (Daiute, 2014).

As I have said, at the commencement of the first interview, the participants completed a "Who Am I" (Cushner, 1999) questionnaire (Appendix A). The intention of the (first person) narrative text is to separate the explicit from the implicit in identity construction (Cushner, 1999) by asking each of the participants to define in writing (i.e., the explicit) her identity. The conversation that follows probes that which is left unsaid, or rather, unwritten (i.e., the implicit). This questionnaire serves to neutralize (to the degree possible) the issues of power and influence in the researcher and participant relationship (Kitzinger, 1991). This questionnaire and the subsequent activity were important for informing some of my interview questions, as well as some of the questions for the focus group (Appendix B).

Two audiotaped interview sessions with open-ended questions designed around themes of identity were conducted two weeks apart at the convenience of the participant (Schram, 2006). The second interview was made up of open-ended questions and story-telling prompts (Daiute, 2014; McLean & Breen, 2009) for the purpose of embedding "institutional values, power relations, circumstances of the physical environment, and individual motivations in narrations or scripts" (Daiute, 2014, p. 7; see also Fairclough, 2010; Harre & van Langenhove, 1999; Nelson, 1998). Each 60-minute interview was conducted locally in private library conference rooms at the participant's university. The out-of-state participant's interviews were conducted via Skype; each time she was alone in her apartment, and I was alone in my private work office. Each interview was transcribed as soon after the interview as possible (Gibbs, 2007) by a professional IRB-approved transcription service and followed by member checking my (interpretive) transcripts with my participants, with time for residual questions (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Each interview was modeled on a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix B).

Fictional story writing. At the end of the first interview, participants were asked to write a fictional story based on the following prompt (Appendix C):

> Imagine a town near yours (but not necessarily a real town) where people gathered to
>
> protest the experiences of women of color on a university campus. What was the
>
> problem? What happened? How did everyone think and feel about it? How did it all turn
>
> out? (Daiute, 2014, p. 50-51).

As Daiute (2014) instructed, allowing the participants to speak through a variety of narrative exercises invites them "to narrate in different relational stances to audience" (p. 51), whereas "in fiction, the author is 'omniscient,' presenting the story from outside the action through a narrator, which may or may not be explicit" (p. 50). Participant stories were submitted to me prior to the

second interview and the focus group taking place. The themes that emerged helped to inform my focus group questions.

Focus groups. According to Oliveira (as cited in Daiute, 2014), "Narrators tend to put their best selves out there in their stories" (p. 50), so asking a participant to narrate good and bad experiences in relation to themselves and as the voice of another, "tends to elicit very different information" (Dauite, 2014, p. 50; see also Daiute, Eisenberg, & Vasconcellos, 2012; Fivush & Haden, 2003; Jovic, 2012). One audiotaped focus group[11] interview session (Appendix B) took place. It lasted 90 minutes. Participants, selected according to location and availability, were asked to narrate their own stories (as well as stories of fictional "others"), concerning both positive and negative experiences in relation to their personal histories of having attended their school as they worked through college. Again, the focus group dialogue was transcribed as soon after the interview as possible, along with member checking with the participants and attending to any follow-up questions.

Research diary. I kept a personal research diary to record my ideas, thoughts and feelings, discussions with others, notions about the research or the process, as well as a place to compile my thoughts on the direction of data collection and analysis for both my 2012 class project and this study (Gibbs, 2007). To be clear, *I saw myself* as a subgroup of this research group with the intention of reflecting on and wrestling with my own subjectivities and the complexity of doing identity research (Belle, 1982; Campbell & Wasco, 2000; Crawford, 2013; Grossman et al., 1999; Hollway, 1989; Oakley, 1988; Riessman, 1990; Sprague & Kobrynowiscz, 2003; Yost & Chmielewski, 2013).

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[11] Based on my experience with these students in the doctoral class project, I believed they would be more comfortable with collective testimony and more candid and talkative in a small-group setting (Villenas, 1996). Including a focus group interview for 90 minutes allowed for this.

Data Analysis

This study was designed to strike a balance between data, theory, and application, and even though it was structured around a model (RMMDI), I was careful not to allow the model to pigeon-hole the data. The RMMDI has been criticized for lacking attention or adequate focus on power, oppression, and privilege (Magolda, 2009). However, nesting this research within CRT and intersectionality and employing Daiute's values and significance analysis during interview protocol construction and early rounds of data analysis and coding gave way to a more holistic perspective.

Once the interviews and focus group recordings were transcribed, I began by listening to each tape while reading the script for accuracy, noting any edits or adjustments on a second copy of each script and being careful to keep one, clean, original copy (Fogerty, 2006). Using Atlas.ti, I then began to inductively code the data (Gibbs, 2007) of each interview into themes, as well as the focus group transcript. Data analysis consisted of coding the transcript "texts of identity" (Gibbs, 2007; Shotter & Gergen, 1989) employing Daiute's (2014) *values analysis*, which is essentially

> a way to consider interaction and changes of meaning in terms of culture, power, and dynamic societies. By selecting expressions from different perspectives participating in the creation and debate of meaning around an issue [or experience], a researcher can identify common, divergent, and changing values around the issue of research interest.… With this analysis, researchers can gain insights about values that are in dispute or at least in flux for the less influential participants as well as the more influential. (p. 112)

Second, the data from the fictional story prompt was coded using plot analysis, which advances narrative inquiry by systematically offering a way to "identify subtle yet important

differences in the experiences people share with their narratives. Plots are like lenses narrators use to focus on what intrigues them, concerns them, or functions in another way in a context" (Daiute, 2014, p. 149). The analysis of the stories was completed prior to the focus group interview, and the thematic results informed those questions.

Third, each participant's narrative was analyzed as a holistic story (collectively, their two interview transcripts, their focus group contributions, and their fictional story submission) using *significance analysis* to code with a focus on *the way* the full story of each participant was told, building, as Daiute (2014) explained, on "prior sociolinguistic, developmental, and narrative research examining dual phases of meaning of discourse—evaluative meaning and referential meaning" (as cited in Labov & Waletzky, 1997, p. 150). In Daiute's (2014) view, "the *way* a story is told offers clues to *why* it is told (p. 150), [and] because significance individualizes meaning shared within a sociocultural group, significance analysis offers researchers a tool for attending to particulars, nuances, even quirks in ways that highlight person and purpose in narrating" (p. 151). This was accomplished by approaching all components (interview one, the fictional story, interview two, and personal contributions within the focus group) of each participant as one narrative, using Atlas.ti to inductively code the data in two rounds and to organize the findings.

With regard to coding, I created a coding manual (Daiute, 2014) appropriate to each strategy and wrote preliminary findings in relationship to the research questions to share in peer debriefing. Recognizing that we construct meaning as we interact in the world, additional codes emerged as I further engaged with the data (Crotty, 1998) and in member checking with my participants. Once all the transcripts were coded using various methods, I reviewed and refined the emergent values-laden themes while consistently referring to my research questions,

methodology, and theoretical framework. Eccles' (1994) study on women's professional achievement offered a translatable lesson:

> Defining achievement itself, much less defining appropriate or ideal ways of using one's talents, is a value-laden enterprise at best. Evaluating the meaning and consequences of gender differences on any particular criterion of achievement is equally value-laden. Too many social scientists have adopted a male standard of ideal achievement when judging the value of female achievements (see Parsons & Goff, 1980). Using this standard, they have focused on the question "Why aren't women more like men?" … To balance this bias, we have tried to pay particular attention to the reasons women themselves provide to explain their achievement-related choices. (pp. 586-587)

In this study, I paid particularly close attention to the reasons the women provided rather than make my own attempts to determine their reasoning. I categorized more formalized recurrent themes by going back to the data to ensure at least four separate participants offered reasons within their narratives that qualified.

The RMMDI provided structure for organizing the study's themes in a way that offered insights about contextual meaning-making in relation to my research questions. I situated the five recurrent value-laden themes within the RMMDI. Consequently, three of Magolda's (1996b) meaning-making structures emerged as grand categories of the *process* of how participants made meaning of their identities. This systematic approach allowed for combining the process of analyses (e.g., significance and value coding comingled within the RMMDI structure) to address both the dynamics of power, oppression, and privilege *and* the relationship between contextual influences, meaning-making structures, and the content of identity. I formulated connections

between my observations to identify patterns of similarity, difference, change, and/or coherence to state my findings addressing the study's research questions.

Lastly, once these recurrent themes and meaning-making structures were clear and member-checked, I coded my own interview notes and research diary to locate myself in the same critical pane as my participants (Grossman et al., 1997; Harding, 1987; Kleinman & Copp, 1993; Landrine, Klonoff, & Brown-Collins, 1992; O'Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2012; Smith, 1987; Sprague, 2005). Taking encouragement from Worrel and Etaugh (1994) to "emphasize the [feminist scholar] researcher as an individual who interacts with participants in meaningful ways that enrich both the observer and the observed" (p. 446), I was able to analyze my own bias and assumptions throughout this process (Harding, 1991), to make visible my implicit knowing (Shotwell, 2011), enrich my skillset as a researcher, and to deepen my understanding of the research process. Indeed, the process and the content of a research project are inseparable (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Crawford, 2013; Grossman et al., 1999; Wasser & Bresler, 1996).

After organizing the recurrent themes, I member checked the participants' stories with my interpretations of the categories to which they corresponded. All seven women agreed to this process via Skype and screen sharing, and no changes were requested. The purpose of my analysis was to not only uncover specific identity constructions but also analyze the process of meaning-making in relation to identity. Two months later, a working draft of Chapters 4 and 5 was provided to the participants as another stage of member checking. I followed up with a phone call in which we discussed their reactions to the chapters. No requests for revision were made, and I received confirmation from all seven participants that they approved of and felt validated by my findings and discussion.

Study Limitations and Delimitations

I contend that employing a constructivist approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) while grounding this study in critical frameworks was appropriate because I sought to understand, through verbal and written dialogue, how a select subgroup of participants make meaning of their intersectional identity. To understand participants' meaning-making, this study modified a narrative inquiry case study methodology. No research is without limitations, though, and two of the central limitations of this study are its sample size and the sample selection. This is not inherently problematic in qualitative research, as Patton (2002) wrote: "Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources" (pp. 242-243). Concerning sample size and sample selection, I also took into account Creswell's (2013) advice on the importance of selecting participants who will be open and honest when telling "their story" (p. 133). The study design and the plurality of tools used during data collection (Daiute, 2014; Turner, 2010), a commitment to simultaneous data analysis so that collected data would inform and strengthen my investigation (Merriam, 2002), and my commitment to collecting trustworthy, thick descriptive data (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1986) worked collectively to address the limitations of sample size and sample selection.

Cuádraz and Uttal (1999) specifically addressed methodological issues that arise when relying on in-depth interviews in intersectionality research. They make two recommendations for researchers analyzing interlocking systems of oppression and intersectionality through in-depth interviews.

First, the researcher needs to contextualize the social construction of meaning. Second the researcher needs to examine the relationship between structure (e.g., race, class, and

gender) and biography (e.g., individual accounts) separately, together, and simultaneously. We recommend a two-step method for contextualizing the social construction of meaning. The researcher needs to both account for situational location and social location. First, the researcher needs to listen to how the individual understands their experience and explains their situational location, that is the contemporary moment about which the account reports. Second, the researcher needs to locate these accounts in relation to the individual's social location, that is, how histories of race, class, and gender stratification (and other structural forms of domination) have shaped contemporary social location for the social group this individual represents. (Cuádraz & Uttal, 1999, p. 179)

I appropriated these recommendations in an attempt to address the limitations of relying largely on in-depth interview techniques.

In recognizing that the researcher as the "research instrument" is "[c]entral to conducting research and more specifically qualitative research" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 368), I have written at length about my dedication to examining my own subjectivity throughout this study with a commitment to an iterative examination of my own meaning-making contexts. Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) wrote that stories are "told, revised, and retold throughout our life. We know or discover ourselves, and reveal ourselves to others, by the stories we tell" (p. 7). Throughout this study, I have remained devoted to the notion that we also know or discover ourselves through the way we hear and interpret the stories of others. To that end, I have consistently applied Lincoln and Guba's (1986) framework of trustworthiness in addressing this limitation.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) have devised parallel criteria of trustworthiness (i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) to the conventional positivist paradigm of rigor (i.e., internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity). To enhance *credibility*, I used Lincoln and Guba's (1985) suggested peer debriefing and member checks techniques. Peer debriefing refers to engaging a disinterested professional peer to assist in the data analysis. As such, I have developed a network of educators dedicated to the study of intersectionality and debriefed my interpretations with a colleague. I also solicited my participant's reactions or engaged in member-checking concerning my interpretations or reconstructions of the data they offered. This was particularly important because analysis included consideration of "the gaps, the silences, the tensions, and the omissions" (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000, p. 21), where my own perceptions were included. To increase the probability of *transferability*, I worked at collecting "thick descriptive data—narrative developed about the context so that judgments about the degree of fit or similarity may be made by others" (p. 77). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that an appropriate technique for *dependability and confirmability* is conducting an "external audit requiring both the establishment of an audit trail and the carrying out of an audit by a competent external, disinterested auditor" (p. 77). Again, I turned to my peer network to complete this technique.

In my efforts to conduct a trustworthy and ethical study, I systematically employed trusted research methodology techniques that allowed the students' voices to be the knowledge that this study reveals and contributes to education research (Karnieli-Miller, Strier & Pessach, 2009), while acknowledging that despite my best efforts to remain neutral, their "voice" would ultimately be co-constructed through my interpretations.

Role of the Researcher

Alan Peshkin (1991) asserted that "[m]y subjectivity is the basis for the story I am able to tell" (p. 104). My subjectivity, like my participants, is informed by the world I occupy; this is my story. I am a White, middle-class, first-generation college graduate/educated, straight, liberal, anti-racist feminist, cisgendered woman who grew up in a protective, Christian, working/middle class, family-oriented, heteronormative, homogenous small village in rural Ohio, where there was no cable, no Internet, and no stoplights.

The discourses that made up *my knowing* (Shotwell, 2011) had ill-prepared me for life outside of my rural town, where most people stayed and married their high school sweetheart or they left to never return. While I graduated near the top of my high school class, I struggled through undergraduate school both with the schoolwork and with the independence that living on my own afforded me. I had to work to pay for the portion of college that my student loans would not cover, and for the first time in my life, I faced potential failure. I changed majors, changed jobs, failed a few classes entirely, and dropped in and out of school altogether several times. It took time, and I experienced both success and failure, but I managed to press on and graduate.

I eventually found my passion, and I decided to enroll in graduate school to pursue a teaching degree. It took some sacrifice but was well worth it. My first year of teaching was in an independent, affluent, all-boys' academy in an upper-class suburb of a major Midwestern city as a middle school history teacher. I was amazed by the ethos of the school community. Adolescent boys were kind and caring, empathetic and driven. The young men certainly had their moments, but overall, they taught me the power of discursive practices and systemic ideology—they were unlike any other 12-14-year-old boys I had ever met. A job offer presented itself where my heart lies, at an independent all-girls international boarding school teaching history and women's

studies to juniors and seniors. I made the move. I taught girls from all social classes, from rural and urban areas, from cities all around the country and all around the world. I taught at this school for several years until leaving to pursue my doctorate.

In all cases and in most stages of my life (after high school), I have been an "outsider" more than an "insider" to the communities I have served (Acker, 2000; Haraway, 1991). I haven't really minded and have found commonalities to connect with people and, as such, was moved to sustain this in my research. While I did not share multiple self-dimensions (e.g., race, age, class) with my participants, I was open to negotiating and learning from my framework and subjectivities in the interest of, as Peshkin said, *the story I am able to tell.* That is not to say that it has always been easy or comfortable. In concert with Tierney (2002), I believe that "[a]t times in our work such vulnerability also needs to be heard, for without it we hold on to it with a unified voice that is power laden and dominant" (p. 549). My experiences have altered my standpoint and have informed this study.

My standpoint and assumptions most certainly have influenced my practice (Harding, 1991; Yost & Chmielewski, 2013), making it important to engage in ongoing self-reflexivity (Grossman et al., 1999) and strong objectivity (Harding, 1991) throughout the research process. As Sandra Harding (2007) wrote:

> Some such information can be useful to the reader, but for the researcher to stop her analysis of her social location here… is to leave all the work up to the reader. It is the reader who must figure out just how such a location has shaped the…conceptual frameworks used, the questions asked, how they are pursued, and so forth. (p. 54)

Donna Haraway (1991), in her provocative classic essay "Situated Knowledges," suggested that this "fiction of objectivity" is possible only for those "performing a 'god-trick'…

[referring to] those occupying the positions of dominators" (p. 193). I have subscribed to Haraway's (1991) notion that "feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. In this way, we might become answerable for what we learn how to see" (p. 190). If we "can somehow find ways of choosing ourselves as imaginative beings… new spaces will be carved out in experience…. It is imagination that offers me a vision of what may be" (Greene, 2001, pp. 76-77). Outsider or insider, we all have imagination. We all have the ability, as Maxine Greene said, *to see the world as otherwise*.

Ethical Considerations

One of the ethical considerations for this study was my position of privilege as a White, middle-class woman. While I was positioned inside as a woman studying gender, I remained an outsider to women of color when studying race (Acker, 2000). This study did not intend to provide a universal narrative, but rather intended to do the opposite. My ontological stance was that there are multiple realities, and I was flexible both in my thinking and with my research processes. Giroux (1992) recommended that researchers and academics cross cultural, theoretical, and ideological boundaries to open up discourses and address the tensions that exist.

In addition to my positionality, another ethical consideration has been the development of *friendships* versus the development of *rapport* (Oakley, 1988). Methodologically, ethnographic research requires substantial immersion into a community, where relationships tend to develop. Having stayed in periodic contact with these young women for five years, our rapport or mentorship was something about which I aimed to be transparent. Glesne (1989) stated, "The case for cultivating research friendships under considered circumstances remains open, but as a rule, I think we should give priority to developing and maintaining rapport, not friendships" (p.

50). Having formerly lived on campus and having been a teacher and an athletics coach of girls of this age group at an international boarding school, I believe my former experience and current doctoral study helped with this issue; the training and experience I gained from maintaining close yet professional relationships with students helped me to address this ethical concern.

Another ethical consideration was that of informed consent. Because the young women were minors (juniors in high school) when they participated in my class project, their parents all gave written consent for them to participate; as the participants are now legal adults, they were all required to consent on their own behalf (Appendix D). In addition, prior to any interview, participants were reminded that their participation was completely voluntary, and should they choose to withdraw from the study, they could do so without penalty at any time. I protected the identity of all participants by having them choose pseudonyms and using pseudonyms for anyone they named, as well as for the cities and schools. I also considered that The American Academy (a pseudonym) is the only school of its kind in the city in which it is located and could be easily identified even if the name were changed.

Conclusion

This chapter describes the conceptual framework and methodology of this dissertation. Layering a critical race and intersectional framework while combining the use of the RMMDI (2007) with Daiute's (2014) values and significance analysis to address the contextual and power relations of intersectional identity construction moved this work beyond the existing research about the identity influencing women of color undergraduates' educational experiences. As Susan Goldberg (1977) rightly stated, "The most valuable part of comparative work in another culture [is] the chance to be shaken by it, and the experience of struggling to understand it" (p. 239). I invited being shaken by this experience while grappling to understand new (multiple)

meaning-making systems. The work will always remain incomplete, but by making human

connections and zeroing in to reveal the complexity of the relationship of socially constructed

identities on education, the image will no longer betray me.

Chapter 4: Findings

In partnership with Critical Race Theory and intersectionality, this study employed a modified version of dynamic narrative research methodology (Daiute, 2014), which was formulated to center the "marginalized voices and experiences, especially narratives that counter negative assumptions and stereotypes, of marginalized people" (Childers-McKee & Hytten, 2015, p. 408). While CRT and intersectionality were the theoretical lenses through which my modified dynamic narrative inquiry data was situated and analyzed, my research questions also led me to make sense of the data within the Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimension of Identity (RMMDI). Modifying and layering these theories and methods provided a comprehensive structure for this study (Figure 3). The RMMDI provided an additional schema for describing the process of (re)viewing and (re)constructing one's identity in relation to context. Context was critical to this study, as I was interested in how the places we inhabit and the people we encounter influence our socially constructed intersections and identities or the answers to "Who am I?" This model also adds a filter that proved valuable in my data analysis, helping me make sense of the process by which this occurs.

CRT + Intersectionality

Social Identities

Filter

Context
- Family
- School
- Peers
- Neighborhood
- Religion
- Etc.

Modified Dynamic Narrative Inquiry
Data Collection + Analysis
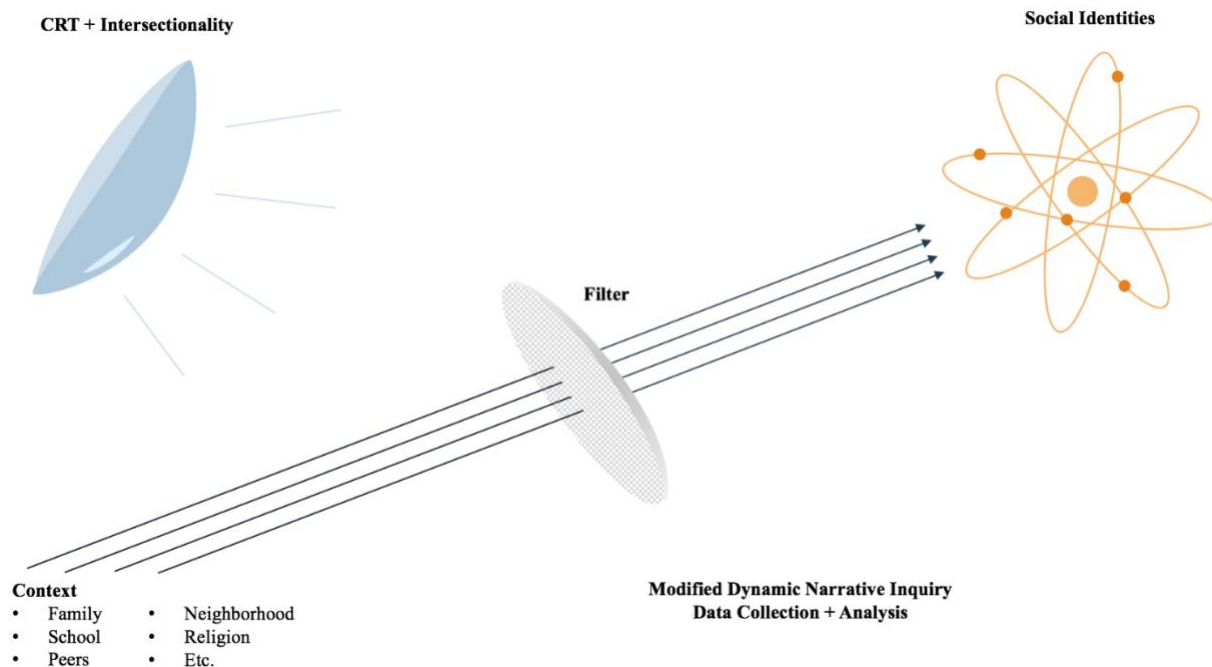
Figure 3. Layering of Research Methods Model.

Using these combined methodological tools in my research design, I documented the narrative data from seven women of color—all of whom are graduates of an urban, single-sex, non-sectarian, public high school—regarding their social and academic experiences in higher education with the express purpose of examining their identity meaning-making structures and the impact their identities might have on their education outcomes. This layered model allowed me access to their counterstories (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), which provided material for notating the pervasiveness and centrality of the racialized constructions of difference of my participants. These stories exposed and sometimes critiqued the hegemonic system of White supremacy in the institution of education.

The data from this study was analyzed through the lenses of Critical Race Theory, an intersectionality theoretical framework, and a modified narrative inquiry methodology. Yosso (2005) wrote that "Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a framework that can be used to theorize,

examine and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact school structures, practices, and discourse" (p. 70). The following discursive formations were examined within the context of predominantly White institutions of education (with the exception of one student attending a historically Black college or university) from the student perspective, and they provided a way to examine the suppression of the voices of some of those on the margins common in hierarchical school reform efforts. Data analysis showed both the process or structures of meaning-making (Magolda, 1996b) and the recurrent value-laden meanings my participants made for themselves. Table 2 illustrates the three process/meaning relationships that emerged. The findings of this study are presented in the following sections.

Table 2

Meaning-Making Structures and Study Themes

PROCESS: Magolda's Meaning-Making Structure	MEANING: Recurring Values-Laden Themes
Formulaic Meaning-Making – unexamined satisfaction with external meaning-making;	belonging and normalcy; class and consumerism
Crossroads (between Formulaic and Foundational Meaning-Making) – tentative internal meaning-making with the possibility of retreat; and	stereotype threat; double-consciousness and living behind the veil
Approaching a Foundational Identity – an appreciation for an internally defined identity. (p. 619)	difference and difficult knowledge

Identities in Context: Formulaic Meaning-Making

The most used process among participants was the formulaic meaning-making structure. Identities are heavily influenced and connected to context in the formulaic meaning-making stage (Magolda, 2009) and are situated within contextual tensions both inside and outside of schools. These tensions are met with varying degrees of resistance and are the result of (re)viewing the environment in relation to self, (re)negotiating and (re)constructing a self that is both future-oriented and rooted in its history, and (re)conceptualizing while adapting to one's immediate and future-oriented social positioning (Block, 2007; Kinginger, 2004; Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001; Norton, 2000). In this structure, the context prescribes an identity that participants fully absorb as their own (Figure 4). Messaging comes from the context, flows relatively freely through one's filter, and impacts, attaches, and essentially becomes their "own" identity narrative. Again, it does not mean that participants are brainwashed or do this without struggle or any resistance. However, assimilation occurs eventually.
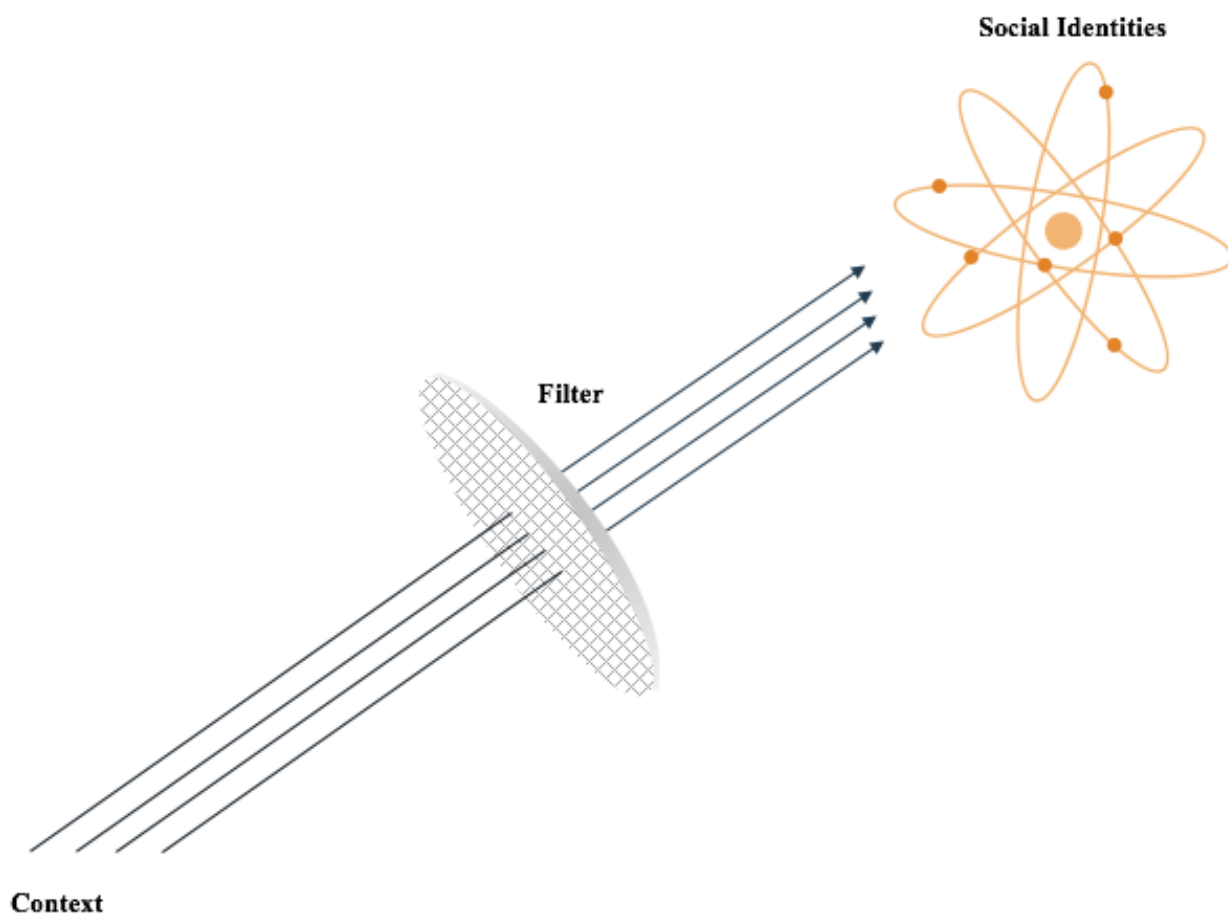
Figure 4. Formulaic Meaning-Making Structure.

All seven participants of this study offered narratives that I classified as being constructed from formulaic meaning-making structures. In the focus group, they separately and collectively expressed feeling like an outsider through deficit stories: ones in which they felt that *who they are* in their core value system was lacking or not enough and they were made to feel (by others) as though they did not belong, particularly by those who held positions of authority. Each participant provided narratives that showed a strong desire to belong and feel "normal" as determined or defined by "others," a yearning for inclusion and acceptance, as well as

elucidating the immense pressure of succumbing to social-class and sociocultural norms (at home and at school) that were both alleviated and exaggerated by consumerism.

Belonging and normalcy. Ria, Kerri, and Lana recalled an incident that operated as a normalcy-defining confrontation that happened early in their freshmen year at The American Academy High School. (The institution's name has been changed for confidentiality). Two administrators pulled the three of them into the main office to discuss "breaking the Black-girl attitude out of [them]." When I inquired what that meant, Ria replied, "It meant everything. Change everything about you. Your walk, your talk, your expressions—you name it, change it to what they vision was." Kerri added, "If you ask them, there was one kina Academy girl, and it wasn't us freshmen year." Lana contributed, "Honestly, I don't know if we ever bought into it or just got tired fightin' it and would rather be left alone—but by graduation, they molded us down for the most part." All three concurred that in order to "peacefully belong," as Kerri described it, you had to "fit the mold or else." When I asked why they thought this single notion of womanhood was so important to The American Academy, they concurred: It was a "power trip" that only total obedience fed.

In her first interview, Diana recounted a post-secondary experience when she consciously applied a lesson about *belonging* that she had previously learned from her secondary school principal at The American Academy.

> Principal Smith was crystal clear. "Listen three times as much as you talk." I tried that my freshmen year. Professors thought I didn't read or was dumb or something because of it too. I was trynna know my place. To find my fit… to not be that mouthy girl from the hood. Instead, I think they wrote me off as not interested or ignorant or somethin'. Not sure what I woulda said anyhow [laughs], I sure didn't know nothin' then. But now I ask

questions when I got 'em and try to give my opinion here and there. It's uncomfortable still though, but I guess it's part of learnin'.

Four students noted deep desires to blend in or feel normal in comparison to their peers.

Shandra commented:

Once I got my bearings, probably after Christmas break my freshman year, I tried to join every club or group on campus that I had even the slightest bit of interest in. The campus ministry, the women's association, the City [name redacted] club, intramural soccer, a mentoring program, the Dominican cultural group… you name it, I joined it [laughs]. I never felt so out of sorts or alone *in my own damn city* [emphasis in original] as I did on this campus. I just wanted to find my people, ya know? It was hard though… for one, it costs a lot. Both time and money… something group leaders didn't seem to understand. I couldn't just take off work or afford to get across town to some event with an entry fee… anyhow, I ended up sticking with a gender equity working group from the Black Student Union and that was cool. I still have a few friends from there.

Along similar lines, Zora observed:

My first year was *ROUGH* [emphasis and increased volume in original] because I was just randomly paired with a roommate. She was aight and all, we just from different planets, if you know what I mean? Like straight up north versus south side in a tiny dorm room [laughs]. Then I found out you could choose to be on a dorm floor with other folks in your major… but I hadn't declared a major yet. I talked with my advisor, and she suggested African American Studies and maybe a Gender Studies minor… she said it was because history was my best subject in high school, and well, *I am Black* [points to arm and laughs] *and a woman*… so that's when I declared. It seemed like a solid place to

live too. I moved my sophomore year then to the AAS floor only to find out I really

wanted to major in anthropology this year. It still worked out I guess; I made more good

friends in the dorm those two years. They were a lot more like me.

Alice, Lana, Kerri, and Diana spoke to the dilemma of losing a sense of family

connection or social-community belonging as they advanced through their studies. They

acknowledged that school changes you. Alice's story of having recently returned home on a

school break was illustrative:

As I keep on going, breaks have been hard on me and on my family too, I think. I just got

to go home for two weeks over spring break, and it was real hard. Hanging at the park or

in the yard—it was like… hard to fit back in, ya know? Like we were speaking different

languages, ya know? And this is my family. My tribe. I missed out on so much. I didn't

know their jokes or even some of the people they was talkin' about. I tried talkin' to my

Cuz about getting certified or licensed to fix cars—he's real handy and all, always has

been—and he just laughed right in my face and told me to [imitates male cousin's voice]

"woman, take your books back south and come back when you's got some sense agin."

Seemed like a'body was noddin' and stuff when he said it too—like they was thinkin' the

same thing…. It was crazy, ya know? I been dreamin' to get home… to just fit… and

relax… to just BE… [audible long sigh], and turns out I don't fit much there either.

Closest fit I have… it like what Pastor James talks about called limbo… like I stuck

between two worlds. I fit there! [laughs] My uncle owns a store down the street from my

family house… use to be I'd want to hang with my Aunties in the kitchen… now I want

to talk wit him about his business and what's goin' on in the community. I neva fit there

before but now it seems like the only place I do.

Class and consumerism. Five of the seven participants in this study talked at length about the class, financial, and material needs and wants of college strongly impacting their sense of self in relation to others. Three participants also spoke to a notion they all called "buying your way in." Ria shared,

> I was in the break-out of my sociology class, and week after week this White guy kept running his mouth about how this oughtta be or how that oughtta be. You know like people only poor because of the choices they make and not because of the hand they was dealt. Just do this, and why can't *they* do that. Never once lookin' back and wonderin' how he got so lucky to be born who he is. I had enough one day, ya know, and spoke up and set like a dilemma up for him: you got X amount of dollars and this and that happens, you already workin' two jobs, but now one can't pay you this week cuz they don't have it, and your baby sick. Whatcha goin do? He got all flustered, and the classroom got real quiet. I didn't care… I had had enough. He finally stood up and looked me right in the eye and said, "I didn't realize the girls here on needs scholarship would be so sensitive. Thought you'd be tougher than that." The professor just said [imitates male professor voice], "alright, alright, things are getting a little hot in here. Let's get back on track." Him or the student never looked at me again the rest of the entire semester. It was literally like I didn't exist anymore…. And that's when I knew the truth wouldn't exist in there either. I didn't try to press it again… what good would thatta done?

Kerri shared a more practical example of feeling the financial and consumer pressures of fitting in:

> My university isn't the best at business, like rankings and all, but it was the best I could afford. With help from [the guidance counselor at The American Academy], I used the

Common App but only got a few estimates of financial aid to consider. My mom and I

thought it was the best deal, and if I get stuck, I can get home pretty easily. I get quite a

bit of help here and can work on campus to make up the rest. It's still a challenge though.

"Making the team" is one thing, but having the right equipment to play the game is

another. I do A LOT of borrowing from friends or the library for some of the smaller

stuff, you know, like, um… calculators and cameras and tech and stuff. I'm sure people

see me comin' and think, "Oh, what she need now?" But man, I'd have to go a week

without eating for this [pulls graphing calculator out of her backpack]. Whatever

though… it is what it is.

This connection between neoliberal materialism and belonging was also illustrated in an

interview exchange that drew from Lana's experiences in a single-sex high school and then in

college.

> Lana: Freshmen year was the most expensive, yo. I bought sweatshirts and mugs,
>
> > blankets for my bed. You name it—if it had University on it, I bought it. I got in
> >
> > these doors, and I wanted to belong here. It was like a Halloween costume
> >
> > though… you might be Superman on the outside, but you still you underneath.
> >
> > Didn't matter how many layers I packed on… I might be in the classrooms, but it
> >
> > clear I *allowed* in… not belonged in.
>
> AJH: Allowed in but not belonging—tell me more about what you mean.
>
> Lana: You know, like… they doin' you a favor or something. Like you get to sit at the
>
> > grown-up table, but you aren't s'pose to speak. I'm invited to pay for class fo'sho,
> >
> > but it's like I'm s'pose to be there to watch and learn instead of be a part of the

conversation. Same as use to be at The American Academy. The trouble ain't worth it. This I know for real. I am learning… but they not."

AJH: How was this the same at The American Academy?

Lana: Class "discussion" was always about they tellin' you how to act, how to look, what to wear, what not to wear, how to be—so you can fake-it-til-you-make-it, I guess. But, it wasn't no discussion about it. It was "I say, you do," or you can find the door. You do it because you want to stay. Ain't nowhere else to go. And I do think they wanted good for us, ya know?

AJH: Do you get that same feeling at University now?

Lana: It's a little less in yo' face. They sneakier. You offer something up that questions they point, and they talk 'bout it for a minute but twist it up with different words. Then I get confused about what I meant in the first place [laughs]. "Trust in the process" was what Ms. Murphy [art teacher at The American Academy] always said… so I do.

Other narratives were more pointedly related to financial difference and social location. Zora explained:

I saved for two years to go on a spring break trip to California. I never been out of the state. Hell, I never really been out the city. Sometime 'round January, my Granmama fell and had to lay off work for a month or so. My Ma needed help with the bills. I was glad I had it to help, but I'll be damned if it didn't sting to see my friends leaving for the airport. A few of them go somewhere every year. Must be nice. That's why I'm here though. One day I'll be able to go where ever, whenever I want. For now, I'm still here.

During the focus group interview, Diana, Shandra, and Kerri spoke to the pressures of belonging to (sometimes) conflicting social groups.

> Diana: We all came up in different neighborhoods, but they was similar in a lot of ways. I use to leave the house in my regular clothes with my uniform in my bag so I wouldn't get picked at on the walk to the train. I'd change at school then before first bell. I'd even go as far as changin' my hair.

> Shandra: Right?!?! [laughing] Junior year, I got sent to the office because 10 minutes before last bell I was putting my nails back on [whole group laughs]!

> AJH: Wait—tell me more about your nails [laughs with them].

> Kerri: So—style matters. Nails, hair, jewelry, phones, cars—that all mean somethin' in our neighborhoods. You not gonna last a minute walking through lookin' like a school-girl… you know, white shirt all tucked in to your khakis. That ain't us. Ain't never gonna be us. That's who *THEY* [emphasis and increased volume in original] want you to be.

> AJH: Who's "they"?

> Shandra: Ya know… people who have power inside schools but don't nowhere else. They mad about that. They sold out and "made it" and think we gotta too, ya know. Shave off all the sharp edges so we look and talk the same… same as them. White folks and Black folks the same there [five second pause]. And we want a little of what they got, so we do.

Shandra's statement quieted the group, and they all nodded in agreement while gazing at the floor. The silence was heavy and lasted about 15 full seconds. To break the silence, Shandra

added: "But it don't mean we don't have a purse full of nails." The group laughed again, and the tension was broken to some degree.

I asked one final question on this topic then: "is there a 'they' that has 'the power' inside your neighborhoods then too?" Diana shared:

> Yes and no. It's different there, ya know… more like a community understanding of what looks good. Huh—I ain't neva thought about it like that—I guess it's kinda the same concept, but it just feels more natural because it's what we always do or how we always been. I guess it was hard because they such different styles. You was the neighborhood you. And then you was the school you. Both worked fine, they just don't cross over.

The full group nodded in agreement that there was no room for school identities (i.e., performing White, hetero, neoliberal, patriarchal norms) and neighborhood identities to "cross over" or be useful in the other context. "You were one or the other, never both," Ria stated without opposition or contradiction from the others. Both were dictated by outside sources of "power," and entry or feelings of belonging or normalcy within these contexts could be established through compliance, obedience, and consumerism.

This process-meaning relationship fits squarely into CRT and intersectionality literature. All of the participants offered narratives that constructed gendered, raced, and classed identities and showed that context greatly and directly impacted their identity narratives. Most connected to gender, race, and class via products (i.e., clothes and uniforms, phones, cars, nails) or behaviors (i.e., silence, obedience, lexicon, travel, or group membership) with secondary, postsecondary, and community contexts. The derived meanings were nearly exclusively shaped by audiences of external authority (i.e., teachers, school administrators, advisors, elders in their community). The meanings, policies, and practices were rarely questioned or confronted.

Agency or resistance to contextual pressures was noticeably absent from these particular

examples and from most of the data in entirety, but several students did speak from a new

perspective with regard to this assimilation process, noting that it had just worn them down.

Findings that included the emergence of agency follow.

Navigating Agency: Identity Meaning-Making at the Crossroads

The second process or structure is called the Crossroads Meaning-Making (Magolda,

1996b). With age, experience, and confidence, the permeability of one's meaning-making filter

decreases, and personal agency advances, minimizing one's reliance on external contexts to

make meaning of their identities (Magolda, 2009). At the Crossroads, some contextual

messaging is rejected or filtered out from their own beliefs of who they are and what they truly

believe, yet still some permeates the filter and is absorbed (Figure 5) (Magolda, 2009).

Social Identities

Filter

Context
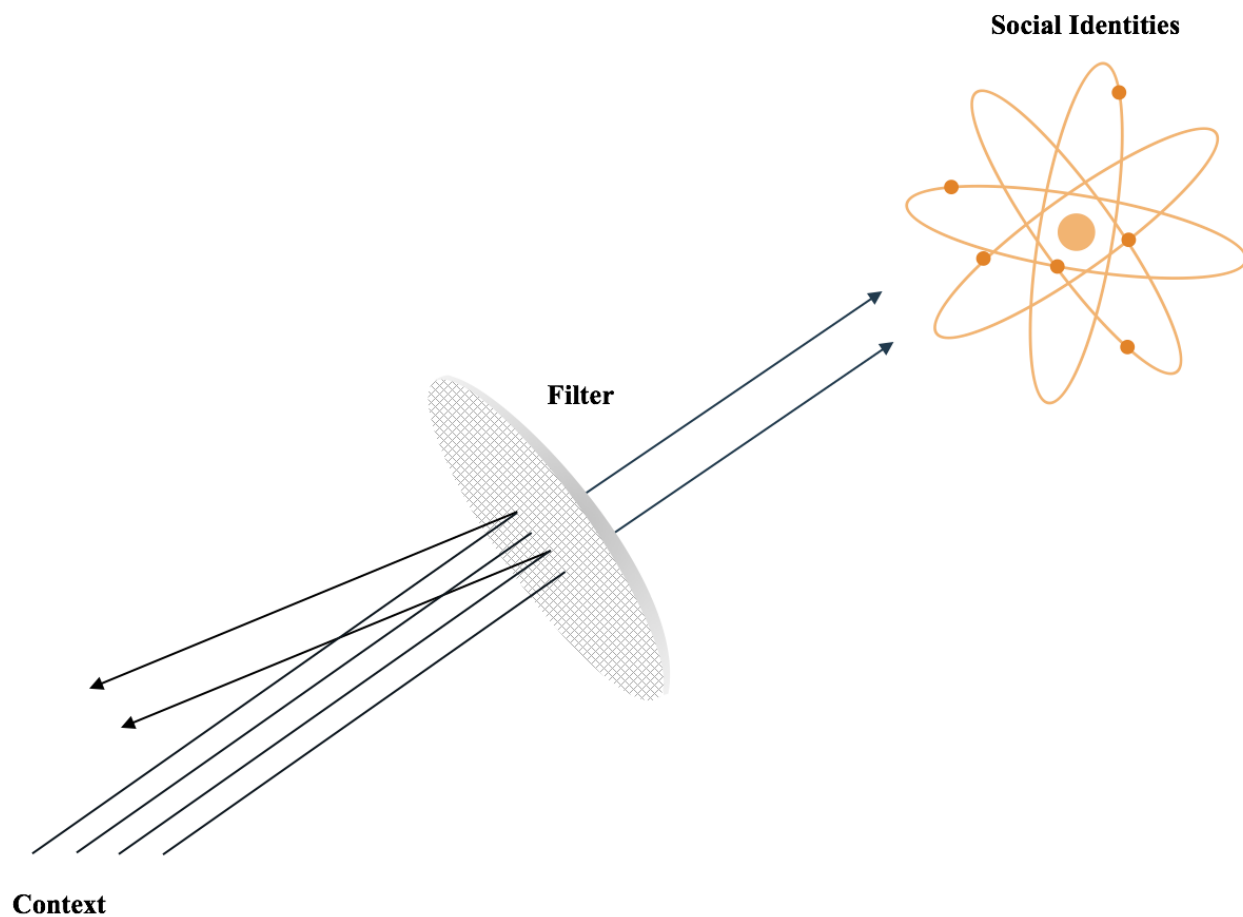
Figure 5. Crossroads Meaning-Making Structure.

Strewn throughout the student handbook, mission statement, website, and marketing materials of The American Academy are the words leadership, leaders, college preparatory, equity, integrity, and professionalism. However, many of the practices that I witnessed or were uncovered in the secondary data transcripts and notes were contradictory and in fact pushed the young women toward a single identity. In transcripts from the class project and again in transcripts from this research, all seven young women narrated that the single identity or "model" American Academy girl never felt natural or organic, and while they may have been able to imitate it on the surface, they never believed it was who they were at the core. In the

recent narrative data of my participants, an emergence of agency surfaced through their descriptions of rejecting or at least questioning identities currently and previously defined by outside contexts. Participants recounted instances in which they experienced internal tensions as a result of navigating this new terrain, where they rejected others' preconceived notions and stereotypes of who they were/are and instead embraced their internal value systems. While at times they resisted the messaging internally, they were not always ready, willing, or able to externally confront the oppression.

Stereotype threat. Alice wrote about experiencing stereotype threat within a department at a university in her submission for the fictional writing exercise.

The small group of students had had enough of being talked down to, of being called on last only to be asked if "*the ladies* understood" or if "*the ladies* were with" him. Almost as if he used another voice… like baby talk when talking to them. Mind you, it was clear which *ladies* he meant, and it surely wasn't the White ones. ENOUGH became their motto. They decided they would take it to the chair of the department. Armed with verifiable stories, condescending emails, comments on papers, they were ready to confront this. They deserved to be here as much as anyone else, and they deserved respect. They got off the elevator on the 5th floor, and the reality of what could happen in the chair's office set in. Would they be met with disregard(?), disbelief(?), anger(?), expulsion(?), … they turned around and got back in. Maybe tomorrow they'd be brave enough to take it on, but maybe they'd just finish the semester and move on.

This notion of newly being able to identify something as "wrong" but being fearful of making that wrong known, especially to those in positions of authority, is something that four

participants shared during data collection. I asked a question about this during the focus group interview to probe a little further:

Several of you have talked about or wrote about developing the skills to (1) recognize something is wrong or off—like when someone has made a judgement about you that isn't true, and then (2) either internally or with someone you trust—talking it through and really confirming it—like "this was wrong," but then (3) being very hesitant to escalate it to someone in power or hesitant to confront the person themselves. Let's talk about that for a minute… what's been your experience?

Zora offered in response to my question:

Well… I can only talk for me but… you know, the things I run up against or feel in these situations aren't the, you know, "noose hanging from a doorknob" kind of situations. That's never happened to me in school. It's the idea of like a death-by-a-thousand-cuts thing. It's most often a feeling or a look or a phrase that's off just enough to make me sit back and take notice. Those are hardest to do anything about, you know… it's like my word against theirs. If I confront the person, they'll just deny it or say I misunderstood them… I'm not equipped to have those conversations, I guess. And ya know… [long pause]—the only thing worse than having someone say or believe those things about you that lead the comment or look or whatever is addressing it and having no one believe you. So… you tuck it away, you tell yourself that you know who you are—and it's not that, you sorta just inventory it and trust that person just a little less, and you go on.

Ria added,

Being a Black woman with an accent in the accounting program is not always easy. From the look and sound of me, you'd guess I was deficient in math skills right? [laughs under

breath] Well I'm not. I'm quite good at math. But I'm never not Black, and I'm never not a woman, right? [laughs hard] Actually… I'm never not one without the other! But I play the game. Every class, every semester, I make sure to sit up front, use very proper English, and prove myself early to just get it over with. Then we can get on with it. Sometimes, I'm surprised at just how much proving it takes, and then I start to question myself. Are they right about me? Do I belong here? How do I size up against *them?* It's tiring, but I mentally bounce back though [long quiet pause that ends with an audible exhale]. Naaaahhhh [shakes head like saying no] … ain't nobody got time to play mind games. I basically force myself back out there with the attitude, "you better get out my way, cuz I got shit to do."

Double-consciousness and living behind the veil. In her second interview, Zora described having others judge her from a place of privilege based on her gendered race and the expectations of performance that followed in two different situations, places, and times.

I took a few gender studies classes before switching out. I was kinna shocked by how much my classmates had read and knew about feminism and women writers. Mostly the White ones. [pause] Writers and classmates, I guess! [laughs]. We was all freshmen or sophomores, so it meant they'd read that stuff in high school. We sure didn't. Closest we got to talkin' bout anything that mattered was in [my] English class, but we also had to pass our tests to graduate and all. Well, you know from being there. Now lookin' back— no gender studies at a girls' school(?)—don't make no damn sense. Does it? I guess talkin' and thinkin' bout breaking down barriers wasn't what that place was about, ya know? Toe the line and do what we say was more like it.

Zora broke from her story for a moment and asked me to recall day she and I interacted when I was observing her high school.

> Remember the belt incident? That's when I knew you was cool. Anyhow… guess I'm a product of that place or at least I was in those classes. What those girls who knew more thought of me was probably actually true then. At least to them it was. It was embarrassing to have these White girls have read more from Black women than I had, ya know? And I didn't have the knowing or the energy to fight it *and* keep up. I still think about it sometimes though.

The "belt incident" Zora spoke of happened during my class project during her junior year at The American Academy. Occasionally, the administration protocol called for a drill coined "uniform check," where the principal would do just that. Students lined up silently down the halls to be evaluated. Zora had on a fully compliant uniform except for a brown leather belt instead of a black leather belt. She was called to step forward and asked in front of everyone to go home and return when in full uniform. Knowing Zora took two buses and a train, totaling over an hour commute to get to school, I advocated on her behalf when the drill was over and asked the principal if this "was really necessary?" She replied something to the effect of "a uniform is only uniform if every piece is standard and compliant." In lieu of having Zora waste two hours commuting or more likely simply go home and miss a day of school, I took her to the nearest Target and bought her a black belt. We were back within 30 minutes. This was one of the many codes that I observed over the multiple months while I was in the school gathering data for my class project that had nothing to do with liberation or education of young women; rather, it was based solely on obedience.

Diana also told me a story about knowing she was wrongly placed in a remedial college class but was hesitant to inquire if this was a mistake. She said, "I didn't want to come off as an angry Black woman too early on with my advisor… especially before I had anything to be really angry about." Others told similar stories of the sort of social engineering they did regularly or of "tiptoeing," as Lana called it, so as not to be noticed as "one of those Black girls," a phrase repeated by *every single participant* for a total of 57 times over the course of data collection.

As Shandra pointed out,

I feel like I represent more than me, you know. My little sister and baby brother are looking to me to blaze a new path. To make it. My folks never had this chance, ya know. They left the Dominican after eighth grade or so and never finished school. I know I'm lucky, right? I don't need to be reminded of that. [long quiet pause] Earlier this year, a professor that I thought I made an impression on because he asked if I wanted to see some of the projects in his research lab, ya know. Like maybe I could work there or contribute in some way. Anyhow, he starts talking to me there, kinda loud—like so everyone around can hear… and says he wants to help me "escape poverty." First, who he? And how does he know I'm poor? Second, what would I be escaping? *WHO* am I escaping from? My family? My community? My life? Fuck that, ya know? Sorry [shakes head a little and holds up hand as if to say stop for a second, but wishes to continue when I ask if she would like to take a break] … I was so shocked I just sorta left, in like a daze or something. But then I got ta thinkin'… I really want to work in that lab, and he all but invited me. He can go on thinkin' he's saving me from whatever, and hell, maybe he is, but… *my truth* is, I'm saving my damn self, and then I'll save my community too.

Kerri shared experiencing a double-consciousness or living behind the veil in her turning-point story:

> I see myself as a leader in my community. To be honest, after my brother was killed, I think I became more powerful. I had to. It changed me. Forever. Maybe it's his spirit or somethin' pushing me… and ain't nothing new for a Black woman to have power and control in my neighborhood. It's expected… maybe just not from someone my age yet. But then here [indicating on campus], I just sorta stay in the background. Don't make waves. I don't really know why either… Maybe because nobody's lookin' to me for answers. Get through and get out. I got a year to go.

Similarly, Lana observed,

> It's funny to me that you see *a lot* of Black staff… some Black administrators, lotta Black *women* too… even a few Black teachers, but the further up you go—the clearer it get *literally* [laughs]. I guess you got to be White to make big decisions around this place…. Or at least a man. But even they mostly White, or at least not Black men. That glass ceiling pretty low here for someone who looks like me, huh? … In that sense, I guess we mirror the world pretty well. That reminds me… a little off topic but still…You know in freshmen seminar I had a TA… I think she was a PhD student in poli sci or somethin'… trynna teach me about GRIT [emphasis and increased volume in original]. Grit!?!?! [says over a laugh/big exhale] Ain't that some shit? White girl from [an affluent suburban high school] teachin' me about grit. [laughter] The book on grit we was readin' was even funnier—also by a White guy from [the same affluent suburban high school] ... can't remember the name of it but… I wanted to say, sugar—spend a week at my house and then we talk…. [long pause]. Who am I to judge though, maybe she had her own stuff too

or maybe she was made to teach that. I guess I judgin' her like she judgin' me. Anyhow, just somethin' I noticed when we talkin' bout where you fit… or who's who around here. I can tell ya one thing—nobody need to teach me about grit.

The narratives in this structure showed that participants determined their need to host dual identities, and the stereotypes most often attributed to these young women were aimed at the intersection of their gender, race, and class. They spoke to a new discomfort with assumptions being made about them by others, in particular, in cases that were counter to their core sense of self. They engaged with concepts of the dominant ideologies while acknowledging the nuances and complexities of each situation. They often vacillated between internal and external voices, which they perceived as potentially interpreting their truth, their own script, as irrational. Even still, there was evident pushback and filtering of the content of their identity, with some inner voice dialogue resisting external scripts, particularly regarding the intersection of their race and gender.

Amplifying your Internal Voice and Quieting the External Noise: Approaching Foundational Meaning-Making

Magolda (2009) asserted that the most advanced form of identity meaning-making occurs when our contextual filters tighten enough to reject outside influences from impacting our internal values (Figure 6). This evolution happens with age due to both biological, cognitive, and physiological development, as well as with life experiences that help us categorize and identify for ourselves *just who we are*.
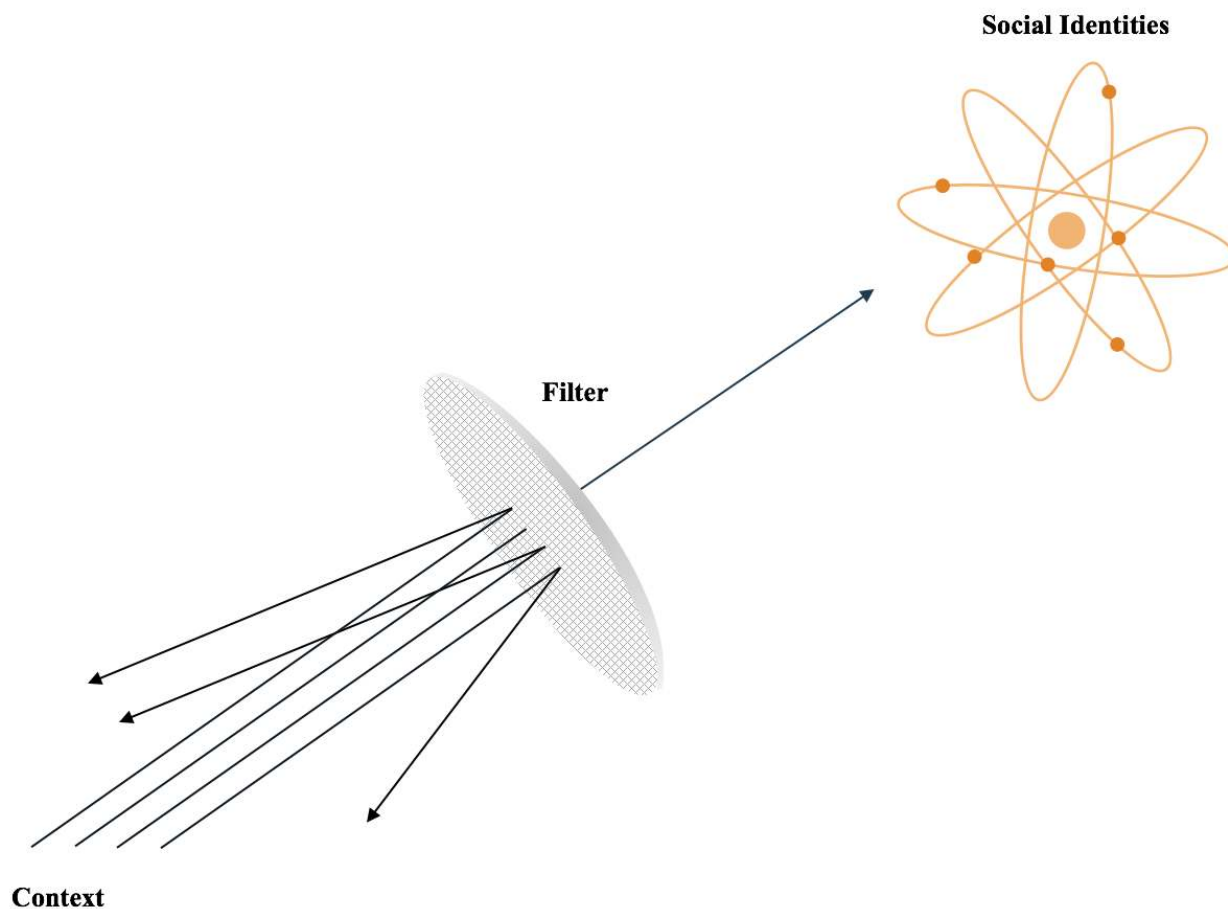
Figure 6. Foundational Meaning-Making Structure.

As the literature suggests for students of this age, the meanings of the participants were least likely to fall in this structure. Four participants spoke to recent experiences of consciously rejecting external contextual influences; the correlating meanings were most often referred to by participants as being "transformational."

Difference and difficult knowledge. Participants offered narratives that demonstrated experiencing difference and difficult knowledge where they were able to reject external contextual influence that led me to categorize the data in the approaching foundational meaning-

making stage. The narratives of two participants have repeatedly illustrated an operation within this structure, as Alice noted.

> A pivotal moment story? Welp… I've only been able to take one gender studies class, but it really changed me. It was last semester, and I mean… like really changed me… in my soul. Oddly, it was taught by a White man… I remember a'bodies mouth dropping to the floor when he walked in and was like, "Welcome to gender studies'… I mean a White guy at an HBCU teaching gender studies—we was like—is this a joke?!?! [laughs hard]. Crazy as it sounds, that class changed who I am. I can't say it enough. It was the first time I ever read Black feminist writers, *and* it was the first time I EVER had anyone talk about White privilege and patriarchy. Every Black girl in that class was like "PREACH!" You coulda pushed me over with a feather that first day, but I'mma tellin' you—I question everything I know now *verrrrrry* differently than before, and it gave me this… confidence maybe(?) to know my instincts or perspectives are right. I don't know… it just lets me hold my chin a little higher knowing other people have experienced and believe in truths like mine.

Zora described a transformational experience that had been advancing her identity meaning-making over the last six months:

> I got a pretty sweet internship this year. It just started in January, but my mentor there or boss I guess is a really smart, really cool White lady. She treat me different than a professor or advisor or that kinda mentor. She's teaching me stuff that I just don't know *yet…* instead of teaching me like I can't know or don't need to know. There's just something diff'rent about the feel of it. I can ask questions and not feel like behind her eyes she's thinking, "this girl don't know nothin'"—instead she likes that I ask questions,

and I don't have to be afraid when I do. When she asks for my opinion, *she actually wants it…* it's not for show. She might not go with it, but sometimes she has. I sure like that I don't have to pretend to have all the answers…. It's given me a different voice… or maybe an *actual* voice for the first time ever.

In this stage, participants actualized their own understanding of themselves *and were aware of the process of meaning-making* through advanced filtering. They were able to author their own identity narrative, which at times ran counter to their own historicized narratives and external narratives as told by others. It was also clear that once they saw themselves in this new light, their self-authorship had changed significantly, perhaps permanently; at their core, they firmly believed this was who they were, and they were no longer wavering.

Conclusion

The findings presented in this chapter have featured the postsecondary social and academic experiences of seven women of color as told by themselves. The findings elucidate how they understand and make meaning of their collegiate and secondary school experiences. The underlying thread within all of the emergent themes is the undeniable interdependence between context and identity. As suggested by the RMMDI, a gradual emergence of an authentic inner voice was present as participants' narratives advanced through the model's structures.

The narratives and counternarratives within this chapter are testimonies of witnesses whose stories reveal, some more than others, the gendered, raced, and classed institutional injustice they have suffered (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). The counternarratives appear to show the power of intersectional identities and also highlight the domination of intersectional hegemony within the institution of education. The participants' identity meaning-making, as they have known it so far, has been challenged both negatively and positively in the context of post-

secondary school *in response to identities* seen as other and often seen as lesser. In spite of the

oppressions they have faced and that they continue to face, these participants embrace their

educational journey. Collecting the data, analyzing the findings, and writing the subsequent

discussion have also required me to become acutely self-reflective and self-aware of my

whiteness, my own implicit biases, and my epistemological perspective as an active participant

in this research (Grossman et al., 1997; Harding, 1987; Smith, 1987).

Chapter 5 presents a synthesis of the findings related to the research questions and the

existing body of literature. Chapter 6 presents a summary of the overall study and conclusions

drawn from the research findings, and it provides recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter presents a summary of the study and a synthesis of the data and findings situated within the broader body of Critical Race Theory, intersectionality, and education literature.

Summary of the Study

Identity is both an internally generated sense of self and one impacted by external expectations. The purpose of this study was to amplify the voices of seven women of color undergraduate students to better understand how their social and academic experiences and the pursuit of a college degree was impacting their identity narratives and vice versa. This study focused on the meaning-making *process* of identity construction, as well as on the specific social identities constructed by the participants.

This qualitative study employed two social science theories as a lens through which to understand the identity construction of the participants: Critical Race Theory and intersectionality. Critical Race Theory challenges us to deconstruct how various institutional and social systems of oppression converge with diverse social identities and impact the lived experiences of marginalized groups (Agnew, 2007; Aylward, 1999; Backhouse, 2010; Crichlow, 2015; Gonzalez & Harris, 2012; Markus & Moya, 2010; Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005). Under the framework of intersectionality, social constructs and oppression are inextricably linked and cannot be dealt with separately (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1993; hooks, 1984).

The research questions were best answered by modifying an approach, the techniques, and the tools of a narrative inquiry case study. Daiute's (2014) dynamic narrative research design was combined with the Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (Abes et al.,

2007) to situate the data within Critical Race Theory and intersectionality. Layering these methods has allowed for a richer portrayal of what contextual relationships students perceived as impacting their social identities, how they came to perceive them, and what values can be attributed between context and identity.

Inter(ior)views on identity meaning-making in the context of postsecondary education. Guided by the study's research questions, participants spoke at length about their social and academic experiences in postsecondary and secondary education. Their individual narratives highlighted the vast differences within the study sample, but the underlying stories suggested a strong connection to contextual influences in their meaning-making processes, which include "factors such as family background, peer culture, social norms, and stereotypes" (Jones, 1997, as cited in Abes & Jones, 2004, p. 619). The messaging from the contextual influences was dominated by broad systems of oppression that control and influence all those who are negatively impacted by them. Similar to Abes and Jones's (2004) study findings on the meaning-making capacity of college students who identify as lesbian, the underlying stories of this study's participants illuminated the dominant ideologies embedded within the contextual influences they used to construct their identities.

Recurrent value-laden themes common among and across individual narratives, such as belonging and normalcy (Bettie, 2014; Bourdieu, 1991; Eder, 1995; Gilligan, 1990; hooks, 1994; Hyde et al., 1990; Riordan, 2002; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Thorne, 1995), class and consumerism (Apple, 1994; Cerulo, 1997; Coleman, 1999; Giroux, 2004a, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Mead, 1956; Williams, 2016), stereotype threat (Steele, 2010; Steele & Aronson, 1995), double-consciousness and living behind the veil (DuBois, 1903; Gay & Tate, 1998), and difference and difficult knowledge (Lorde, 1984; Pitt & Britzman, 2003),

surfaced while each story was rich and unique with varying degrees of self-perception. I then looked to the data for the processes used to construct the participants' identities. I categorized those recurrent themes within the process structure of the Abes et al.'s (2007) Reconceputalized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity. Using this structure, three of Magolda's (1996b) meaning-making structures emerged from the participants' narratives: formulaic, crossroads, and foundational. Table 2 (see p. 102) illustrates the correlation of this study's recurrent themes with Magolda's meaning-making structures, as defined by Abes and Jones (2004).

Before moving further into the discussion, an important term to define is *content.* "Content refers to the substance of the participants' understanding of their identity" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, as cited in Abes & Jones, 2004, p. 619). In this study, as expected, I found that as the participants' content advanced to filter external noise, the greater the participants' degree of self-authorship and agency. When meaning-making occurred through formulaic structures, where participants had little or no internal filtering, they also had little agency over their content; their identity narratives were reflections of identity stories as told by others. As self-authorship advanced through the crossroads structure and moderate internal filtering occurred, they navigated advancing agency as they learned more about who they truly were; the women teetered between moments of self-authorship and external authorship—sometimes one and then the other and sometimes a blending of the two. The highest degree of filtering or access to an internally valued or self-ascribed identity occurred when approaching a foundational identity, where participants' sophisticated understanding of their identity was clear. There were far fewer narratives that served as evidence of foundational identity meaning-making. While four participants offered narratives that qualified, only two of the women offered them more than once.

Formulaic meaning-making and external authorship: Belonging and normalcy, class and consumerism. It has been expressed by Magolda (2009) that "[b]efore the cultivation of [an] internal voice, one's personal voice is an echo of the voice of external authority" (p. 628). External formulas or formulaic meaning-making are used extensively throughout the college experience for many students, as found in a longitudinal study with significant findings (Magolda, 1992, 2001), showing that many students made all their decisions, including ones that would affect their long-term future, based on what others told them. In Magolda's study (1992, 2001), some students saw knowledge their college instructor had given them in lectures as the only knowledge worth exploring; they chose majors based off of parental figures and mentors' suggestions, and they even made sense of their own sexual orientation by what was deemed appropriate by their peers. Students were not truly encouraged to think for themselves or to make decisions based off of intrinsic value. Instead, the external formulas provided to them were used as a way to create meaning and establish their identities (Abes et al., 2007).

By and large, the narratives of this study most often fell into this meaning-making structure. The women in this study indicated a desire to belong and fit in, to blend in as "normal," as defined by others as White, middle-class, patriarchal, and the like. In most cases, they made note of coercive school and community environments and their own efforts to belong through consumerism (Cerulo, 1997; Mead, 1956). Belonging, normalcy, and consumerism seemed to involve products mostly connected to gender, class, and racial identities. For instance, participants spoke of the products (i.e. clothes and uniforms, phones, cars, fingernails) or behaviors (i.e. silence, obedience, lexicon, travel, or group membership) that represented or signified belonging or being "normal" within both secondary, postsecondary, and community contexts for low-income and working-class women of color (Bourdieu, 1991; Eder, 1995;

Gilligan, 1990; Hyde et al., 1990; Riordan, 2002; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Thorne, 1995). With

minimal or no filtering of their own, the content of participants' identities in narratives related to

belonging, normalcy, and consumerism were largely shaped by external authority audiences

(Bettie, 2014). Their narratives suggest that they believed or at least conceded to the notion that

belonging or normalcy is something that you can ascribe to through adopting the formal and

informal policies and practices in both their postsecondary and secondary schools. By the time

the participants were Juniors at The American Academy, the policy and practices were rarely

questioned or confronted, but now several students spoke from a new perspective with regard to

this assimilation process, noting that it just wore them down (Apple, 1994; Awad El Karim,

1999; Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Butler, 1991; DuBois, 1903; Foucault, 1977; Gramsci, 1971; Ibrahim,

1998; McAdams et al., 2006; Shotwell, 2011; Williams, 2016). Regardless, these White

supremacist, patriarchal policies and practices maintain the current system of wealth, power, and

privilege to which they can never truly actualize simply by having been born a woman of color.

Critical Race Theory reminds us that this is the institutionalized and ideological

oppression that the participants are working against (Banks, 2004; Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Collins,

1990; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Culp, 1994; Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; hooks, 1989; Hull et

al., 1983; Gotanda, 1991; King, 1988; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Losen, 2011; McCall,

2005; Morris, 2016; Perna, & Jones, 2013; Powers, 2007; Smith, 2008; Smith & Stewart, 1983;

Tate, 1997; Tuck; 2012; Vickery, 2015; Williams, 2016; Wise, 2010). Under close examination,

the policy and procedure of The American Academy appears to be reproducing neoliberal, white

privilege, and patriarchy instead of working toward an anti-racist feminist ideology that its

mission and vision purport (Apple, 1994; Barry, Bacon, & Child, 1957; Bonilla-Silva, 2003;

Chodorow, 2000; Di Leo et al., 2014; Gilligan, 1993, 2011; Giroux, 2004a, 2013; Hancock &

Garner, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2000, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lipman, 2004; McIntosh, 1988; Saltman, 2012; Williams, 2016). Osterman's (2000) findings "suggest that students' experience of acceptance influences multiple dimensions of their behavior but that schools adopt organizational practices that neglect and may actually undermine students' experience of membership in a supportive community" (p. 323). While the participants seemed to have a new framing for their secondary experiences, their narratives within the formulaic meaning-making structure did not showcase a transfer of this knowledge to their more recent experiences in postsecondary school.

All seven participants revealed a desire to "belong" or "just be normal" on their undergraduate campuses as well. For most of the participants, the purpose of belonging was validation that they deserved to be in college. Again, this validation was sought from external authority and was seemingly preparing the participants to be plugged into the existing social model (Di Leo et al., 2014; Epstein & Straub, 1991; Giroux, 2004a, 2013; Marcia, 1980; Saltman, 2012; Williams, 2016). Validation through belonging and normalcy was noted as desired to be granted from both higher education professionals (professors and counselors) and from their peers (Johnson et al., 2011). Participants widely believed belonging was something you got or earned, but not something you had a right to; belonging was situated as an exclusionary process set up within predominately white institutions *and* within the HBCU through their discursive structures, policy, procedures, staffing and faculty (Anzaldua, 1990; Collins, 1990; hooks, 1989; Hull, Smith, & Scott, 1983; Lorde, 1984).

Just as prevalent as the narratives of unspoken mores were the narratives related to the very visible, physical representations of class. In *Teaching to Transgress,* bell hooks (1994) wrote, "It only took me a short while to understand that class was more than just a question of

money, that it shaped values, attitudes, social relations, and the biases that informed the way knowledge would be given and received" (p. 178). Silence or at least self-censorship "enforced by bourgeois values is sanctioned in the classroom by everyone" (hooks, 1994, p. 180). Coleman (1999) argued that consumerism and materialism allow for a sense of community without having to know a single person intimately. The notion of belonging is externally reassured by what we wear, what we eat, and the items and experiences we have when those around us have them too.

For participants who constructed gendered (as a point of departure for critique), raced, and classed identities that showed underlying formulaic meaning-making structures, context greatly impacted their identity (Anderson, 1988; Collins, 1990; Cuádraz & Uttal, 1999; de la Torre & Pesquera, 1993; Giddings, 1984; Hurtado, 1989; Moraga, 1983; Smith & Steward, 1983; Zavella, 1989; Zinn & Dill, 1994). With little or no resistance from the participants, the external agents (e.g., professors, counselors, advisors, peers, school community) impacted not only how participants saw themselves operating in the world, but also impacted what schools they chose, the items they purchased, where they lived, and the courses and majors they chose, for example, potentially allowing the ruling class to remain protected and quite possibly, the underserved to remain underserved (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Williams, 2016). Context strongly influenced the meaning participants made of their identity and life choices, particularly in the transition period from secondary to postsecondary school and early in their general higher education experiences (Abes et al., 2007; Abes & Jones, 2004; Magolda, 1999a, 1999b, 2009). In multiple cases, participants spoke of having to leave an identity behind or be selective of which identity to maintain in which context. hooks (2000) wrote similarly of her experiences,

Slowly I began to understand fully that there was no place in academic for folks from

working-class backgrounds who did not wish to leave the past behind. That was the price

of the ticket. Poor students would be welcomed at the best institutions of higher learning

only if they were willing to surrender memory, to forget the past and claim the assimilate

present as the only worthwhile and meaningful reality. (p. 36-37)

The systems of domination remained intact (Zinn & Dill, 1996), and participants reported self-

segregating for survival or employing "fictive kinship" (Chatters, Taylor, & Jayakody, 1994;

Cook, 2010; Cook & Williams, 2015; Fordham, 1987; Kostantinos, Jones, & Rodriguez, 2011;

Wilson, 2017) that is drawing on peer groups to maintain equilibrium and to minimize racialized

barriers (e.g., joining affinity groups, moving to affinity floors, choosing courses/majors) as they

navigated the experiences at the intersection of being a young, low-income, woman of color in

postsecondary education. The minimal filtering and low levels of content permitted their identity

narratives to be scripted by others, many of whom, as illustrated by the data, operated with

preconceived notions and implicit and explicit biases about women of color.

Crossroads meaning-making and the teetering between internal and external self-authorship: Stereotype threat, double-consciousness, and living behind the veil. When

students begin to develop their own intrinsic value systems, they tend to do so through a process

called self-authorship (Kegan, 1994). This idea is a blend of two developmental theories, one by

Kegan (1994) that was further advanced by Magolda (2001) and Magolda, King, Taylor, and

Perez (2008c). These student development theories state that a sizable part of one's development

is through the student learning (metacognitively) the complex process of meaning-making. To

make meaning through the self, one must understand their own purposes and feelings, as well as

motivations.

The process of navigating this new sense of agency requires a critical look from within, confidence, and a self-awareness (i.e., filtering and advancing content) that many students may not possess, hence the reason why they tend to look to sources outside themselves for validation and resilience. While the research on the benefits of single-sex schools noted improved self-awareness and self-confidence as being particular outcomes for low-income girls of color (Arbor, 1998; Baker, 2001; Bracey, 2006; Campbell & Evans, 1997; Crombie, Arbarbanel, & Trinneer, 2002; Lee & Bryk, 1986; Mael, 1998; Streitmatter, 1997; Stutler, 1997; Thompson & Ungerleider, 2004; Vockell & Lobonc, 1981), this study did not surface any evidence through data collection to support such a case for these particular participants. Narrative data did support that with age, experience, and expanding contexts that participants have noted an advancing sense of self-awareness and self-confidence. Regardless of where and when this advancement has happened, Kegan's (1994) theory described this integration of the mind as a combination of interpersonal and intrapersonal developments in self-authorship. An emphasis should then be placed on students developing holistically, acquiring the skills that help them obtain self-authorship; they must acquire skills that help them obtain knowledge of self and knowledge of others separately and collectively.

Before the student can reach the self-authorship phase, they must first experience the crossroads (Magolda, 1999a) or the process between the two meaning-making structures, formulaic and foundational. The student is beginning to think critically about the external forces that guide their life but is not yet to the point where they can follow consistent internal values. As shown in Pizzolato's (2003, 2004) study, many students will eventually recognize that the external formulas they were following do not fall in line with their internal values. The external value system of advice given to them by friends, family, and others that created an external

formula then becomes changed to the student's internal formula as time moves on during the crossroads phase (Magolda, 2009). This phase is where students must decide if they will live their lives in accordance to others' plans for them or in terms of what they truly want for themselves.

Parks described the crossroads experience as that of a "shipwreck" (as cited in Magolda, 2009, p. 7), noting it becomes an "every woman for herself" scenario because the young adults must leave the comfort of doing what others expect of them for the unknown of what they expect for themselves. At its essence, it is the adult version of Piaget's (1954) assimilation, accommodation, and equilibrium processes. The crossroads is the portion of student development where there is much difficult work for the student to do. The crossroads is where students must filter out others' beliefs from their own in order to establish who they really are and what they truly believe. There are many crossroads microsteps that students can assess as they continue in their journey, found by the Wabash National Study interviews (Magolda, 2009). Students begin to hear their internal voices and feel the tension in their decisions between self and other, but they would not always consider their own voice as the most important influence in making their decisions. Students have to learn to balance the demands of both autonomy and interdependence (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). As they continue to work on trusting their own inner voice, they can begin moving closer and closer to the self-authorship phase.

The women in this study who constructed their identities within crossroads structures tended to do so with regard to their identities within the stereotypes and circumstances that accompanied them. The narratives showed that the stereotypes attributed to them were most likely aimed at the intersection of their gender, race, and class. They spoke to a new discomfort with assumptions being made about them by "others," in particular in cases that were counter to

their core sense of self. They were confronted with unexamined assumptions, deemed natural or fixed, from those in power positions. They experienced assumptions regarding their community and cultural norms, needs, and deficits, their resilience, and their intellectual vitality that were most often laced with meritocratic, racist, and classist undertones (Gay & Tate, 1998). Stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995) and experiencing double-consciousness and living behind the veil (DuBois, 1903) or doubly bound (Gay & Tate, 1998) were the emerging value-laden themes that exemplified the crossroads meaning-making structures of the participants.

Most of the women shared numerous examples of internal conflict when dealing with stereotypes that often overlapped and created tensions with their notions of normalcy or belonging. Steele's (2010) book *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do* presents research that showcases "the surprising ways that stereotypes affect us—our intellectual functioning, our stress reactions, [and] the tensions that can exist between certain groups" (p. 13). Stereotype threat holds that if negative stereotypes exist about a group, those identified as belonging to the group may become anxious, and that anxiety may cause underperformance or at a minimum cause them not to perform at their highest capacity (Steele, 1997). All seven participants discussed prominent feelings of anxiety, depression, and fatigue in relation to stereotype threat and double-consciousness.

Navigating the space of belonging and feeling normal yet being highly attuned to the stereotypes and outside perceptions creates a mental, physical, and emotional fatigue that several participants noted during the interviews. Guinier (1990-1991) succinctly modernized and described DuBois' (1903) notion of double-consciousness as a "multiple consciousness [that] provides intellectual camouflage and emotional support for the outsider who always feels the three-ness of race, gender, and marginality" (p. 96). She went on to write:

W.E.B. DuBois's idea of double-consciousness, two warring selves within one black body, living within "the veil" yet gifted with "second sight".[12] Even while performing insider roles, many of us still function as outsiders…. Those who do not experience the world through color blindness or gender neutrality live with the peculiar sensation of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others. We are self-conscious precisely because of, not in spite of, our race and gender. (Guinier, 1990-1991, p. 97)

Participants described in various ways meaning-making within crossroads structures as acts of a performative nature and noted the influence of context on the multiple meanings of their racialized-gender identities; six of seven participants shared narratives that illustrated crossroads meaning-making. Zora aptly called the performance "paying the Black tax" and went on to say that she had to continually prove she was worthy of access despite being in the same major and institution as her White peers. DuBois (1903) similarly described double-consciousness as

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…. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He does not wish to Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He wouldn't bleach his Negro blood in a flood of White Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the

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[12] See W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, p. 16 – 17 (McClurg & Co., 1903).

world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face. (p. 351)

The tension, anxiety, and anger within the crossroads meaning-making structure as expressed in the participants' narratives exemplified the context of the institution of education as a location of colonial, White, neoliberal, and patriarchal values that was otherwise presented as colorblind (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Culp, 1994; Gotanda, 1991; Tate, 1997; Wise, 2010). In this stage, they also vacillated between internal and external voices that they perceived as potentially interpreting their script as irrational (Aleinikoff, 1991; Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Crenshaw, 1988; Gotanda, 1991; Smith, 2008; Wise, 2010; Zinn & Dill, 1994). Examples of double-consciousness and living behind the veil saturated the narratives and often surfaced when participants were making sense of their secondary school experiences. For example, several of the women spoke about student-to-teacher interactions, both positive and negative, where the person of authority used language like "you're good at" or "you struggle with" or even something more explicit like "clearly, writing is not your thing," and in these cases, the young women took on that narrative as they saw themselves through the authority's eyes going forward even though they remembered being surprised or "shook" by the statement. They were less often able to identify their current experiences in the same manner, or perhaps a more accurate assessment would be to say they were less sure of identifying their current situation as such. Time and distance from the actual event seemed to allow for stronger judgement and confidence within the crossroads meaning-making structure.

Underlying both the stereotype threat and the double-consciousness narratives were efforts of the participants working hard not to let the contextual influences wholly define their

identity. There was evident push back and filtering of the content of their identity with some inner voice dialogue resisting the script, particularly regarding the intersection of their race and gender. However, there was still hesitation, tension, or resistance to fully countering the external narratives that often included knowing themselves as a form of resistance to good girl/bad girl stereotypes of working-class women of color, leaving this crossroads as they appear to teeter between formulaic and foundational identity meaning-making.

Approaching foundational meaning-making and self-authorship: Difference and difficult knowledge. The last stage of securing internal commitments and self-authorship tends to begin in the mid to late 20's and generally solidifies around the 30's for many adults (Magolda, 2008b, 2009). Magolda (2009) asserted that this stage is when adults can follow their internal voice with ease and filter out the noise from external audiences. As one approaches the structure of foundational identity, a capacity to define one's beliefs, identity, and relationships develops (Magolda, 2001, 2009). It should become second nature for the adult to understand both what his or her internal values are and how to make conscious decisions that are consistent with these values and goals created by the self. Within this meaning-making structure, the chaos and unpredictable events that happen in life become easier for the adult to handle, as they have a consistent internal value system to guide them in their decisions along the way (Jones, 2010).

While the oldest participant in this study is 23, several narratives show strong evidence of being able to resist or filter contextual influences and instead project a self-authored identity. Fairly consistently over the course of data collection, four of seven participants presented stories arching in the evolution from externally defined identities to internally defined identities; this was most evident when I analyzed each participant's data holistically. This became less obvious with cross-sample analysis.

The journey toward self-authorship for the participants is still advancing, but the nuances are apparent. Two themes surfaced and are categorized under the foundational meaning-making identity: difference and difficult knowledge. Audre Lorde (1984) wrote of the necessity of "difference" in inclusive feminism and reform in the essay *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House:*

> Interdependency between women is the way to freedom which allows *I* to *be,* not in order to be used, but in order to be creative. This is a difference between the passive *be* and the active *being.* Advocating the mere *tolerance* [emphasis added] of difference between women is the grossest reformism. It is a total denial of the creative function of difference in our lives. Difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialect. Only then does the necessity for interdependency become unthreatening. Only within that interdependency of different strengths, acknowledged and equal, can the power to see new ways of being in the world generate, as well as the courage and sustenance to act where there are no charters. (p. 111)

Similarly, Pitt and Britzman (2003) asserted that difficult knowledge works to counter what we expect to find in claims through data, whereas lovely knowledge confirms what we expect to find. Lather (2007) wrote of difficult knowledge: "here, accepting loss becomes the very force of learning, and what one loves when lovely knowledge is lost is the promise of thinking and doing otherwise" (p. 13). Two of the four participants who offered narratives categorized in this structure spoke of being "started awake" (Alice, 2017) by a teacher, lesson, or circumstance that led them to be acknowledged and valued for their difference and by another's difference. They actualized their content through advanced filtering and were able to author their

own identity narrative, which at times ran counter to their own historicized narratives and external narratives as told by others.

Advancing the Broader Body of Literature

Situated within and building upon existing literature, the data demonstrated that gender, race, and class are significant identity constructions in the lived experiences of these seven women. The qualitative data made evident that the context of a college campus and the social and academic experiences of the students in them are key factors in identity meaning-making. However, I speculate that for the participants of this study, coming of age while attending a college-preparatory charter school with all the high-stakes characteristics common in the era of neoliberal education driven by market reforms (e.g., tracking, zero-tolerance policies, school-choice; first *No Child Left Behind*, then *Race to the Top*) was more of a driving force in their identity construction than the school being a single-sex environment. Overall, the participants still reified the major point of research reviewed for this study. Given these outcomes, this study has served to advance the literature concerned with the breaking down of essentialism, which is upon Stoljar's (2000) rendering "often identified with a perspective that privileges a white, middle-class, heterosexual conception of womanness and excludes women of colour and women of different classes or sexualities from the political category of 'woman'" (p. 177). A second area where this study has advanced the body of literature is through the documentation of the lived experiences and perceptions of women of color, all graduates of an urban, single-sex secondary school (Harding, 2004). Furthermore, this study continued the examination of the political and social construction of knowledge and the process of knowing (Cole, 1993) of "specifically located knowers" (Code, 1998, p. 176).

The participants' accounts revealed that formulaic meaning-making was the most prevalent process by which they formed their identity perceptions. The data from this study suggested that for students who have not yet developed the capacity beyond formulaic meaning-making structures, their social and academic experience may be *the factor* in identity meaning-making. The external audiences of authority that they encountered in both secondary and postsecondary educational settings were the most noted influences on identity meaning-making. In these cases, little or no filtering by the participants themselves was presented. In this light, the data of this study is consistent with the literature that holds that identity is produced through cultural, social, and political discourses and is complex and changing (Abes et al., 2007; Code, 2000; Fraser & Nicholson, 1990; Harding, 1991; Harding & Hintikka, 2003; Harraway, 1991; Hartsock, 1998; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Wheedon, 1987); however, the degree to which this held true within the institution of education provides new insight.

This study advances the literature by illuminating just how impactful educational experiences are in identity construction. There is ample evidence from the stories of the participants that implicit and explicit biases in their social and academic experiences were significant sources of identity meaning-making. At this stage, inability to self-filter the implicit understandings (Shotwell, 2011) could have perilous consequences. It is a location that education reformers should attend to for both holistic student development initiatives and professional development training for employees of the institution. This study also brought to the surface feelings of inadequacy in their academic preparation, in particular in the humanities; I might speculate that STEM school curriculum may have fallen short and may have contributed to participants seeking an authoritative voice to guide them rather than explore their own agencies. For instance, secondary school STEM curriculum often focuses on the hard-sciences with black

and white answers, standardized tests, and little room for creativity. Participant narratives included various expressions of feeling ill-prepared to think critically, and several noted insecurities around not having read very widely. Transitioning from a homogenous secondary school environment to a diverse PWI amplified these feelings for several of them.

Collins (1989, 1990, 1997, 2000, 2009) has written extensively about how the lives of Black women are intertwined with racist and sexist oppression that institutionalizes the devaluation of Black women while idealizing White women. The participants' narratives that were categorized under the crossroads meaning-making structure directly align with this position. Collins (1995) has been careful to separate interlocking oppressions (macro institutional) and intersectionality (micro-level individual oppression within interlocking structures). The findings of this study indicated that participants experienced both to varying degrees. Participants noted that access does not equate inclusion, nor does equality necessarily mean fairness, a finding similar to that of the modern single-sex school research by Williams (2016); they expressed feelings similar to that of a caste system, where through charity and goodwill they were invited in to fill seats and for what felt like appearances, but they were not invited to offer opinions or be involved in intellectual dialogue. In the crossroads meaning-making structure, participants struggled with the tension between finding their agency and familiar feelings of obedience and compliance. Johnson et al. (2011) characterized this occasionally hostile, ongoing process of identity construction "as an entry point for the study of power, status and agency" (p. 339), and the findings within the crossroads structure show this is a possibility as well. Similarly, the blending of home, school, and community discourses and the power relations within were exhibited within participants' identity constructions as well (Epstein & Straub, 1991).

The least exercised meaning-making structure was that of approaching a foundational identity. Two of the participants delivered a narrative that classified as foundational, and two additional participants expressed three and four narratives, respectively, that qualified as using foundational structure. The limited offerings within this structure were not a surprise given the age of the participants and previous research findings (Magolda, 2001). Here participants broke from the common sense of the ruling class that Gramsci (1971) called hegemony to no longer accept Lorde's (1980) mythical norms. Within this structure, participants noted finding their voice and standing up for themselves as liberating (Murphy et al., 2013; O'Connor et al., 2005). They described instances when someone encouraged them to do so by creating a safe environment to take risks and trust their instincts. Continued commitment to combatting colorblind policies and programs in educational institutions and an added commitment to developing spaces and practices for talking about agency and voice with marginalized groups may help to move more students toward more holistic development.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In Chapter 1, I presented the scope, significance, and purpose of this study, as well as the research questions driving it. Chapter 2 provided a thorough review of the existing body of literature in relation to identity construction, single-sex school history and outcomes, and the social and academic experiences of women of color. Chapter 3 discussed the theoretical framework and methodology of this study. In Chapter 4, I presented the findings of the study organized within the emergent themes. Chapter 5 detailed a final summary of the study and synthesized the data related to the broader body of scholarship. In Chapter 6, I render my conclusion and extract the implications of the study, provide recommendations for further research, and unveil my final thoughts.

Summary

> "How long can we continue to pull bodies from the river
> before we go upstream and see what's pushing them in?"

~ Harrah Apel, Crow Creek Sioux Matriarch, Fort Thompson, South Dakota, 2004

For more than a decade, this quote has resonated with me, even haunted me. I spent the first half of my career in education on the front lines as a classroom teacher, a coach, and a mentor. I have implemented grant-funded, community-based projects, volunteered as a community organizer, and worked one-on-one with many individuals and families. I did everything in my power to pull bodies from the river; to some degree, this dissertation is my attempt to move upstream. I began my doctoral journey with a vision to guide democratic education reform efforts into a more inclusive, supportive, and productive enterprise. However, I end this particular study with the direct challenge to schools and the institution of schooling to explicitly uncover and work to dismantle White supremacy and the oppressive ideologies that

sustain it. Making change locally is necessary, and the needs in these localities are certainly immediate, but to go upstream, to create institutional change, we must focus equally upon the political.

In a divisive world in such dire need of finding ways to walk together, it is instrumental to think about education research as a method for political change. This study responded to calls within education and within feminism for an intersectional approach that draws attention to White supremacy, power, privilege, and identity. It is crucial that we see higher education institutions as a space to *learn from* students and to walk *with* students. As an anti-racist feminist and White-ally/accomplice, I believe it is my responsibility to seek to understand the lived experiences of others. As a result of this study, I have a more cohesive sense of what it means to be a woman of color navigating postsecondary education. I vehemently argue that we need to understand the broader social messaging that takes place within the walls of academia, as well as to understand and pay attention to the implications external social messaging has for life and learning. If a goal of higher education institutions is to help students succeed in the "real world," then understanding and challenging the way students negotiate knowing themselves and the world around them can only enhance the complexities of student development.

Implications

For research. Utilizing Critical Race Theory and intersectionality as frameworks for this dissertation was not just appropriate but necessary for exploring future educational reform efforts, in particular when attempting to disrupt the White supremacist, paternalistic, neoliberal, deficit-based, top-down ideology woven into many modern school reform movements. This framework proved particularly useful when working across lines of race. It required me to refrain from offering my own narratives and instead allowed for the experiences and counternarratives

of my participants to be expressed in their own words while providing their own perspectives (Thompson, 2004). I chose to appropriate intersectionality as a theory that "explains the processes and mechanisms by which subjects mobilize (or choose not to mobilize) particular aspects of their identities in particular circumstances" (Nash, 2008, p. 11) and coupled it with the Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity. As an anti-racist scholar-activist, this proved to be a powerful tool that has enabled me to center the voices of those previously marginalized by their social location and to move their epistemology into the dominant discourse.

While I consider myself a realist, I also believe in the goodness of people and in the divine power of the universe to right itself. I believe and see evidence of previously idle (White) people mobilizing because they "now know," having heard the stories, pain, and struggles of "others." Quantitative data is undeniably valuable, especially for understanding the scope of an issue. It helps us see how many and how far the proverbial dots spread. Qualitative data, though, connects those dots. It allows for the picture to be completed. Narratives paint those pictures in color and add both ethos and pathos. Narratives allow for us to explicitly say what we mean—to name the demon. It is a vehicle to expose and challenge curriculum, policy, and practice more directly. Moving beyond the politicized debates strictly around policy concepts, such as neoliberalism, and *toward the lived experiences of those navigating these systems* is the best route to truly progressive education reform. I believe this approach can lead to a deeper understanding of agency, responsibility, and the negotiation of power for both researchers and participants.

For the institution of education. The second major implication of this work can and should be used to inform leadership, as well as student development policies and practices in K-

16 education. We must elevate conversations about prejudiced recruiting and hiring practices. This begins with examining who is in leadership positions within K-16 institutions and whose voices are and are not being represented. We must move beyond hiring *for diversity* and instead hiring because *inclusion* moves the needle of social justice. We must address the silencing of "others" through the White supremacist, patriarchal, neoliberal curriculum, policies, and practices that promote and reward obedience, competition, and standardization. We do this by uncovering the explicit and implicit lies offered to us, which dictate that everyone should be able to benefit from the opportunities of choice-based, White supremacist systems and structures. We do this by creating spaces for marginalized voices to be heard and privileged ears to listen and we—*those who are currently with the power to do so* (i.e., accomplices)—must continue to explore ways, models, and systems to facilitate this collaboration.

We must focus our efforts on cross-coalitional activism. If we are serious about attending to the needs and rights of marginalized students and engaging students of privilege in social justice work, I believe the application of identity work in educational spaces *is imperative*. We cannot fight the demon we do not know or will not acknowledge. Campuses or districts operating in silos need to be reformed into spaces of collective action; this must be an across-the-board adoption. In addition to educating students, faculty and staff need to be trained in race and identity work, and the implications of (in)equity malpractice need to be made clear. Personal exploration of implicit bias, welcoming and processing difficult critical conversations, and evaluation of our own (evolving) participation in oppression is never complete. Continual and conscious self-work must be at the forefront of this change.

For practice. My continued commitment to this work has been revived through this process, with renewed energy spent on uncovering and understanding my own biases and

assumptions. Dominelli (1988) argued that continual anti-racism education and training are necessary to uncover and discard avoidance strategies. The rewards outweigh the risks and discomforts. My participants asked for continued conversations around these topics and acknowledged their own personal growth and advancing self-understanding from having been a part of this study. At the end of our focus group discussion, Alice offered that "being allowed to take the stage instead of being a nameless extra felt really powerful," and she expressed gratitude for the opportunity. For me, seven years of work was justified by that one statement. It has been my honor. For social justice reformers and activists, I can only hope this dissertation might inspire and inform them. I hope educators and researchers discern the self-reflective nature of using this kind of framework as another immense benefit; it has been transformative for my own practice and for my own understanding of my personal identity.

Focusing on the inspiring struggles of people who have sought to liberate themselves from oppression and domination changed *who I am* at my core. Hearing my participants talk about the ways in which they have contorted and conformed both willingly and at times against their will in an effort to fit or belong or find a sense of "normal" made me reflect on my own educational experiences and my own practice as an educator-scholar. At the forefront of my mind and throughout the pages of my researcher diary was my identity meaning-making process as related to my educational experiences, and more narrowly with regard to developing and writing this dissertation.

Over this seven-year process, I found endless examples of my personal formulaic meaning-making: from the lexicon I've adopted, to writing styles, to what I read and who I seek out as experts. I looked to my committee for approval and, maybe more importantly, I looked to

my participants for approval. I wanted to get it *right*—right as determined by external authorities, perhaps even a peer-reviewed journal.

I also looked at my doctoral experience and found a fair amount of crossroads meaning-making as well. Will I be accepted as an anti-racist, feminist scholar-activist, or will I be criticized as yet another White woman trying to speak on behalf of women of color? I have gained more and more footing in my confidence through my relationships with women of color and with other White, anti-racist women activists; however, I still waiver between "I'm just a novice… no I'm an expert… I'm ready to speak… and maybe it's best to just listen." My lack of certainty has come through trial and error in multiple contexts. I have examined my own Whiteness throughout this study and have found commonalities relative to our shared working-class beginnings. Most honestly, my crossroads have been affected directly through listening, reading, writing, speaking, and welcoming critique from mentors, like my committee, and from peers, scholars, my participants, and former and current students. It is work and it takes courage.

My hope as I moved toward the end of this dissertation was that I continued to approach a foundational identity as an educator-scholar. It also takes continual identity work of my own. I have constantly seen opportunities to explore my own biases and assumptions, my own implicit and explicit knowing, my cultural competencies and deficiencies. Identity work is never really done, and I would have it no other way.

Recommendations for Research

I believe that more mixed methods and further qualitative studies are needed to document the experiences of women of color, especially with regard to identity construction. Obtaining narratives behind the many quantitative studies that exist would prove powerful and connective. Future studies could be improved by using longitudinal design. I believe more longitudinal

studies need to be completed in order to gain a more holistic view of the evolution of identity within the institution of education. Having a storied past with these participants was helpful and insightful, but had I been able to regularly collect data over the years, the data provided could have been richer. Additional studies could also be improved with an increased sample pool and number of research sites. Future research may provide findings with greater applicability and generalizability by increasing the sample size and the number of research sites. Including additional marginalized groups or focused dimensions of identity could also improve future studies. Similar inquiries are warranted, for example, into the experiences of other marginalized groups (perhaps Latina, Native American, Non-binary and Trans*, etc.). They might include other focused dimensions of identity constructions as an additional point of entry, for instance, (dis)ability in relation to and intersection with other identity constructions.

Final Remarks

My intention was that this study would serve three purposes. First, it would contribute to the anti-racist feminist body of literature on, and more importantly with, women of color in secondary education. Secondly, it is my hope that education reformers consider the salient social and educational contextual influences on identity construction as meaningful locations for addressing the relationship between knowledge, power, and political change. Lastly, hopefully women of color will be encouraged to share their stories and continue to persevere, and White researchers will explore the phenomena of our own implicit knowing and our situatedness as critical so that our anti-racist social, political, and education reform work might more authentically reflect a commitment to social justice within and beyond the walls of academia.

This dissertation has been a true labor of love. The subject of this study, when it was less defined, is what drove me to apply to a doctoral program. The scholarship has met and exceeded

my every expectation. The relationships I've developed with my advisors, my colleagues, my peers, and my participants have been the unexpected truest reward, not to mention the self-reflection and self-development that has transformed me, my life, and my practice.

In closing, I leave you with a passage from "The Passionate Mind of Maxine Green: I am—not yet," where William Pinar (1998) penned the brilliance of Maxine Greene:

Education at its best is a process of teaching people to explore ideas themselves and the world in which they live, to ask questions about the experience called living and to embrace ambiguity, to notice the unusual without fear and to look upon the ordinary with new eyes. (p. 67)

My hope is *that my readers also look forward with new eyes*.

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Appendix A: "Who Am I" Questionnaire and Exercise

Complete the statement, "I am a(n) ___, " 20 times in the spaces provided below rather quickly. Do not think too long about your responses as no answers are right or wrong.

1.   I am a(n)_____.

2.   I am a(n)_____.

3.   I am a(n)_____.

4.   I am a(n)_____.

5.   I am a(n)_____.

6.   I am a(n)_____.

7.   I am a(n)_____.

8.   I am a(n)_____.

9.   I am a(n)_____.

10.   I am a(n)_____.

11.   I am a(n)_____.

12.   I am a(n)_____.

13.   I am a(n)_____.

14.   I am a(n)_____.

15.   I am a(n)_____.

16.   I am a(n)_____.

17.   I am a(n)_____.

18.   I am a(n)_____.

19.   I am a(n)_____.

20.   I am a(n)_____.

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Gaining More Awareness of Your Identity

The following assessments and questions help you to gain a picture of the image you have of yourself.

Agent = member of a dominant group who is defined to have 'power,' and power can be your *own* definition of what you consider it to be as you see how it relates to that identity.

Target = member of a subordinate group who is defined as disenfranchised, deprived of rights, disconnected, oppressed, etc.

Agent or Target

1. Look at your list of "Who am I?" responses. Place and **A** for agent (member of a dominant group) to the left of the response keeping in mind, fully *your* perception of a dominant group as define above) or **T** for target (member of a subordinate group, keeping in mind, fully *your* perception of a subordinate group as define above). Find totals for each group.

As =_____

Ts =_____

Individual or Collective

2. In addition to the T or A, place and **I** for individual traits (singer, dancer, student, mother, father, etc.) and **C** for collective affiliations (member of a choir, church, club, support group, etc.)

Is = _____

Cs = _____

Ethnicity

3. Ethnic group identification is often used to describe human groups that share a common historical heritage and includes a sense of peoplehood, or the feeling that one's own destiny is somehow linked with that of others.

How early on your list did ethnic identity appear?
What does its placement suggest about you and your identity with an ethnic group?
If it appeared toward the bottom or the top, to what do you attribute this?
If it did not appear at all, to what do you attribute this?

Appendix B: Interview Protocols

Interview One

<u>Personal History</u>

1) Tell me about your family background.
   Probe:
   - a) Where were you born? And when?
   - b) Where were your parents or guardians born? How would you describe them?
   - c) Who so you consider family?
   - d) Where did you grow up?
   - e) What was/is "home" like?

2) What is your cultural background?
   Probe:
   - a) How do you identify with regard to your: gender, race, class, age, sexuality, ability, religion?
   - b) What did you learn about yourself growing up from your family?
   - c) What did you learn about yourself growing up from your neighborhood?
   - d) What groups do you belong to (can be formal or informal)?
   - e) Do you feel you act or behave differently in different groups? In what ways?

<u>Social and Academic Experiences</u>

3) Tell me about your school history (e.g. preschool, elementary, middle, high, college).
   Probe:
   - a) How did your experiences change as you got older?

4) Let's first talk more about high school, tell me about The American Academy.
   Probe:
   - a) How did you choose to go to The American Academy?
   - b) What were your experiences like at The American Academy? Were you a part of any groups, clubs, sports, etc.?
   - c) Did you work (formal employment) during high school?
   - d) What were your relationships like with teachers? With your peers?
   - e) What did you learn about yourself in high school? What influenced that most?
   - f) What, if any, impact did going to an all-girls school have on you?
   - g) What did you learn about being (fill in with self-described identity categories from question 2a) at T The American Academy
   - h) What did your high school teach you that's been most useful in college?
   - i) How did they miss the mark or what do you wish they would have taught you?
   - j) If you could time-travel and go back and give freshmen-year you some advice – what would it be?

5) Let's move on to life now, tell me about your college experiences.
   Probe:
   a) Tell me about the college admissions process, what was it like for you? How did you pick a college?
   b) What expectations, if any, did you have upon arriving at college? Have they changed? If so, in what ways?
   c) What are you majoring in or what field/career is of most interest to you? Where do you think that interest comes from? What has it been like to pursue that study?
   d) What are your relationships like with your teachers? Or mentors?
   e) Tell me about your relationships with your peers.
   f) Are you a part of groups, clubs, athletics, etc.? If so, what attracted to you to the organization?
   g) Have you had any internships? Or jobs?
   h) Tell me about your successes and challenges in college so far. What did (I will reference specific examples of success/challenge) teach you about yourself? About society?
   i) What have you learned about being (fill in with self-described identity categories from question 2a) in your university?
   j) At the present time, how much and in what ways would you say college has influenced or changed you?

Thank you so much for your time and thoughtful answers. The next time we meet I want to continue to talk about you social and academic experiences and their impact on who you "are."

Here is the writing prompt we discussed (Appendix C). Take a second to look it over. Do you have any questions about it? I'll collect your story before we begin our next interview.

Interview Two
1) Let's pick back up on life now with regard to your identity. You described yourself in our last interview as a(n): (fill in the self-described identity categories from previous interview), tell me what you've learned about being "you" in the world today?
   Probe:
   a) What social and academic experiences do you recall having something to do with your awareness of how you've come to know what it means to be (insert any or all identity categories)?
   b) What, if any, challenges have you encountered in school related to your identity?
   c) Describe how these challenges have affected you.

2) The self in Narrative (McLean & Breen, 2009): I'd like to do an exercise with you that requires you to tell me two stories. Each story should be based on an experience you've had in the past; they should be specific and set in a time and place.

Event One: Peak Experience
The first story is called the *Peak Experience* or *High Point* story. A peak experience is a moment in a person's life in which she feels a great sense of joy, excitement, happiness, or some other very positive emotion. If your life were a movie, this would be a specific scene that you could describe what was happening (so not a general time period like "4th grade was really great…." But rather "in the cafeteria during the fall of my 4th grade year, this specific thing happened." Got the idea? I'll give you a few minutes to think of what "peak experience" you'd like to tell me about and then I'll ask some questions.

What happened?
When did it happen?
How old were you?
Who was involved?
What were you thinking and feeling?
Why is this event significant?
What does this event say about you and your identity or personality?
Have you told anyone about this event?
Why did you choose to tell/not tell?
Did you get the reaction that you were hoping for? Why/why not?

Great, thank you so much. Let's move on to story two.

Event Two: Turning Point
Continue to think about your life experiences. It's often possible to identify key *Turning Points* or episodes through which a person experiences a BIG change. I'm particularly interested in a turning point in your *understanding of yourself.* Think back to a time that something happened that made you change how you thought about yourself. This story is a little different in that you might not have realized it was a turning point back then – but what is important is that you see it as a turning point in your life now. If you can't think of a time that had a dramatic turning point, then please describe a time that comes closest to it.

What happened?
When did it happen?
How old were you?
Who was involved?
What were you thinking and feeling?
Why is this event significant?
What does this event say about you and your identity or personality?
Have you told anyone about this event?

Why did you choose to tell/not tell?
Did you get the reaction that you were hoping for? Why/why not?

Lastly, let's talk for a moment about some things you value deeply and make you – you.
Specifically, the things you value about: yourself, education, and then your future.

3) Your "Self" first:
   a) Without being humble, what do you value the most about yourself – as a human, a friend, a daughter, a student, citizen?
   b) What does it mean to "be your authentic self"?
   c) Do you ever feel you have to hide who you are? Or mascaraed as someone else? How did you know to do this?
   d) What, if any, parts of you do you hide or alter most often? What does that feel like? How do you benefit from it?
   e) What are we (society or that particular place/location) losing because you're not being yourself?
   f) How does that impact your (internal) sense of value?
   g) Where can you most often be your authentic self?
   h) How does it feel to be fully valued while being your authentic self?

4) Education next:
   a) What is it about education that you value?
   b) When you are feeling best about your work as a student, what do you value about the task/work the most? (developing leadership qualities, rewards, skills, relationships, etc.)
   c) How has education impacted your personal value?
   d) What is the single most important thing education has contributed to your life?

5) And your future:
   a) When you think about yourself in the next two to three years, what do you hope you'll be like?
   b) What do you think is most likely to be TRUE of you in three years?
   c) What do you fear or worry about being in the next two to three years?
   d) What are you most excited about being in the next two to three years?

Focus Group Interview

This conversation is being recorded for research purposes. Please let me know now if you do not agree to being recorded. You may request that the recording stop at any time. I ask for you to NOT use each other's names so that our recording may remain as confidential as possible; in the event someone slips and uses someone's name – I will change it to the pseudonym in the written transcription of this session. So that you feel like you can be as candid and honest as possible, I ask that you all agree to not repeat anything we talk about here with anyone else or with each other after this meeting.

1. What would make it easier to be "you" (who you truly are) on your college campus?
2. Your fictional stories have some common themes to them. A few I was able to discern were (insert themes from coded analysis).
   Probe:
   Tell me your initial reaction to hearing that.
   What do you think this stems from?
   What, if any, experiences have you had personally with (insert theme(s)).
3. How have you been visible/invisible in college?
4. What is the hardest kind of identity/woman to be on a college campus?
5. Where do you go to for safety or solace on campus?
6. What should educators know about you and what should they be doing to support you?

Appendix C: Fictional Story Prompt

This prompt will be given to each participant after the first interview and the story will be collected before the start of the second interview.

Writing Prompt
Imagine a town near yours (but not necessarily a real town) where people gathered to protest the experiences of women of color on a university campus.

What was the problem?
What happened?
How did everyone think and feel about it?
How did it all turn out?

Appendix D: Adult Consent to Participate in Research

The Image Betrays More Than It Reveals: Inter(ior) Views from Women of Color on Identity and Social and Academic Experiences in Higher Education

Principal Investigator: Amy J. Hauenstein, Ed.D Candidate

Institution: DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois, USA

School: College of Education

Faculty Advisor: Amira Proweller, PhD, Associate Professor, Social and Cultural Foundations in Education; Department Chair Educational Policy Studies and Research, College of Education

What is the purpose of this research?
I am asking you to be in a research study because I am trying to learn more about the college experiences and identity construction of Women of Color who previously attended single-sex high schools. This study is being conducted by Amy J. Hauenstein, a graduate student at DePaul University as a requirement to obtain her Education Doctorate degree. This research is being supervised by her Faculty Advisor Amira Proweller, PhD.
We hope to include about seven people in the research.

Why are you being asked to be in the research?
You are invited to participate in this study because you are a Woman of Color in pursuit of a college degree and you attended a public single-sex high school in the United States. You must be age 18 or older to be in this study. This study is not approved for the enrollment of people under the age of 18.

What is involved in being in the research study?
If you agree to be in this study, being in the research involves:

- Completing two individual interviews (60 minutes each) at a location convenient for you. The interviews will occur about one week apart. At the first interview session you will be asked to complete a short written activity sheet called "who am I," which will take about 2 minutes. Then, we will discuss your responses. Then, you will be asked to complete another short written activity related to identity, which should take 15 minutes or less. Then, we will discuss your responses to that exercise. Finally, we will conduct an interview with open ended questions about your academic experiences in primary school, middle school, high school, and college, your social experiences and your individual identity. The interview will be audio recorded.

- At the end of the first interview, I will give you a prompt for writing a fictional short story related to women of color on college campuses. The story can be as long or as short as you think is necessary to tell your story (estimated time of 60 minutes or less). You

will take the prompt home and write the story on your own time. I will ask that you bring the completed story to the second interview.

- Then, at the second interview, which will also be audio recorded, I will ask you questions about your individual identity and life experiences. I will remind you after the interview that I will send you a doodle poll to complete that will allow me to schedule the focus group discussion.

- You will be invited to be a part of a focus group discussion (90 minutes once) several weeks after the interviews. If you are unable to join for the focus group, you can still participate in the study. I will try to get as many people together at one time. We will talk about your experiences on your college campus and the themes from the story that you and others wrote based on the prompt I provided. The focus group will also be audio recorded.

- Completing an optional follow up video-chat or in person meeting that will allow for checking the accuracy of the interviews. We will review and discuss some parts of the interview and focus group transcripts to be sure I understood what you said accurately.

- The interviews and the focus group will be audio recorded and transcribed into written notes later in order to get an accurate record of what you said. Although we ask you to not use your real name, if any real names are used, they will be replaced with the chosen pseudonym. You may still participate if you decline to be audio recorded; I will use written notes instead.

How much time will this take?
This study will take about 4.5 of your time. The individual interviews will take about 1 hour each to complete. The short story writing will take about 1 hour or less to complete. The focus group interview will take about 1.5 hours to complete. The entire study will take about 2 months to complete.

Are there any risks involved in participating in this study?
Being in this research study involves some risks. You might experience some awkwardness or discomfort answering interview questions about your identity, your childhood, and your school experiences. You may choose to skip any questions or stop participating at any time without any repercussions. Given that there is a focus group discussion and you and other participants will hear each other's comments, there is the possibility that others may find out what you have said and will repeat your comments to others. We have put some protections in place to prevent this from happening. We will ask you and the other participants to refrain from using actual names and to use the pseudonyms (fake names) you chose when you agreed to be in the study. Also, we will ask you and the other participants to not repeat what is said to others. However, we cannot guarantee that the information you provide will remain confidential.

Are there any benefits to participating in this study?
There may be no direct benefits from being in this research study. However, participants may benefit from the opportunity to discuss and examine their own lived experiences, related to their identity construction and their social and academic experiences. The indirect benefit of the research is the knowledge gained about identity construction in relation to the social and academic experiences of students and may aid scholars, activists, policy makers, and citizens in creating democratic public education systems in theory and practice.

Is there any kind of payment, reimbursement or credit for being in this study?
You will not be paid for being in the research.

Are there any costs to me for being in the research?
You are responsible for any costs related to getting to and from the location where you will participate in the research. Every effort will be made to meet at a location convenient to you.

Can you decide not to participate?
Your participation is voluntary, which means you can choose not to participate. There will be no negative consequences, penalties, or loss of benefits if you decide not to participate or change your mind later and withdraw from the research after you begin participating. Your decision whether or not to be in the research will not impact your current or future mentoring relationship with me.

Who will see my study information and how will the confidentiality of the information collected for the research be protected?
The research records will be kept and stored securely. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study or publish a paper to share the research with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. We will not include your name or any information that will directly identify you. We will use your pseudonym (fake name) in our research records.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. However, some people might review or copy our records that may identify you in order to make sure we are following the required rules, laws, and regulations. For example, the DePaul University Institutional Review Board may review your information. If they look at our records, they will keep your information confidential. A transcription service will be used to transcribe the audio recordings in to manuscripts. They will keep your information confidential.

The audio recordings will be kept until accurate written notes have been made, then they will be destroyed after 1 year.

You should know that there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court or to tell authorities if you report information about a child being abused or neglected or if you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.

Please be aware that disclosing experiences with sexual or relationship violence during the course of research does not constitute a formal report to the University and will not begin the process of DePaul providing a response. If you are seeking to report an incident of sexual or relationship violence to DePaul, you should contact Public Safety (Lincoln Park: 773-325-7777; Loop: 312-362-8400) or the Dean of Students and Title IX Coordinator (Lincoln Park: 773-325-7290; Loop: 312-362-8066 or titleixcoordinator@depaul.edu).

Individuals seeking to speak confidentially about issues related to sexual and relationship violence should contact a Survivor Support Advocate in the Office of Health Promotion & Wellness for information and resources (773-325-7129 or hpw@depaul.edu). More information is available at http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/hpw/shvp.html. Individuals are encouraged to take advantage of these services and to seek help around sexual and relationship violence for themselves as well as their peers who may be in need of support.

If you do disclose an experience with sexual or relationship violence, we will also provide you with a resource sheet containing this information at the end of the study.

What if new information is learned that might affect my decision to be in the study?
If we learn of new information or make changes to any portion of the study, and the new information or changes might affect your willingness to stay in this study, the new information will be provided to you. If this happens, you may be asked to provide ongoing consent (in writing or verbally).

Who should be contacted for more information about the research?
Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study or you want to get additional information or provide input about this research, you can contact the researcher, Amy J. Hauenstein at amyhauenstein@gmail.com or at 440-488-6902. You can contact the Faculty Advisor, Amira Proweller at aprowell@depaul.edu or at 773-325-4320.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the DePaul Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have questions about your rights as a research subject you may contact Susan Loess-Perez, DePaul University's Director of Research Compliance, in the Office of Research Services at 312-362-7593 or by email at sloesspe@depaul.edu.
You may also contact DePaul's Office of Research Services if:

•Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
•You cannot reach the research team.
•You want to talk to someone besides the research team.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

<u>Statement of Consent from the Subject:</u>

I have read the above information. I have had all my questions and concerns answered. By

signing below, I indicate my consent to be in the research.

Signature: _____

Printed name: _____ Date: _____