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Visualizing Girlhood: Visibility and the Power of the Black Girl Gaze to Understand Adolescent Girls' Identity

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Approval of the Dissertation Committee

This dissertation has been duly read, reviewed, and critiqued by the Committee listed below, which hereby approves the manuscript of Darielle Blevins as fulfilling the scope and quality requirements for meriting the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education.

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Abstract

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Black feminist scholars have highlighted the various ways Black women and girls are rendered invisible throughout many U.S. institutions. In the past few years, advocates have called attention to the ways gendered-racialized biases contribute to the punitive and dehumanizing treatment of Black girls in school. This study will demonstrate how Black adolescent girls negotiate their identity at school through the creation of self-portraits. By using dual self-portraits, in which girls are able to express their own perspective and imagine the perspective of their teacher, Black adolescent girls are allowed the space to explore the relationship between power, culture and their identity development. Overwhelmingly, the visual and interview data in this study suggested two major ways girls are experienced in relation to their teachers. Their inner selves are rendered *invisible* (i.e. Girls believed their teachers did not know or see their inner selves) or fully *visible (*i.e. Girls believed their teachers knew and saw their complete selves). The findings of this research study provide information for teachers to understand how to engage Black girls in ways that support their multiple identities. This study contributes new knowledge to the field of teacher education and Black Girlhood Studies.

Keywords: Black girlhood, adolescence, visual methodology

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Black feminist scholars have highlighted the various ways Black women and girls are rendered invisible throughout many U.S. institutions. The work of Black women and girls often goes unnoticed in historical documentations and celebrations of the civil rights movements of the 60's as well as in modern movements for equity. Kimberle Crenshaw, attorney, civil rights advocate and a leading scholar of critical race theory, championed the rights of Black women workers whose unique experience of being Black and female was rendered invisible by a legal system that would not acknowledge their experience of discrimination as separate from White women and also separate from Black men (Crenshaw, 1989). In the current age of Black Lives Matter, media coverage and public discourse center the experiences of Black men and boys rendering the gendered-racialized discrimination of Black women and girls invisible. With targeted needs excluded from policy, Black women and girls often suffer from sociopolitical invisibility while research and educational practices remain hyper visible to multiple forms of public scrutiny.

In the past few years, advocates have called attention to the ways in which gendered-racial biases contribute to the punitive and dehumanizing treatment of Black girls in school. In January 2019, a group of Black girls attending a New York middle school were strip searched after exhibiting behaviors that school personnel described as "hyper and giddy during lunch hour" (Gold, 2019). Educators and administrators of the school assumed the girls were on drugs and forcibly strip searched the girls in hopes of confiscating drugs. No drugs were found, as these middle school girls were naturally giddy just as many adolescent girls are during this stage of development. To the school personnel, Black girl happiness was invisible and mislabeled as

deviance. These educators made an assumption about who these Black girls as they did not develop personal relationships with them as students to understand who they are. It is therefore necessary to interrogate the ways in which teacher-student relationships impact students, and the role teacher preparation plays in mitigating these issues.

Punitive discipline policy and gendered racial stereotypes lead educators to see Black girls as deviant, resulting in Black girls' inequitable treatment in school. Educational equity scholars have emphasized the differences in structured life opportunities for many Black children as they are overwhelmingly educated in under resourced schools with inexperienced teachers using learning materials that are not relevant to their lived realities (Darling-Hammond, 2010). These conditions, coupled with pervasive stereotypes, leave Black children at higher risk of experiencing conflictual relationships with teachers. Scholars suggest that due to the impact teachers have on children's academic success and overall adjustment in terms of development (second only to parents), teachers are the most influential people in children's lives (Pianta, 1999). To understand more about Black girls' experiences in school, this study examined Black girls' understanding of themselves and their relationships with their teachers through a reflective art exercise utilizing self-portraits and an interview. This reflective art exercise was intended to provide a more in-depth understanding of how Black girls develop in school identities.

Students spend over 6 hours a day, 5 days a week with teachers, and when that time is characterized by conflict and control, children are at a disadvantage when it comes to developing a healthy self-concept. When children have a positive self-image, they feel confident to aspire to reach their full potential; moreover, they believe in their ability to effect positive change and impact their world. Black girls are provided with fewer opportunities in school to develop positive relationships with teachers. Considering these experiences, educators and administrators

need to pay attention to the impact on the emotional and internal selves of these girls as they are constructing their identities.

Gendered-Racial Stereotypes

Controlling images and narratives of Black women have pervaded U.S. society since they were used to justify the enslavement of African people. Archetypes of Black women include the Mammy, Hot Mamas or Jezebels, welfare mothers, the Strong Black Woman and Superwoman. These narratives persist to justify the continued marginalization of Black women and girls (Collins, 1991; Brown, 2009 ; Harris-Perry, 2011). In the era of enslavement, the "Mammy"—the obedient, happily asexual servant—was created to justify the economic exploitation of house slaves and continued as an explanation for the overrepresentation of Black women in domestic spheres (Collins, 2009; Harris-Perry, 2011). Conversely, the Jezebel image is usually portrayed as a light skinned Black woman who cannot control her sexual urges and frequently seduces men, namely white men (Mitchell & Herring, 1998; West, 1995). Sapphire, a character from the *Amos 'n' Andy* TV show in the 1940s and 1950s took pride in loudly berating and emasculating the men around her (Mitchell & Herring, 1998; West, 1995). The Strong Black Woman and Superwoman pervade our current society as Black women are expected to remain stoic, strong, and selfless despite their circumstances. These stereotypes leave little room for Black women to express their needs and emotions; for Black girls who are developing a self-definition, this means that the lines between who they feel they are and who they are expected to be by society are blurred.

Stereotypes of Black women as hypersexual, boisterous, and aggressive can cause girls' typical behavior to be viewed as devious, or behaviors that warrant the teaching of new skills to be viewed as needing correction. In a participatory action research study, where teenage girls

along with Black girlhood scholar Venus Evans-Winters collaborate to carry out the study, Mia, a 16-year-old girl participant and researcher observed, “Society has these stereotypes, and like, it’s going to be hard to make these stereotypes go away” (2017, p. 418). This indicates that adolescent Black girls are aware of beliefs about who they are that assumes how they believe that they inherited and not earned. Additional studies show that girls express experiences in which they are policed for their fashion choices, verbal expressions, and hairstyles. (Evans-Winters, 2017; Wun, 2016). Aja Reynolds and Stephanie Hicks (2016) recognize girls whose expression embody African and Black culture are targeted. Reynolds and Hicks (2016) explain the conceptualization of Black girls’ behavior as ghetto subjects them to harsh punishment:

> When Black girls in schools display behaviors that are deemed “ghetto,” or a deviation from the social norms that construct acceptable behavior according to a narrow, White middle-class scope of femininity, they are deemed non-conforming and thereby subject to criminalizing responses (p. 13)

Likewise, Venus Evans-Winters, Black Girlhood scholar, calls out the ways stereotypes about Black girls influence the types of research that has been perpetuated throughout the decades. Empirical research about Black girls has long focused on high rates of early pregnancy, sexuality, drop-out rates, and aggression. Like stereotypes, these studies reinforce narratives of the problemed Black girls while moving attention away from the institutions that historically oppressed Black women and girls through gendered-racist practices and policies (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). Black Feminist Scholars assert the need to shift our thinking away from deficits to a concept of resilience and agency (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). Patricia Hill Collins, Sociologist and Black Feminist Scholar, admonishes these socially constructed

narratives are a way to ensure racism, sexism, and poverty are a normal part of life. There is a need to understand how these stereotypes impact how Black girls are treated in school.

Impacted by the pervasive negative images and research about Black women, teachers' beliefs about femininity, behavior, and expression also impact how girls behave in class (Blake, 2011; Curby, 2014). Research suggests that some Black girls develop dual identities in which their outward behaviors and persona are not congruent with their beliefs about their inner selves (Henry, 1998; Odumosu, 2015; Fordham, 1993, 1996; Evans-Winters 2011). Some girls will behave passively, speaking minimally while in class, then expressing confidence and assertiveness in nonacademic spaces (Henry, 1998). This response is protective in nature as it occasionally makes them invisible to excessive punishment often enacted on Black girls who openly express their opposition to unfair class and school policies (Henry, 1998; Blake, 2011; Reynolds, 2016).

Research also indicates that responding passively and assertively may both have implication for mental and physical health concerns later in life (Harris-Perry, 2011). Passive responses may lead women to internalize negative views of themselves if they do not have or are never given the opportunity to interrogate these stereotypes. Several studies confirm the ominous impact of overt and internalized racial oppression (Williams, 2000; Harris-Perry, 2011; Walton, 2017). Black women and girls endure oppression directed toward Black people as well as discrimination on the basis of gender (Crenshaw, 1989). Current research shows an increase in depression and suicide among Black girls (Walton, 2017), and medical and social scholars believe the compounding stress of gendered-racial oppression throughout the lifetime results in an increase in maternal and infant mortality for Black women despite access to resources

(Owens, 2019). Scholars make direct connections between these spikes and the impact of gendered-racial oppression.

Purposes

Given the long-term consequences and high stakes of pervasive stereotypical narratives of Black women and girls, this study demonstrates how Black adolescent girls negotiate their identity through the creation of self-portraits. By using dual self-portraits, in which girls are able to express their own perspective and imagine the perspective of their teacher, the study allows Black adolescent girls the space to explore the relationship between power, culture, and identity development. This approach is intended to uncover the covert messages teachers send to their Black female students and the impact those messages have on students' identity development. Given the disparity in exclusionary discipline of Black adolescent girls, this study will share the experiences of girls who have endured persistent discipline in school and those who have minimal exposure with school discipline.

Black girls' identity development and constructions have been greatly undertheorized. Research that centralizes dialogue and storytelling can provide opportunities for healing as it allows Black girls to share knowledge, feelings, and experiences that have been devalued in many educational spaces as well as in broader society (Lindsay-Dennis, Cummings, & McClendon, 2011). Dialogue paired with the act of drawing have been utilized to create safe spaces for self-reflection and revelation of otherwise unrealized beliefs. In this study, the dual self-portrait process proved to be a useful exercise for creating safe spaces for Black adolescent girls to identify negative messages then talk back and express their truth. Thus, this study contributes to the developing field of Black Girlhood Studies to inform teacher education programs.

Dialogue about school reform increasingly forsakes the impact of inequities on the emotional well-being of our students. With the goal of centering youths' perspectives and emotions in order to bring an understanding to teaching profession at large this study makes clear the ways students make meaning of themselves and the impact of their relationship with their teacher. This focus was intended to reveal the impact of teachers' words, actions, and beliefs on how girls understand themselves. This study contributes to the growing movement toward gender-responsive training for educators while providing a gendered-racialized perspective.

Dominant approaches to identity development research and theory offer adult conceptualizations of children's self-concept and do not allow participants to articulate this for themselves (McGuire, 1984). In our society, there are various hierarchies of power, one example being that between adults and children, and another between researchers and participants. When adolescents are engaged in the research process, this hierarchy is disrupted. Visual methods provide an opportunity for adolescents, who are usually acted upon, to express themselves and use their power.

Drawing from Black Feminist theory and phenomenological foundations of centering the voices of Black women and girls, participants will engage in a visual reflective exercise about the ways they perceive how their teacher views them as well as how they represent their inner selves. This method is used to uplift students' perspectives in a field that often defers to adults' perspectives and opinions. O'Kane (2000) maintains that visual methods at least partially reflects "a move away from seeing children as passive recipients of adult socialization, to a recognition that children are social actors in their own right" (p. 136). My central argument is to use visual methods to address the need to center Black girls' perspectives on their identity and how their teacher's view them. This study is *g*uided by the following research questions:

1. How do Black adolescent girls verbally and visually express their inner selves?
2. How do Black adolescent girls depict their in-school identities in relation to their teacher?
3. How does the drawing-elicitation interview process inform the expression of girls' identity?

Significance of the Study

A significant aspect of this Black girl-centered research study focuses on challenging power hierarchies of researchers and participants, adults and children, teachers, and students. This study moves forward the conversation on reimagining how we engage in educational research and practice with Black girls. There is a need to interrupt the power dynamics between school officials and Black girls by providing Black girls the space where vulnerability, art creation, and truth-telling are encouraged. In this new space, there is potential for theorizing and celebrating Black Girlhood in ways that contribute to the necessary healing of Black girls from institutional trauma.

While visual methodologies have become more commonly used in educational studies, few studies center Black girls. This study fills that gap by creating a Black girl-centered methodology for girls to reflect and self-define. Dual self-portraits created by Black girls are a way of resisting stereotypical narratives and images pervasive in society. Creating dual-self-portraits allows girls to self-define and challenge potentially internalized stereotypes. Through the drawings, a Black girl is able to visualize how she feels within herself as well as how she experiences her relationship with her teacher—all from her own gaze.

Theoretical Foundations

Black Feminist Theory

In the early 1800's, women like Mary McLeod Bethune, Anna Julia-Cooper and Nannie Borrough made educating African American women a priority by opening schools and publicly advocating or the education of Black girls. By engaging in public discourse about the rights of Black women and girls, these women like many others laid the foundation for modern discourse on Black feminist ideology. In her foundational text *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Power (2001),* Patricia Hill Collins draws from these scholars and outlines the deep history African American women have in addressing social inequities. Collins builds upon previous Black women's work and proposes a theory in which centering knowledge drawn from the lives of Black women is used to view the dynamic experience of being Black and female in the American context. Black feminist thought as (also called Black Feminist theory) is a framework from which to understand, research, and discuss Black women's lived experiences, centering the knowledge of Black women throughout history and through present day. Black feminist theory consists of "theories and specialized thought produced by African American women intellectuals designed to express Black women's standpoint" (Collins, 1990, p.10). Black feminist theory positions Black women as experts of their own lives and does not rely on members of the academy to validate their lived experiences.

Three tenets of Black feminist theory will be central to this study: (1) lived experience as a form of knowing; (2) use of dialogue in assessing knowledge; and (3) the ethic of caring. This theory gives credit to the women who will never see or have never seen the inside of a university. Traditional research theory validates the voices of those who are deemed worthy by the academy which may draw distinctions between Black women who are members of the academy and women who Collins (1990) refers to as the everyday Black woman. Because this

theory gives voice to the everyday Black woman, it is dynamic and is shaped by the varying positionalities of the Black women speaking.

Collective experience serves as the foundation for Black feminist theory recognizing that, due to the diversity in experience of being a Black woman, the confluence of nationality, sexual orientation, class, and skin tone can all create different responses to the shared experience. While some believe marginalized group identities are only created in response to the dominant culture, Collins (2001) asserts that individual responses define the perspective based on each woman's lived experience. Collins observes, in the face of domineering White middle-class values, that some women talk back while others question their womanhood. Likewise, as Black adolescent girls are negotiating their identity, some will question themselves as they compare their Blackness to White standards, while others will openly assert their agency to preserve their cultural identity.

Black women create meaning and self-define through dialogue with one another about their experiences with gendered-racial oppression. Black women continually create space for the safe expression of their true selves that would not be possible in the presence of people who participate in the culture of domination, namely Black men, and White people (Collins, 1991). As I engaged with Black girls about their experiences with their teachers, the Ethic of Caring was central to my data collection and analysis. My intention in the interview process was to establish rapport and convey that I care about their feelings and their experiences. According to Collins (1990), emotional expression is central to knowledge validation in the African American female tradition.

Throughout her writing, Collins (1990) shares narratives of Black adolescent girls, yet how this framework applies to the convergence of multiple marginal identities of Black

Adolescent girls has been greatly undertheorized. Joyce Ladner (1971) and Nikki Jones (2009) conducted extensive qualitative studies on the realities of being a Black female adolescent in the U.S. Black girl-centered research often utilized Black Feminist theory to make sense of the experience of being Black and female (Ladner, 1971), yet noted the need for a separate theory that directly addresses the impact of childhood (Evans-Winters, 2007). Scholars question what the impact is of pervasive stereotypes and negative narratives in schools on Black girls' gendered-racial academic, social, and emotional identity development. They have taken up this call and are moving toward the development of a field of Black Girlhood Studies to center the importance of Black girls' lived experiences and move toward a pedagogy that honors Black girls realities. This study contributes to this body of work by centering the experiences of Black adolescent girls who exist within the context of multiple marginalized identities.

Black Girlhood Pedagogy and Studies

Following the tenets of Black feminist theory, Black Girlhood Pedagogy is particularly concerned with understanding the intersections of being a Black female child by centering the lived experiences of Black girls throughout the centuries (Owens, 2017). Brown (2009) defines Black girlhood as "the representations, memories and lived experiences of being and becoming in a body marked as youthful, Black and female" (p.1).

Black girlhood pedagogy is a framework rooted in an asset-based orientation of research with and about Black girls that counters the deficit-based literature. Scholars of Black Girlhood seek to uplift narratives of Black girlhood that do not rely on what has been said before as the definitive last word. Brown (2009) asserts, "We do not have a language that accurately describes what it means to work with Black girls in a way that is not controlling their bodies and/or

producing white, middle-class girl subjectivities." (p. xv). Recognizing the creative potential of Black girlhood is a useful framework from which to:

1. Articulate visionary Black girlhood as a meaningful practice;
2. Showcase Black girl inventiveness of form and content;
3. Expand our vision of Black girlhood beyond identity;
4. Sense radical courage and interdependence; and
5. Honor praxis, the analytical insight that comes only by way of consistent action and reflection (p. 3).

To adequately account for the lived experiences of what it means, what it feels like, and what it looks like to construct a self as a Black girl in today's society, we need additional research directly from the experts themselves: Black girls. Brown (2007) asserts that by allowing the Black girls' voices and actions to form the basis of what we call Black girlhood, we will move closer to more authentic representation.

Visual Methodology

Visual methodologies have historically been used to shift power dynamics within education and many diverse fields including anthropology, medicine, and sociology. As Black girls navigate dual identities, methodologies need to be applied to adequately center their voices and experiences. Visual analysts argue images, like language, reflect artists' beliefs and values (Literat, 2013; Albers, 2007). Likewise, participant-created visual texts represent how they make meaning of their world. Visual methodology can be useful in understanding beliefs and meaning, making concepts central to identity development (Albers, 2007). Scholars have used drawing methodologies to understand children's conceptualizations of complex topics. For example,

researchers used drawing exercises to understand how fifth grade students conceptualize and visualize gender (Brown & Albers, 2014).

Drawing methodologies have been described as a "channel to voice their inner stories" (Literat, 2013, p.12). Ana Bagnoli (2004) specifically used self-portraits with participants to bring forth the expression of their "needs, motives and emotions" (p.6), which are not always evidenced in word-based qualitative inquiry. Participants were able to communicate sensitive feelings and aspirations in ways that may have been limited if verbal words were the only option of communication (Bagnoli, 2004). Additional scholars support the conclusion that traditional methods of inquiry alone do not elicit the amount, depth, or quality of visual methodologies (Guillemin, 2004; Literat, 2003). In a study where children were asked about emotionally latent events, more information was produced when the child was asked to draw or re-enact the event that caused their emotion versus when they were asked to retell the event (Wesson & Salmon, 2001). Underscored throughout the literature is the importance of reflective discussion of the image produced, guided by the participant (Literat 2013; Saldana, 2009; Bagnoli 2004; Cappello, 2005). Therefore, this study's use of visual methodologies and dialogue were done so to promote robust data collection.

Positionality

Being Black and female in American society encompasses a complicated history of oppression and subjugation. The intersection of these two identities shape how I experience the world and how the world experiences me. For a child, this is purely exhausting. As a child, I found solace within the "cracks" of our society and hid within the margins attempting to be sheltered from an unfamiliar world. I often remained quiet in class, not wanting to elicit attention from adults or my peers. I learned which behaviors, hairstyles, fashion styling, language choice,

dispositions, and attitudes were preferred. At times I received conflicting messages from student peers. For example, when I was in sixth grade, an Asian friend of mine told me that I was whitewashed because I "talked like a White person," to which I took great offense as I knew this was not a compliment. I was completely taken by surprise when that same day, a white friend called me "ghetto" after overhearing a comment I made. My experience and behavior changed when I attended a small predominantly Black school and had my first Black teachers. I volunteered to answer questions in class and wanted to be seen by my teachers. I welcomed the praise I received as well as the attention from my peers who now appreciated my style and big hair. I have been fascinated by this duality that can be present between how I internally perceive myself and how I am viewed from the outside.

I came to this work after reading the seemingly contradictory and relatively unexplored concept of self-definition and double consciousness of Black girls. Literature talked about some girls being loud as a form of resistance, demanding to be heard, while other Black girls remained silent and passive in class as a way of resisting curriculum that did not reflect their interests. Going even further, some scholars rejected the notion that silence was an act of resistance and claimed that Black girls have cultural ways of constructing and expressing femininity that is not explained in merely considering if they are loud or quiet. Henry (1998) contends that girls believe school is a place of gendered and sexual politics in which they are silenced and "disallowed" to express themselves when boys frustrate them. I wanted to know: What does the concept and/or process look like today? How do girls believe they express their identity? What is the relationship between the relationship with their teacher and how they express their identity at school?

Definition and Rationale of Terms

Black- People of African descent who share common ways of being and knowing. Used interchangeably with the term African American. The dynamic experiences and responses to these experiences have caused some Black women to take up and defend the use of some terms over others. For example, "African American" had been widely accepted yet many in the 1980s and 1990s critiqued its use while others questioned the use of "Black." Collins decides to focus on "why Black feminist thought exists at all" instead of entering the "linguistic treadmill" with her peers (p. 22). Collins uses both African American and Black to describe women of African descent and this study will do the same.

Exclusionary Discipline- Any practice in which students are removed from the classroom as a form of discipline. Common forms include suspensions and expulsions. Also includes referrals to the office, prevention from attending school events or recess, and being sent out of the class during times of instruction or work time.

Black Girls Gaze- Claudine Taaffe coined the term "Black Girl Gaze," a visual theory, and defines it as "the documentation about the process of creating Black girl-authored counter-narratives." Taaffe asserts that the "key to this process is the fluid teaching and learning process between Black girl photographers and Black women curators/facilitators" (Taaffe, 2016, p52). I am adapting this concept to also include many forms of artwork created by Black girls.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter presents a review of current research on elements of Black girlhood that impact Black girls' identity development and educational experiences. I begin with an overview outlining how schools act as socializing agents in children's development. I highlight the ways in

which negative stereotypes are pervasive in society and replicate in the classroom, thereby contributing to the negative treatment of Black girls in the classroom. I then discuss how the field of education and child development conceptualize identity development but fail to account for the impact of marginalization on development. I present an analysis of the ways researchers have centered Black girls' voices therefore creating new narratives about the identity expression of adolescent Black girls. This section focuses on scholars' conceptualization of Black girls' response to teachers' beliefs. I highlight conditions that result in girls developing dual identities by molding themselves to be favorable in their teachers' eyes (Fordham, 1993; Henry, 1998). Scholars observe that other girls reject this socialization and often become targets of persistent discipline. (McCluskey, 1989; Morris, 2016; Evans-Winters, 2017; Blake, 2011). This chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of current research as it pertains to Black girls' educational experiences. I argue the need, when working with Black girls, for an approach rooted in Black feminism which considers race, gender, class, and age with conscious consideration of the ways Black girls are impacted in education.

Why Black Girls

There is a pressing need for educational research that examines the school experiences of Black girls as well as illuminates research methodologies in which Black girls can claim authority of their own narrative and healing. The majority of prior educational research conflates the experiences of Black males with that of Black females, which overlooks the ways that Black girls' unique sociocultural positioning impacts their school experiences and identity development (Delpit, 1988; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003). Likewise, girlhood research that centered White female students' experiences indicated girls receive less instructional time, less help, and less positive and negative attention than their male counterparts

(Sadker & Sadker 1994). Conversely, studies that center Black girls' experiences in the classroom find that Black girls are often targets of negative attention by teachers in ways that their White female counterparts are not (Morris, 2007; Wallace 2008). Research that does not account for gendered and racialized realities of Black girls miss the nuanced experiences that create specific understandings for Black girls in school.

In a study of adolescent students, Black girls reported the highest desire to be leaders as compared to their male and female peers (Smith, 2004). At the same time, Black girls with school discipline records were more likely to experience formal and informal discipline from adults on campus than non-Black students (Wun, 2016). Therefore, there is a system that targets and tracks girls of color making it difficult for them to get out of the cycle of punishment . To understand how Black girls occupy seemingly opposing positions, it is essential to understand the racialized and gendered dynamics that occur within educational institutions.

Using Intersectionality as a conceptual framework, Monique Lane (2017) conducted a feminist auto-ethnography in a two-year study of a girls' empowerment program that she established at an urban public high school. Lane analyzed Black feminist curricula, in-class video footage, student artifacts, and interviews with former participants. She argued that Black feminist pedagogy may promote the development of positive social and academic identities among African American female youth. She urges that Black girls' experiences must be viewed through an intersectional lens because they are treated harshly due to their gender, race, sexuality, religion, location, and age.

Moreover, Black Girlhood scholars Ruth Nicole Brown and Aisha Durham contend that our understanding of girlhood, popularized by books like *Reviving Ophelia* and *Girl Power*, provide an incomplete account of girlhood in America (Brown, 2009; Durham, 2013). We need a

field that celebrates Black girls and interrogates the systems that render their needs invisible. Therefore, Black Girlhood pedagogy is particularly concerned with understanding the intersections of being a Black, female child by centering the lived experiences of Black girls throughout the centuries. Researchers argue that, unlike their White female peers, Black girls—particularly those from under resourced communities—often receive harsher punishment and are hyper visible as compared to their wealthy female counterparts (Evans-Winters, 2017; Wun, 2017). As a result, schools contribute to the inequitable treatment of Black girls.

Schools as Socializing Agents

Scholars assert that schools can act as "powerful sites for the construction of culturally patterned gender relations and teachers are the agents of socialization" (Adler, 1992, p.169; Apple, 2004) Based on a 6-hour school day and over the course of 13 years, students spend approximately 13,000 hours in school (Apple, 2004; Stein 1999). One ninth grade girl expressed, "Many of us see our teachers more than we see our parents. I think that teachers need to realize that they are part of our lives as much as they are. Yes, our parents are important, but teachers are also because we see them so much" (Stein, 1999, p. 20). As children are socialized and shaped by the beliefs of their parents, they are also impacted by the beliefs of their teachers. When those beliefs are positive there can be positive outcomes but when beliefs are rooted in bias, they can be detrimental to students' identity development.

African American girls enter U.S. classrooms with high expectations of success and a strong cultural identity from their families (Chavous & Cogburn, 2007) yet they are often met with differential cultural expectations when they enter the classroom. Given the majority of the current teaching force are White, middle-class, monolingual women (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2013) who may have internalized

sexist views about how to express femininity (McAllister & Irvine, 2000), their classroom values may conflict with students who do not share their cultural upbringing. White women often have social expectations for girls that do not align with many African American girls' at-home socialization.

As children navigate social expectations in multiple settings, differences in classroom expectations and home expectations contribute to teachers' increased perception of misbehavior by Black children as compared to children of other ethnicities (Howard, 2010). In addition, Kumar and Hamer (2012) found in their sample of 784 preservice teachers, over 25% reported harboring prejudiced beliefs about children from different cultures than their own. Extant research confirms most preservice teachers bring little cultural knowledge and experience into the classroom (Barry & Lechner, 1995; Bell, Horn, & Roxas, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Gilbert, 1995; Hollins & Torres-Guzman, 2005; King, Hollins, & Hayman, 1997; Sleeter, 1985, 2001; Valli, 1995). As a result, when Black girls reach middle and high school, teachers perceive them to be disruptive and aggressive, at times without cause (Morris, 2016; Wun, 2016; Evans-Winters, 2011). Teachers bring their own cultural values into the classroom as a part of their teaching practices and when they conflict with students' home culture, this creates a barrier to positive teacher-student relationships (Howard, 2010).

Attachment in the Classroom

Attachment theory suggests that children need consistent, stable, warm interactions with parents in order to develop healthy relationship strategies(Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth & Bell, 1970). Educational research scholars confirm that when in the context of a warm environment, children can develop bonds with their teachers similar to bonds young children create with their parents (Pianta, 1999). When a positive attachment is established in the classroom, children are

better able to take healthy risks, build peer relationships, and demonstrate all of the necessary characteristics for healthy school adjustment (Pianta, 1999). Unfortunately, all children are not afforded the right to learn in such an environment needed to support this type of close relationship. Leading experts in K-12 education contend that relational negativity in relationships with kindergarten teachers can predict poor academic outcomes and suspensions in upper grades especially for children who may be exposed to additional vulnerabilities (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). It is essential that students have positive relationships with their teachers to set the foundation for success in their academic and social lives. Conflicts experienced in the early years have the potential of integrating into the fabric of the brain causing relational and emotional damage that is difficult to repair in adult years (Siegal, 2012; Pianta, 2001).

Additionally, researchers found, when teachers perceive more positive relationships with their students, they are more likely to offer additional support (Curby, 2014). In contrast, teacher–child relationships characterized by conflict may lead to frequent attempts to control children's behavior and thus hinder efforts to promote a positive school environment for these students. Pianta and Hamre (2001) conducted extensive research on teacher child relationships from early childhood through secondary education, determining closeness and conflict as influential predictors for quality relationship between early childhood teachers and students. Students of color who have caring relationships with their teachers are more motivated and perform better academically than students who do not (Foster, 1995; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 1990). Black girls particularly benefit from caring and loving classroom relationships.

Pang (1999) disrupts accepted notions of care that are characterized by smiles and sympathy common among early childhood professionals and challenges educators to reflect on their own beliefs about social and racial justice, comparing these values to the teachers' daily

practice. How can one truly show care if they cannot see the needs of the students they are teaching? Pang asserts one can have a strong belief in human rights, equity, and equality and not show genuine care. Conversely, when one has a genuine disposition to care, they find a way to treat others with justice, equity, and fairness. In the classroom, teachers understand their responsibility to care for the students in their reach, yet this is a conceptual obligation and does not always translate to practice. Lane (2017) furthers this challenge, asserting that Black girls benefit from a politicized ethic of care and love rooted in Black feminist theory. Educators understand that education of Black children is inherently political and emotional (hooks, 2003).

Multicultural Education and Ethnic Studies

The field of multicultural education has been a powerful force in advocating for the inclusion of culture into school curriculum. Multicultural scholars opened the door for greater conversations about culture in the classrooms (Banks, 2013). Multicultural teacher education courses were introduced to better prepare teachers for teaching children within a culturally pluralistic society. Nieto (2000) explains, "Multicultural is a descriptive term that refers simply to the reality of pluralism and the factual coexistence of people of diverse cultures" where Multicultural Education should communicate the power of a democracy, social justice, and equity (p.2). The efficacy of a multicultural framework that centers pluralism has been questioned as there is little research to demonstrate that preservice teachers' preparation in implementing the information covered in the course is evidenced when they enter their classroom (Sleeter, 2001). In an exhaustive review of studies, Sleeter (2001) admonishes,

> It is difficult to say how much impact multicultural education courses have on White students... Almost none of the studies . . . examined the impact of multicultural education coursework on how pre-service students actually teach children in the classroom. (p. 99)

Further, scholars investigate if the content of the multicultural education courses address the need to transform the culture of education (Zeichner, 2003). In an analysis of multicultural teacher education course syllabi, Gorski (2003) determined that most courses focused on liberal forms of multiculturalism in which teachers are asked to self-reflect on their biases in class in order that they are able to be sensitive to the needs of children whose backgrounds are different from theirs. Gorski calls for more teacher education courses to emphasize a critical lens in which systemic oppressions are analyzed. Consequently, critical multicultural scholars have called for a re-imagining of multicultural education to examine the political and social construction of the identities that structure social, political, and educational relations (Gorski, 2003; May, 2009). This type of education should be asking questions about representation such as: Who is represented, underrepresented, misrepresented, and/or invisible? How is power exercised in the classroom. This reflection process leads to classroom cultures that leave students feeling they can access power, feel validated, and are included in the fabric of their classroom culture.

Anti-Bias Pedagogy

The practice of anti-bias education for children is rooted in the belief that even young children are aware of the differences in power distribution and privilege in their world. This awareness is harmful for all children (Louise Derman-Sparks, 1989). Children who have been minoritized and victimized for their ethnicity, ability level, gender expression, or sexuality face additional barriers to their overall growth and development. Leading children in conversations about power and privilege is a "practice of freedom" which is a central premise in anti-bias education, emboldening children "to construct a knowledgeable, confident self-identity; to develop comfortable, empathetic, and just interaction with diversity; and to develop critical thinking and the skills for standing up for oneself and others in the face of injustice" (Louise

Derman-Sparks, 1989, p.9). Teachers need to be armed with tools to challenge internalized and externalized beliefs about gender, race, and class. This framework has potential to be transformative for teacher education programs and disrupt harmful narratives of Black girls.

Importance of Empathy and Reflection in the Classroom

In a study examining teacher's beliefs about the role of empathy in the classroom, researchers suggest empathy plays a key role in working with children from diverse backgrounds (McCallister, 2002). Teachers were exposed to cross cultural simulations intended to help teachers experience emotions comparable to the feelings of marginalization. Next, they were immersed in a cultural community different than their own and finally, they reflected on personal experiences with oppression.

Results indicated more than half of the teachers (59%) reported improvement in their classroom interactions since employing empathetic techniques (McCallister, 2002). The ways in which their classroom environment affected the feelings of diverse students were of concern for 56% of teachers in the study. Teachers also noted that students from cultures different from their own had diverse needs and fears that teachers need to meet. This study made clear that teacher behavior can influence the classroom experience for marginalized students.

Impact of Negative Stereotypes of Black Girls on Classroom Climate

Historically, Black girls have been viewed through the lens of adulthood rather than girlhood as they are subject to stereotypes generally attributed to adult women (Collins, 1990; Wright, 2016). When these negative stereotypes are assigned to young children, there can be detrimental outcomes as girls are no longer viewed as children and held to adult standards. This perspective—the "adultification" of Black girls—has been documented in homes, schools, and the interpretation of research (Thomas, 2011; Henry 1998; Grant, 1984). To understand whether

there are differences in beliefs about the innocence of White and Black girls, Epstein and colleagues (2017) surveyed 325 adults from various racial, ethnic, and educational backgrounds across the U.S. Respondents were randomly assigned a questionnaire about either Black girls or White girls with a focus on specific periods of childhood and adolescence, each divided into four age brackets: 0-4; 5-9; 10-14; and 15-19 years of age. In attuning with the social positioning of Black girls, items that associated adultification and stereotypes about Black women and girls were included in the surveys.

The findings indicated that adults believe Black girls need less nurturance, protection, support, and comfort than their White peers. Additionally, results indicated that adults believe Black girls are more independent, know more about sex, and know more about adult topics. Often, Black girls are viewed as strong enough to handle what comes at them or too weak to resist social pressures (Epstein, 2017). This adultified view of Black girls can lead to instances in which educators should be teaching new skills yet they choose to punish developmentally appropriate behavior like talking in class or forgetting homework believing the girls should have a more sophisticated understanding and mastery of social skills.

Elementary school classrooms can reinforce notions of adultification. Grant and Sleeter's (1994) analysis of African American girls' roles in this setting revealed the intense social nature rather than academic rigor considering their racialized positions as classroom helpers, rule enforcers, and peer negotiators. At the core of this positioning is the teacher's prejudiced beliefs that can manifest in the ways they describe, interact with, and prioritize their Black female students. Grant (1984) notes teachers perceive Black girls to be overly self-reliant and mature as compared to their peers. Specifically, in school in an autoethnography of desegregated classrooms, Grant observed that Black girls were given adult like tasks in the class at rates much

higher than their non-Black classmates (1984). This history of adultification has often been framed through the lens of behavioral choices Black girls are making instead of a response to a society that views Black girls as more adult. Throughout the years, scholars have observed and debated the ways that Black girls' behaviors serves as a coping mechanism for the systemic oppression they experience in school and in broader society (Cohen, 1996).

In a study consisting of teacher interviews and classroom observations, Morris (2007) found Black girls are more likely to be perceived as "loud" or "defiant" and to be reprimanded for being "unladylike." He shared that "[b]eliefs can be influenced by common discourse about Black girls. Since some African American girls do not perform femininity in ways that are congruent with teacher's beliefs they are viewed as being disrespectful and defiant" (p. 509). Morris comments that "in their genuine attempts to help these girls by teaching them proper ladylike manners, educators often unintentionally stifled the outspokenness and assertiveness that forged academic success for many [Black] African American girls" (p. 509).

Teachers have authority within their classrooms in which they govern how students speak, write, and behave. When teachers hold values and beliefs that are aligned with White, middle-class values, they can render deviant the cultural expression of Black girls. More information is needed on the impact this has on the identity development of Black girls as they negotiate how they will present themselves to the world.

Identity Development

Common conceptions of adolescent development are generally based on a Piagetian approach of linear stages of cognitive maturation in which children move from lack of self-awareness to the ability to understand abstract ideas like ethics, politics, and engagement in scientific reasoning (Piaget, 1964). Traditional identity development theory proposes that

identity formation is achieved once a young person develops a sense of self independent of family relationships (Piaget, 1964). Critiques of Piaget's theory have underscored the cultural and political biases present. In contrast, for Vygotsky, the self was created through the reciprocal dynamic of relationships, behaviors, and self-concept. Behaviors elicit different responses that we internalize by means of social judgements to develop a sense of self (Penuel, 1995). Though Vygotskian scholars take into account the sociocultural aspects of his theory, many decontextualize the of role power and oppression in his development of it. Vygotsky provides a starting point from which identity development within an oppressive nation can be explored.

Multicultural and bicultural conceptualizations of identity have also been offered and provide rich insight into identity development. Luis Moll (2014) asserts, "Understanding identity requires an understanding of the funds of practices, beliefs, knowledge, and ideas that people make use of" (p. 32). Identity is not only a cognitive process but a social and cultural undertaking in which values are constructed. This is a useful perspective when considering the socio-political positioning of Black girls as they develop their ethnic and gender identity. Moll clarifies that ''identity'' is not a thing but a social construct vaguely referring to a vastly complex set of phenomena (p. 32). This construction often requires students to hold multiple perspectives of themselves while developing their own beliefs.

This study builds on the work of bicultural theorists like Antonia Darder and Brian Fay who contend that some children developing identities in a society in which they are not a part of the dominant culture resist negative views of themselves while others internalize these messages (Fay, 1987; Darder, 1991). Darder, who writes about the realities of children who are constructing identities in a society and school where they have been racialized and gendered maintains these children experience a bicultural identity development process in which they learn

to operate in both their culture and the dominant culture (Darder, 1991, 2015). Given most public-school teachers represent the dominant culture, education must be understood in the context of the relationship between dominance and subordination in the larger society (Apple, 2004). Broader social hierarchal systems like race, class, and gender contribute to the domination and undermining of Black women and girls even within the classroom.

Gendered-Racial Socialization

Black adolescent girls are not only faced with navigating their changing bodies and fluctuating hormones, but they are also forced to negotiate gendered-racial realities at school and at home. Thomas (2011) explored the "salience, or significance and meaning of gendered racial status, and developmental aspects of gendered racial identity" of African American girls and young women. Through the use of focus groups, the participants answered: What does it mean to be African American (or of your ethnicity)? What does it mean to be a woman? What does it mean to be an African American woman? (p. 530). Findings suggest gendered-racial identity has more impact than gender and race separately for Black adolescent girls and young women. African American college age women expressed experiences in early childhood with gendered race, gendered racism, and/or oppression (Thomas, 2011). Research on gendered socialization suggests Black girls are taught from an early age to pursue their education at the expense of beginning families and careers in order to better position themselves and their community in society (Thomas, 2011; Lewis 2013).

Many Black girls are socialized to not only understand the complexities associated with being Black but also being born female. In another study by Thomas (1999) examining gender differences in racial socialization, African American families were more likely to emphasize academic achievement for girls; conversely, they actively prepared boys for potential racial discrimination. Girls, unlike boys, were given relationship socialization in which they were

taught to not allow any man, White or Black, to mistreat them. Black girls receive consistent messages from parents about their academic high expectation but also to be watchful of male predators of any race. Consequently, parents teach girls considerably fewer coping strategies than boys. The consequences of being expected to maintain academic excellence while also being accountable for your own safety may lead to unhealthy social and emotional development. This may teach girls that adults and men do not have to be accountable for their own actions.

Double Consciousness and Self Determination

For Black people, particularly those living in America, the process of identity development is inherently spiritual as one must reckon with non-tangible realities about what it means to be both African and American. Black scholars like W.E.B Du Bois and Patricia Hill-Collins write extensively about the ways Black people are forced to understand their Blackness through the lens of a "more powerful other," while developing a sense of what it means to be African and American (DuBois, 1903; Collins, 1991). For both scholars, this journey of self-definition is one that is deeply rooted in Spiritual transformation as Du Bois named his legendary book, *The Souls of Black Folks*. Their underlying questions are concerned with what it means to be human and what it means to come to an understanding of oneself in the faces of injustice.

Collins asserts Black women engage in acts of self-definition to counter negative societal narratives. As Black women are aware of the duality of their identity and the differences it creates in their lived realities, they develop a self to present to the outer society and preserve their true self. One version of a Black woman's identity is enacted to the dominant society while the other (true self) is shared only to trusted members of the in-group. Black feminist theory suggests this skill was developed as a form of resistance and shows resilience of Black women to hold opposing ideas about themselves while not internalizing negative views into their own

perspectives. Thus, images of the broader society were not integrated into the woman's self-definition.

Women have often learned to self-define at early ages as Black female children have not been shielded from messages of Black female inferiority. This seems to be confirmed as qualitative and quantitative studies generally report high levels of self-esteem and self-concept of African American women and girls (Buckley, 2000; Buckley & Carter, 2005). Additional, theorizing needs to be done on the impact of dual identities on Black girls in early childhood through adolescents. Little has been researched on the long-term impact of the mental gymnastics on the psychological, physical, and relational wellness of Black females.

Black Girl Gaze

In *Art on my Mind*, bell hooks discusses the importance of the Black gaze in creating spaces in media, visual arts, and academia that challenges viewers to look beyond the idea that equates Blackness with victimization (1995). We come to this place when we decenter the gaze of the dominant culture and create space where Black people analyze art and society from their own standpoint (hooks, 1995). hooks reminds readers of Black women's legacy of self-preservation when she writes, "By turning her back on those who cannot hear her subjugated knowledge speak, she creates by her own gaze an alternative space where she is both self-defining and self-determining" (pp. 94-95). It is this act of self-definition that the Black girl participants engaged in as they created dual self portraits within a Black girl centered space.

Womanist Alice Walker (1983) writes "In my own work I write not only what I want to read–understanding fully and indelibly that if I don't do it no one else is so vitally interested, or capable of doing it to my satisfaction–I write all the things I should have been able to read" (p. 13). In this way, the Black girls in this study told their own stories and created visual narratives

that women before and girls after them will want to see. This has also been demonstrated by Claudine Taaffe who conducted a study in which Black girls used photography to tell their stories (2016). The girls participated in an all-girls after school program in which they were given cameras and prompts that encouraged them to photograph their world. In this space led by Black women, the lines of power and authority were blurred and replaced with an ethic of mutual care and respect. Through this process, Taaffe named a concept in visual theory, Black Girl Gaze, that starts in a place of self-reflection for Black girls and therefore documents their self-generated and self-defining visual narratives.

The historical tradition of Black women creating spaces to express their true selves and discuss their shared lived experience has come in various forms, including girls' clubs, church groups and girls-only mentorship programs. This practice of uncensored knowledge exchange, construction, and self-determination is central to the process of identity development for Black girls. Black women and girls use these spaces to align themselves with a shared truth that is often not encountered in dominant society. Within Black women- and girl-centered spaces arise an opportunity for healing from the traumas of existing within a society that operates on systems of domination (Dominque Hill, 2014). Black girls are not always afforded the opportunity to have "free spaces" to socialize and learn with their peers and Black women.

A number of previous authors recognize Black girls have ways of being and knowing that are often unacknowledged and overlooked within the classroom context and are not often represented in scholarly literature (Haddix, 2013; Womack, 2013; Brown, 2009). In moving toward an accurate depiction of Black girlhood, we need to look to Black girls as the main example. Several studies articulate these modes of communication, ways of being and knowing, as types of literacies expressed through reading, writing, language, music, dance, and multiple

technologies (Haddix, 2013; Womack, 2013; Brown, 2009). As Muhammed explains, common discourse of Black girls' narratives has been fabricated or partially told (Muhammad, 2015a). It is necessary to center Black girls' experiences to imagine a future where Black girls are not being policed and criminalized for their non-conformity to white middle-class standards.

Building on foundations in Black feminist theory and Womanism of cooperative learning, Henry (2001) implemented reading, writing, and discussion collectives with Caribbean girls to understand how they reconciled their multiple identities. The participants kept journals in which they were instructed to write their uncensored views about their cultural identities. These uncensored reflections provided space for the girls to celebrate their ideas and meaning making processes they may have otherwise felt apprehensive to share publicly. Black girls need "free spaces" which are non-judgmental and uncensored to promote self-expression which is often suppressed in traditional classrooms

Black girls also use performative literacies, including playwriting and dance, to express themselves. Kontovourki (2014) explored the ways Black girls ages 14-17 engaged the opportunities to create their own dramas and performances while in a space classed "Girl Time." She posits that "bodies are perceived as texts, as sites of inscription as well as site of possibility" (p. 134). Creating dramas allowed the girls to explore realities that would only be possible in their imagination. Research also indicated dance as a mode of communication that allows Black girls a means by which to express themselves. Brown (2009) observed how girls used structured and unstructured dance to explore their personality, sexuality, and confidence. Through dance the girls were able to bond with one another as wells as receive attention and praise in ways they only experience when they are dancing. Brown highlights how Black girls are often praised when they use their bodies to dance which is influenced by the hip-hop culture in which they

were raised (2009). Black girls need more opportunities to create and perform that are not reliant on the sexualization of their bodies. This undoubtedly leaves room for further examination on how Black girls would negotiate their identities if they were afforded more tools to express themselves and more opportunities to be praised.

Several studies have shown Black girls have a vested interest in their education and have ways of knowing and expressing that knowledge using literacies that are unfamiliar and deemed inappropriate by most educators (Morris, 2016; Wallace, 2008; Evans-Winters, 2011). This misinterpretation by many educators leaves Black girls vulnerable to increase disciplinary action which may have consequences for their academic and emotional well-being. Black girls have multiple modes and means of constructing and expressing their identity that need to be represented in mainstream identity development theories in ways that celebrate their unique positionalities.

School Push Out

"Pushout" for Black girls consists of a "policies, practices, and consciousness that fosters their invisibility, marginalizes their pain and opportunities, and facilitates their criminalization" (Morris, 2016, p. 24). Discourse, policy, and practices influenced by long lasting stereotypes contribute to the overrepresentation of Black girls in exclusionary discipline. Exclusionary discipline is any practice that prevents a child from engaging in academic and social school activities. The current U.S. educational system operates on the politics of fear as policies that rely on removal from school permeate school policy. Morris (2016) finds that three factors influence Black female students' inequitable punishments in school: (a) Zero Tolerance Policies including various forms of surveillance measures, (b) policing of their bodies as criminals, and (c) penalizing "bad" girl attitudes. This has resulted in Black girls being represented in 12% of

suspensions as compared to 2% of White girls during the 2011-2012 school year (Reynolds, 2016). In early childhood education, Black girls make up 54% of the girls' discipline with out-of-school suspension while they are only 20% of the girls enrolled (Civil Rights Report, 2014). The overrepresentation of Black girls in exclusionary discipline has implications for the ways Black girls are viewed and how their emotional needs can be overlooked due to the overwhelming belief that Black girls are strong and therefore do not need help.

Increases in contact with school discipline systems adds to the criminalization and adultification of Black girls. Connie Wun explains, Black and Latina girls with school discipline records are more likely to experience formal and informal discipline from adults on campus than non-black students as described in recent research conducted by (2016). Suspensions and expulsions are directly related to contact with the criminal legal system. For middle school girls, the strongest predictor of being arrested later in adolescence is experiencing suspensions and expulsions during middle school. (American Bar Association & National Bar Association, 2001). Scholars have suggested African American girls suffer excessive surveillance and describe the condition as being continuously watched while also being denied access to their full rights as humans, including agency over their bodies and lives (Wun, 2016; Evans-Winters, 2017). Girls themselves draw parallels between the school experience and prison. When asked how she felt about school, one participant drew a jailhouse (Evans-Winters, 2017). This problem is important because it illuminates issues of racism and sexism that continue to pervade the American educational system.

For African American girls, the intersection of racial and gender stereotypes impacts the ways in which they are disciplined. For example, when African American girls' behaviors do not align with that of typical white middle-class expectations, which often require girls to be quiet

and modest, teachers interpret their behaviors through a lens of correction. When African American girls are loud, outspoken, or assertive, teachers use the framework of the stereotypical images of Black women as confrontational or aggressive to interpret these behaviors. This leads teachers to believe African American girls need greater social correction therefore increasing disciplinary referrals. Stereotypes and bias greatly influence how teachers interact with Black female students.

The National Women's Law Center published a report titled "Dress Coded: Black Girls Bodies and Biases in DC Schools" which uncovered the ways in which Black girls' bodies, fashion choices, expressions of femininity, and behaviors are being policed on school sites. They connected this to administrator bias and the resulting rates of disproportionate, exclusionary discipline. Black girls in D.C. schools are 20.8 times more likely to be suspended than white girls (National Women's Law Center, 2018)**.** In a study meant to examine the impact of dress codes and school policies on Black Girls, researchers found schools were overly strict and had inequitable implementation of their policies. From interviews of 21 Black girls at 12 schools in the D.C. area, the authors identified themes across schools such that 81% require a uniform, 65% regulate the length of skirts, 58% prohibit tank tops, 42% ban tights and/or leggings, and 45% require students to wear belts (and many specify the belts must be black). Black girls and girls of color are disproportionately disciplined for hair, makeup, and dress. The authors also noted that schools ban styles associated with Black girls and women, like hair wraps (National Law Center, 2018). These policies directly impact how these girls express themselves and their sense of agency. Additionally, policies that target girls based on race and gender contribute to reinforcing narratives that girls of color need to be policed by teachers, administrators, and other students.

Teachers' beliefs, interactions and teaching practices are shaped by the gender-racial hierarchies that permeate American culture and the education system. Teachers often have gendered-racial bias rooted in social norms whereby educators discipline girls who deviate from the norm (Blake, 2011). Destiny, a 15-year-old girl researcher-participant reflects,

> While I was in middle school the policy was for us not to wear dark colored nail polish and tips. Because they felt in was street wear (ghetto) and unprofessional. They only didn't allow it because mainly African American kids wear them, and they tried to do whatever they can to prohibit blacks from expressing themselves. (Evans-Winter, 2017 p 418).

Destiny highlights the ways in which educators' ascription of value, or lack thereof, of Black culture directly influences how she and her Black female classmates can express their identity at school. In an analysis of school discipline policies, researchers found rules based in racial stereotypes, sex stereotypes, and those that promote rape culture. Due to these inequitable policies, students experience negative interactions based on stereotypes and assumptions about who they are as Black people. School rules that ban "revealing" or tight clothing are based in sex assumptions that girls should be modest. Alarmingly, researchers found these rules reinforce rape culture as they communicate to students that girls and their bodies are to blame for distracting boys (Kendall, 2017).

Responses to Oppressive School Culture

Fordham (1993) suggested many African American young women actively work to resist the White, middle-class constructions of womanhood while others adapt their values in order to fit in, and further suggested that Black girls may adopt a tough persona in order to avoid being overlooked in the classroom. She went on to claim that high achieving Black girls and their male counterparts may take on a race-less persona to increase access to academic success. To

Fordham, some Black children enact the notion of passing by embracing White middle-class behaviors in order to avoid persecution in class. Children often try out different behaviors to attempt to fit in. For Black girls, they cannot change their sex or their ethnicity yet there are challenged to strip themselves of cultural attributes to fit into the White culture and values often set forth in their classrooms. This process of consistently feeling like you are not enough may have negative impacts on girls' self-concept and emotional well-being.

Henry (1998) observed African American girls attending an African American-centered school and writes that the Black girls developed dual personas that lead to resilience inside and outside the classroom. The girls practice silence and "talking back" as strategies to succeed in class. Some were even passive while in class yet outspoken and bold outside the classroom Black female students may still have to confront gender dynamics that overlook, ignore, or suppress their multiple identities as women of African ancestry even in majority Black spaces that are intentional about meeting the needs of all genders. Cohen et al. refer to this practice as "doing school." They explain, when girls do school they receive more adult approval which is preferred even if they receive less overall attention than more demanding students (1996). Girls are continuously having to negotiate their identities in order to be seen and acknowledged even in spaces that are predominantly Black.

In *Flipping the Script: Dangerous Bodies of Girls of Color,* Venus Evans-Winters (2017), conducted a qualitative participatory action research study with high school girl researchers-participants. Evans-Winters along with adolescent girl researcher-participants analyzed the experience the girls of color had with the adults and discipline policies at their high school. The adolescent girl researcher-participants conducted interviews, journal reflections, and drawing exercises, the suggesting girls of colors' bodies are viewed as dangerous. The drawing process

allowed girls to represent emotion and action in ways that are best expressed through visuals. The drawing and reflection process provided the means for adolescent girls of color to process their gendered experiences. In interviews, high school girls expressed, "How I wear my hair has nothing to do with how smart I am...I like my nails long. That doesn't make me a slut and then not smart." Another girl researcher explains, "I hate having to cover myself, so boys can focus. That's stupid" In high school, girls are aware of the differential racialized and gendered expectations. Evans-Winter et al expounds, stating that if Black girls don't act the way teachers want them to or don't conform to society's expectations of how femininity should be expressed, they are penalized. This study summarizes how Black girls interpret the ways in which they are dehumanized by the ways their bodies and actions are policed.

Many classrooms operate on a hidden curriculum of rules, regulations, and beliefs—based in anti-black sexist ideologies—that are not stated but are enforced. For Black girls, this hidden curriculum prohibits self-expression (Evans-Winter, 2017). When asked to reflect on her experiences with school discipline, Destiny, a 15-year-old researcher expressed, "They just don't like our culture (Evans-Winters, 2017, p. 418)." Evans-Winters, along with girl researchers, found that high school female students of color believe their teachers see them as less than human and report how they were prohibited from wearing dark nail polish and nail tips because adults on campus felt it was unprofessional and considered streetwear. Further, they concluded that girls became dangers to the classroom as they resisted the authoritarian policies and practices enacted upon them.

Blake (2011) echoes that African American girls' expression of femininity and nonconformity to traditional gender expectations can lead educators to react more punitively to their otherwise developmentally appropriate behavior. When Black girls behave in ways that

differ from white female norms, they are targeted for discipline. Black girls fear being labeled the angry Black woman which is a common stereotype from slavery. “Characterizing Black women as animalistic, irate makes it easier to justify their enslavement” (Evans-Winters, 2011, p. 175). When Black girls behave in behavior that is deemed “ghetto,” they are considered non-conforming and a deviation from social norms and "thereby subject to criminalization” (Reynolds, 2006, p. 13). In a conceptual article, Reynolds discusses the need for Black girls to have the freedom to exercise agency in the classrooms. She contends carefree Black girls are the most disciplined and targeted because they unapologetically express their Black identity (2016). Girls who displayed more physical behaviors were more likely to be disciplined than girls who engaged in covert indirect aggressive behaviors (Golson, 2014). The psychological impact of gendered-racial interactions facing Black girls in educational spaces are often ignored in mainstream education literature as well as identity development theories.

Spirit and Mental Health

For African American women, education has historically been viewed as a spiritual journey that went beyond academics but was meant to uplift and inspire change in a people. Black women used education as a tool of liberation for themselves and their race. When spirituality—in the sense of centering values, finding purpose, and creating meaning for oneself through education—is acknowledged, teacher-student relationships blossom in ways that lead to better academic outcomes as well as to improved self-concept. When the spirit is not nurtured, Black students are often left feeling out of place and unseen, feelings that frequently lead to negative psychological effects.

Spirit Murder of Black Girls

Law expert Patricia Williams likens racism to a type of murder, one that doesn't inflict pain on the physical body but murders the spirit. She describes spirit murder as "disregard for others whose lives qualitatively depend on our regard" (1987, p. 151). Williams describes how the policing of Black bodies and the devaluing of Black death contributes to anti-Black society. Scholars Bettina Love (2015) and Dorothy Hines-Datiri (2017, 2018) assert that the violence inflicted on Black children at school by way of school resource officers, educators, and administrators contributes to the spirit-murdering of Black children. Love posits that Black children are subjected to a murder of the spirit when they are consistently suspended, expelled, and physically assaulted on and off campus. Love also proclaims spirit murder is inflicted through the denial of inclusion, protection, safety, nurturance, and acceptance because of "fixed yet fluid and moldable structures of racism" (2013). Hines-Datiri suggests that "school discipline has been used as an instrument for spirit-murdering Black girls, and it is the intentional death of the Black spirit that can result in a lifelong imprisonment of the mind and soul even when there are no visual bars present" (2018, p. 63). For the sake of Black children's emotional well-being, Love begs the question, "How does a Black child live, learn and grow when her spirit is under attack at school, and her body is in danger outside the classroom?" Schools should be sites of safety and growth, but instead contributes to the emotional damage of Black children.

Mental Health

Dawn Szymanski, a psychologist, highlights the impact of anti-Black racism and sexism have a negative impact on Black women's physical bodies and mental health (Szymanski, 2016). Social theorists proposed the importance of a strong racial identity for Black children to combat the impact of racism. However, research specifically on Black women suggests racial pride does

not moderate the psychological effects of racism or discrimination. Racial centrality has long been believed to be a buffer for racist discrimination, but Szymanski and colleagues suggests racial identity centrality does not act as a buffer to discrimination for most African American women (D.M. Szymanski, 2016) Although positive racial attitudes can increase resilience in youth and adults as they navigate college, it is less likely to buffer psychological impact. While Black girls' social resilience allows them to succeed in school, the impact of racial and gender oppression to their psyche may be detrimental. The mental and physical health of young Black women with positive racial attitudes is negatively impacted by gender and racial discrimination.

One consequence of persistent targeting is the increase in emotional disturbance and depression in teenage girls of color. When children do not feel accepted, they can have adverse social emotional development and school adjustment. In a study of high school girls, 67% of Black girls reported feeling sad or hopeless for over 14 consecutive days as compared to 31% of White girls and 40% of Latina girls (African American Policy Forum) . In addition to stressors associated with having an intersectional identity, the effects of feeling rejected by teachers over the years can have serious mental health implications for African American girls. Analysis of the long-term impact of girls learning in environments that are oppressive in nature need to be conducted in order to understand the severity of teacher beliefs on students.

Summary of Literature Review

This chapter discusses factors influencing the educational experience of Black girls and the need to account for the intersectionality of gender and race when considering identity development. Race has been considered in the discussion of positive identity development of Black children. The increasing focus on gendered experiences reveals males and females experience Blackness differently, thus racial identity surveys need to account for gendered

differences (Brown, 2016). This review highlights the lack of research on the intersectional impact on girls of color's school experiences as they face additional racialized sexist discrimination. While Black girls are considered resilient, gendered-racial stereotypes leave them vulnerable to increased exclusionary as compared to their white peers. Black girls face different and punitive expectations due to their gender and their race (Thomas, 2011; Wun, 2016; Evans-Winters, 2017).

While there is some research that explicitly includes the narratives of girls themselves, like Venus Evans-Winters' study with girl researchers, more needs to be done to include the actual words, opinions, and narratives of the girls being studied. The use of more dynamic modalities, like visual methods, would allow children of all ages to engage in the process of meaning-making that so many researchers have. In addition, the field of Black girlhood pedagogies can be extended with the use of multiple methodologies. Visual methodologies should continue to be used to actively engage the voice of participants. As the culture and society continued to change, this would provide an authentic and fresh voice to the experiences of girls in today's schools.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The purpose of this phenomenological visual-based study is to document how Black adolescent girls negotiate their identity through visual representations of the self, while centering the relationship between power, culture and the identity development of Black girls. The goal is to learn how Black girls negotiate their identities within the power hierarchies of traditional schools. This study is rooted in a deep commitment to centering Black girl voices to share their

expertise in living out the complexities of their identities. Guided by the study's Black feminist framework, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do Black adolescent girls verbally and visually express their inner selves?
2. How do Black adolescent girls depict their in-school identities in relation to their teachers?
3. How does the drawing elicitation/interview process inform the expression of girls' identity?

Research Design

A Phenomenological Visual Based Inquiry

I use a methodology that centers the experiences and perspective of participants; qualitative inquiry allowed me the opportunity to center Black girls' experiences and perspectives as essential to this research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Rooted in the field of qualitative methodology, I utilized a phenomenological framework with a visual-based research methodology. With the goal to uncover meaning and knowledge, phenomenology centers the lived experiences of the individual. Phenomenology focuses on understanding the inner consciousness of people experiencing the phenomena of interest (Husserl, 2019). As explained by Edward Husserl, phenomenology explores the conscious mind, and how we use language to express our feelings and thoughts as well as our cultural practices (Smith, 2013).

Phenomenology was most appropriate for this study because the research questions are aimed at understanding the phenomena of what it is like to be a Black adolescent girl in San Diego broadly and in their classrooms specifically. Phenomena is viewed through the perspective of the actors in the specified situation of inquiry (Lester, 1999); this approach best suites this study that seeks to understand Black adolescent girls' school experience in San Diego. The

phenomenological framework also allowed me to leverage several qualitative methods including fieldnotes and journals. Notably, the use of visual methods addressed the abstract nature of the inner self while being developmentally appropriate to the needs of the adolescent participants. Specifically, a self-reflective drawing exercise with a drawing-elicitation in-depth interview, research journal field notes and researcher journal reflections are employed in this study.

Visual Methodology

Black Girlhood scholar, Ruth Nicole Brown submits "creating space to practice visionary Black girlhood makes the creative potential possible" (2009,p. 3). Visual-based research has a long-standing history of addressing issues of power relations and promoting justice for marginalized people. The use of visual methodology has historically been used to understand the experiences of marginalized people and analyze power relationships that continue to push them to the margins (Freire, 1968). Likewise, visuals have been used as tools of agency by those whose power is often unrecognized.

Freire, in his historic inquiry, utilized cameras to understand how impoverished children in Brazil experienced exploitation. While the children's photographs were thought to be simplistic by adults, when asked to expound on their purpose behind taking photographs of a nail that had been hammered into a wall, they revealed how they were being forced to pay to rent the use of a single nail each day (Freire, 1968). This visual method provided a tool for children to voice the realities of their experiences in ways that words alone could not convey. Given the goal of this study was to learn how Black girls understand and express their identity, particularly in relation to figures in power over them, visual methodology was chosen.

Another methodology based in drawing was utilized to allow girls to illustrate ideas and feelings that language may not sufficiently express. Kress and Van Leeuwen suggest all images

are “entirely in the realm of ideology” (1996, 2006; p. 12). Specifically, the act of drawing is reflective in nature and “necessitates knowledge construction and personal meaning making” (Guillemin, 2004, p. 287). Guillemin suggests that word-based methods may also limit the researchers’ possibility of exploring the ways identity development is experienced and conceptualized (Guillemin, 2004). Word-based methods can be limiting in that the participants may not have the vocabulary to explain the complexities of their experiences or their emotions. Black girls embody multiple identities that can be complicated to describe using only words therefore Black girls need diverse means to express their complex identities. Research suggests data from children is richer when elicitation in drawing form than when captured only through interview (Wesson & Salmon, 2001).

In this study, visual methodologies acted as a vehicle for greater expression of what and how the girls felt. In several drawings, the participants drew representations and symbols that elicitation emotions without the use of words. Namely, one participant used the imagery of a broken heart to represent her relationship with her teacher. The symbolism of a broken heart was meant to elicit emotions that this student did not yet have the language to express.

Dual self-portraits have been used by expressive artists, art therapists, and teachers offering ways to reflect and interrogate notions of identity. In general, dual self-portraits represent two sides of oneself and most often will contain one image of how a person feels about themselves with another image of how they perceive society views them.

Study Participants

Ten self-identified Black females participated in this study. To ensure the study captured the experience of being Black adolescent girls and the nature of their relationship with their teachers, the following specifications were established: (1) Participant self-identifies as a girl, (2)

participant is between 11-14 years old, and (3) participant self-identifies as African American or Black. I decided to limit participants to Black or African American girls due to the increasing research on the unique experiences Black girls have in school. Given the socially constructed nature of gender and race, it was important that the participants self-identified their race and gender. For this study, their understanding of how they perceived themselves was of great importance. By selecting participants who self-identify as Black or African American girls, I aimed to ensure they had the shared experience of living as African descendant in the U.S. Girls in this developmental period are beginning to make decisions about how they will express their gendered and racialized identities. This period of life was fitting for an examination of identity. All participants resided in San Diego County.

Participant Recruitment

Due to the specific participant criteria, purposeful sampling was employed to recruit information-rich participants who have experienced the phenomena under study (Creswell, 2013). Secondary recruitment occurred through word of mouth utilizing the snowball sampling method to recruit 10 participants. Initial recruitment efforts were made by sending emails to schools, arts groups, community-based organizations, and after school programs focused on the needs of girls. I also leveraged personal networks by posting a flyer to groups of teachers and counselors via Facebook and University Alumni groups. In the recruitment email, I included information about the study, participant criteria, and my contact information. Through this email solicitation, I received responses from individual parents, an after-school site at a predominantly Black K-8th school, a girls-only expressive art therapy group, and a girls-only teen club. I followed up with emails and phone calls to confirm interest and eligibility, then moved forward with the predominantly K-8th school and individual parents. After contacting the principal of a

small predominantly Black charter school and the coordinator of its after-school program, I was given permission to announce the purpose and goal of the study in an all-girls class. The principal and after school coordinator continued to make announcements to parents about the study and obtained parent signatures. I was able to explain my study and distribute parent permission slips during the school day in a class called "Girl Talk" led by the principal who is a Black woman. The all-girls class is intended to provide a space where girls can bond and learn about one another. The principal worked with the after-school coordinator to disseminate and collect the parent permission slips and allowed me to conduct interviews after school.

Interview Setting

I conducted all interviews in October and November of 2019. Interviews were conducted at locations that were most convenient and comfortable for students and parents to increase the likelihood of authentic and honest interview experience. Locations of the interviews consisted of a public library, a coffee shop, and an after-school program located on a school campus. Four interviews were conducted in public places and six were conducted at one after school program located at a small predominantly Black charter school in Southern California. I conducted interviews over multiple visits during non-school hours. I met with girls in whichever classroom they were in at the time I arrived. They often rotated classrooms based on the activity they were completing with the afterschool program that day. Often times interviews were held in rooms full of other students who were being supervised by an after-school care leader. I then found a relatively empty space in the room to set up and begin the interview. The ten participants included girls from age 11 to 14 as represented in the table below.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age
Magali	12
Danielle	11
Maria	13
Lynne	11
Jordan	14
Dymond	12
Bianca	12
Measha	12
Na'Ima	13
Kailie	12

Data Collection

Data collection occurred in two steps: the reflexive drawing exercise, drawing-elicitation interview, and an in-depth interview. Additional data sources included field notes and researcher-reflexive journals. These collection activities yielded the following data sources.

Visual Text: Dual Self- Portraits

The reflective exercise was designed to center the Black girl's gaze (Taaffe, 2016) in a society in which Black girls are often overlooked. I created a visual-based elicitation protocol centered around a reflective art exercise called Dual Self Portraits that would visually document the process of becoming and being a Black girl in the U.S. Given the documented dualities Black girls experience due to the pervasive nature of societal stereotypes and beliefs about who Black girls should be, I wanted to learn about how Black girls understand and experience this reality in

the classroom. I intentionally prompted participants to engage in visual exercises so knowledge of advanced vocabulary would not bias the memories that participants might want to share. In alignment with my theoretical framework of Black feminist theory I believe it is essential to establish a definition of self before one can adequately critique an outsider's view (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1989). I intentionally began the dual self-portrait process with the girls' beliefs, feelings, and understandings of themselves as a way to center their voices and perspectives. The second portrait was to be drawn as a representation of how each girl believed her teacher viewed her.

I asked each participant to choose a pseudonym that she preferred to be used during the study before we began the interview. I then provided each girl with a variety of coloring materials including traditional colored pencils and makers, and flesh-tone colored pencils and markers. To gauge each participant's prior knowledge of portraits, I asked what she knew about portraits and told her I would be asking her to draw a self-portrait. I then asked her to draw a self-portrait as a representation of how she feels about herself on the inside. Specifically, I said, "I'm going to ask you to draw a self-portrait. Do you know what a portrait is? A portrait is a picture of someone, so a self-portrait is a picture of yourself. Can you draw a portrait that represents how you feel about yourself on the inside? Think about your dreams, desires, and what you feel about yourself on the inside. It can look however you want; it doesn't have to have eyes, nose, and a mouth. You can also use words in your portrait."

I then asked her to draw a picture, on the separate piece of paper, as a representation of how her teacher sees her. Specifically, I said, "Now take a moment to think about a teacher you had last school year, someone who you spent a lot of time with and who has disciplined you before. When you have that teacher in your head, think about the way that teacher views you. How does your teacher interact with you? How has your teacher seen you interact with others?

What are things they have said you about you. Can you draw a portrait that represents the way your teacher sees you?" When the participant completed both drawings, we engaged in collaboratively analyzing their own image. In order to center the girls' gaze, I first asked them to analyze and reflect on their own images using a technique called Visual Thinking Strategies as a way to read visual texts (Yenawine, 1998).

Between Methodology and Analysis: Black Girls as Experts

"Between methodology and analysis" means that the girls participating in this study operated in a space that bridged their role as participant and researcher. In essence, the girls analyzed their own drawings and made meaning of the visual texts. My goal was to be authentic in centering their voices, thereby empowering them to be the experts of their own experience, and to be engaged in an analytic process with them before making meaning of the drawings on my own. To do this, I utilized Philip Yenawine's Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), a three-question protocol developed to engage children in the process of analyzing and reading visual texts in museum and classroom settings. In a speech about the possibilities of VTS, Vladimir Orlov noted it has the potential to "democratize and humanize the classroom" (1994). In this way I believe the VTS can be transformative for visual-based research—especially with children—to further change the hierarchy in knowledge construction and validation.

In my study, the girl participant-researchers each identified which portrait they wanted to analyze first (the inner self or the teacher's view). I then asked variations of the three central questions of VTS: 1) What is going on in this image? 2) How do you know? and 3) What more can you find? Yenawine describes these strategies as student-centered liberatory teaching practices and positions art as a medium that produces reflective thinking (Yenawine, 2009). Although, not explicitly a method of data analysis in the traditional sense, this process afforded

the girls agency in analyzing and making meaning of their own work. Every girl was able to speak to the intention of her drawing and how her visual texts may be interpreted by herself and others. Instead of only using my own judgement, it was important to understand how the girls made meaning of their drawings. I subsequently used this analysis to inform the uncovering of final themes.

Drawing-Elicitation Interview and In-Depth Interview

I developed a loosely structured protocol and organized the question into three parts: 1) Reflections of Dual-Self Portrait 2) Identity: Black Girlhood Development 3) Teacher-Student Relationships and Experiences with Discipline. This structure was created to provide a framework for the interview process and ensure the topic of interest for this study, but it was not a standardized collection procedure. I followed the girls' lead, as some participants preferred discussing their portraits during the drawing process; this led to conversation about themselves and their relationships with their teachers. Following this moment of self-reflection, I engaged in dialogue with girls about their identity development process. I asked them to share not just their experiences but also the feelings they have about themselves and their teacher. According to Collins (1999), emotional expression is central to knowledge validation in the African American female tradition. My semi-structured interview design with open-ended questions allowed participants to share the diversity of their experiences and elicitation personal narratives (Nohl, 2009). Open-ended questions minimized my influence and allowed participants to openly share the experiences (Creswell, 2005).

Each interview ranged from 30 minutes to one hour and was audio recorded, transcribed, and stored in locked storage space. I ended up with 10 interview transcripts and 20 visual texts as each girl completed two drawings.

Data Analysis

Saldana suggests analysis of visual data be based in reflection of the images using intuition and strategic questions (2009). I used several processes to make sense of these complex data. Although not specifically a method of analysis, I repeated Yenawine's VTS as a method for generating researcher memos while analyzing the participants self-portraits. VTS is flexible and useful in analyzing complex visual texts as it is a mechanism for reading and analyzing texts. The complexity of the data called for a method that lends itself to considering "multiple possibilities" (Yenawine, 1998, p. 1). This method provides an open-ended, structured process to reading visual texts with a reflective lens. In general, I read and reread each of the portraits individually and also as a set to identify themes.

I subsequently used a combination of techniques including Peggy Albers' (2013) Visual Discourse Analysis (ADV) to inform my analysis centering Albers idea that researchers can identify the conversation between the producer, content, and viewer. In VDA, visual texts are analyzed for the messages they convey and the discourses evident in the text makers' belief system. Albers suggests that analysis of visual texts, particularly those elicitation for research purposes, should be guided by the relationship between the intentions of the producer, the image's content, and the conclusions that may be drawn for the viewer. I first analyzed the portraits individually (inner self-portrait followed by the teacher's view) making note of how the producer (the girl participant) communicated her inner self through visual elements. I then analyzed the portrait for elements that were possibly included for me as the intended viewer of their portrait. Finally, I analyzed each set of portraits as a conversation between the inner self, teacher's view and what the girls were conveying to me as a young Black woman researcher who

they presumed to be in a position of power. This analysis process framed the next steps of analysis and processes of uncovering themes.

Interview Data Analysis

Audio interviews were transcribed as word documents. I used a software program called Otter that transcribed the interviews while audio recording. I listened to each transcript and made minimal edits to correct for mistakes made by Otter. I then sent transcripts that needed additional editing to an outside transcription service called Rev.com. I checked the interview for accuracy against the audio recordings. I also maintained a notebook and Word document of analytic memos in which I wrote my reflections, reactions, and emerging themes (Charmaz, 2014). I consistently wrote and audio recorded reflective memos while engaging in analysis of the interviews in an effort to capture patterns and trends that emerged in relation to my research question and purpose. I compared these memos to the memos and notes created for the visual texts.

In addition to reflective memos, I utilized initial open coding upon first look at the transcribed interview data and pre-coded it for emotions, views on relationship with teacher, and feelings about inner self. Young and Barrett (2001) emphasize the importance of using multiple methods to adequately triangulate methods.

Analyzing Visual Text and Interview Data

As a final step of analysis, I analyzed visual texts with transcribed data. Using the constant comparison method, I analyzed each set of portraits, comparing them with each other, and then with the pairs of portraits from the other participants looking for patterns, similarities, and differences. I did this by reading the visual texts like one would read texts in a book, looking from left to right while listening to audio recordings of the interviews. I then used the

interview transcriptions and codes to inform the emerging themes. From this deep analysis of multiple data sources, I was able to identify clear patterns and groups.

Trustworthiness

David and John Creswell (2013) name multiple ways that a qualitative study can bolster its trustworthiness. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data and findings in this study, I used researcher reflexivity by writing researcher memos. I engaged in peer debriefing with my committee member who specialized in visual methodologies. I utilized the convergence in findings through a variety of data sources and analysis by comparing analysis of visual texts and interview transcripts. I also listened to the students' interviews while analyzing the visual data to inform the conclusions I was drawing from the participant generated images.

Limitations

Qualitative inquiry provides deep understanding and nuanced findings that are not generalizable to the experiences of the greater population. This study will not make claims from the qualitative findings about all Black girls in San Diego. Nevertheless, narrative and visual representations are vital in understanding the experiences and thus, impactful findings can be uncovered with small sample sizes.

Research Permission and Possible Ethical Considerations

I obtained permission from the Claremont Graduate University Institutional Review Board. I received permission from all parents and the principal of a local K-8 school located in Southeast San Diego which is known as the heart of Black San Diego. Potential risks included some social discomfort as students reflected on their experiences with discipline. Prior research indicates visual-based methodology encourages participation and is intended to mitigate risk.

Throughout the interview process, I checked in with participants to monitor their comfort level and remind them that they could share to the extent of their comfort and stop the process any time they desired.

Chapter 4: Findings

Negotiating the Self: Black Girls Invisibility and Visibility in the Classroom

The purpose of this study was to understand how Black girls visualize their inner selves and their selves from their teacher's perspective. More specifically, my work aimed to understand the impact of teacher-student relationships on adolescent Black girls' understandings of themselves while considering the role of power in the classroom. Additionally, this study investigated the utility of the dual self-portrait process for reflection and dialogue. In this process, girls drew two self-portraits: one that represented their true self or how they feel on the inside and one that represented how they think their teacher sees them. Overwhelmingly, visual and interview data suggested two major ways girls are experienced in relation to their teachers; (1) Their inner selves are rendered *invisible* (i.e. girls believed their teachers did not know or see their inner selves) or (2) Their identity was fully *visible (*i.e. girls believed their teachers knew and saw their complete selves). Girls whose inner selves were invisible to their teacher at times also experienced a *hypervisibility* where their actions, words, or behaviors were targets of their teacher's ridicule while their needs and feelings were dismissed. The girls negotiated these experiences of invisibility in two major ways: 1) "doing school" by enacting behaviors they believed were desirable to teachers, and 2) asserting agency and refusing to be silenced by being outspoken in class.

Invisibility

A striking commonality uncovered during analysis was the girls' experiences of feeling unknown and unseen by their teachers in the classroom, essentially rendering them invisible. When the inner self-portraits and portraits from the girls' perspectives of their teacher's view were incongruent, I labeled them "invisible." Invisibility is characterized by teachers who didn't know the girls' inner selves, namely their emotions, interests, and areas of importance in their lives. In the visual texts, remarkably, girls who experienced invisibility and reacted by "doing school" all made clear academic references in their outer self-portraits and not in their inner self-portraits. For example, Danielle drew a paper with the grade A- in her teacher's view of her and made no reference to academics in her inner self portrait(Figure 6). Their images all used representation, in which they used objects and symbols to stand for an intangible concept and to explain the depth of their inner emotional worlds. In the interview data, some girls centered their teachers seeing them as students but not knowing their inner emotions. When asked how her teacher sees her Danielle replied, "Mostly, like, more of like, a regular like 'academic' student." The girls utilized their portraits to visualize what it feels like to not be seen nor validated by a teacher and have your true self rendered invisible.

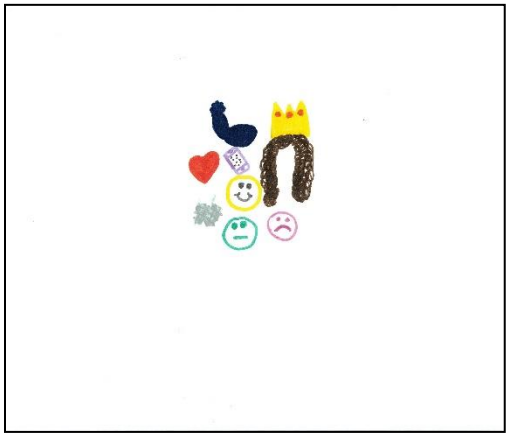

Figure 1. Lynne's Inner Self

Figure 2. Lynne's Teachers View

Lynne's portraits are an example of when portraits are incongruent. Lynne's inner self-portrait is dynamic and includes a variety of symbolism while her teacher's view is based on her teacher's validation of her behavior as depicted by her teacher saying, "Good Job…" (Figure 2). When I met Lynne for the interview, she was soft spoken and spoke in a matter-of-fact tone. During the interview, Lynne described feeling confident within herself and her many characteristics. In her inner self-portrait, she used a different color to indicate each different emotion represented by emoticons. She explained her symbols saying, "I think I'm strong. And sometimes I'm happy or sad or I'm neutral." She used symbols to represent who she is, many of which represent power. For example, she drew a flexed strong arm to represent her physical strength and drew a heart to represent how loveable and deserving of love she is. She also drew long, curly hair on the paper without a body or face, which suggests that curly hair is important to Lynne. She explained that she likes her hair because " it's not like everyone else's. It's curly. A lot of people have straight hair." Lynne also drew a crown and placed it centrally on top of her curly hair. When I asked what this meant, Lynne responded, "I think I'm a queen."

Lynne's portrait from her teacher's perspective is void of her complex emotions and contains none of her interests. She drew herself in a favorable situation with her teacher in which she is receiving praise her for helping other students complete their work. In the portrait, Lynne's facial expression seems ambivalent to her teacher's praise. When I asked if her teacher knew her inner self, Lynne seemed baffled and informed me that her teacher does not know because she does not engage with her students. In a very matter of fact tone, Lynne explained that her teacher did not know Lynne's inner self and did not want to know:

> *Darielle:* Do you think that she really wants to know, like, the true like the inner self that you drew?
> *Lynne*: Umm, not really, I don't think so.

Darielle: What makes you think that she doesn't really want to know?
Lynne: She doesn't talk to students. She just does her work.

Lynne's school experiences taught her that teachers were not meant to pursue in-depth relationships with their students. While in class, Lynne has received the message that her teacher does not even have the desire to learn how she feels about herself. Lynne's inner self is not seen or recognized by her teacher. The incongruence of the portraits and Lynne's acknowledgement that her teacher does not know her inner self suggests that many aspects of her identity are invisible in relation to her teacher.

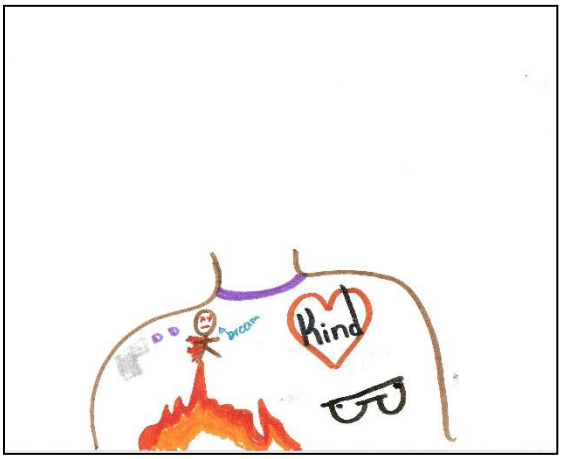

Figure 3. Maria's Inner Self

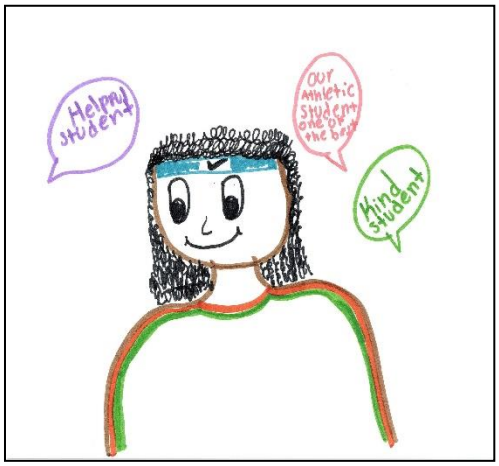

Figure 4. Maria's Teacher's View

Another piece of evidence that exemplifies the girls being rendered invisible comes from Maria's portrait and interview. Maria's dual self-portrait offers an example of how vast differences between perspectives in portraits shows a lack of true visibility in the classroom. Her portraits were incongruent in that her inner self is filled with representations of anger, rage, and violence, while her teacher's view depicts her as a happy athlete. Maria, who attends a relatively small charter middle school where she is one of few Black children in her grade, wore a large sweatshirt and giggled throughout the interview. Conversely, she explained that internally, she

frequently feels frustrated and full of anger. In her portrait, she represented her anger with orange and red flames that spanned over half of her inner self-portrait. Above the flames she drew a recurring dream she has in which she is being shot and killed. To represent the dream, she drew a gun, bullets, and a stick figure of herself lying on the ground dead. She describes her inner self by sharing, “In the inside, I get frustrated a lot. I'm kind to others. This is about my dream. I randomly just die.” She described her dream in a matter-of-fact tone and went on to say, “If I were someone else, I'd think like violence. [Pointing to the drawing] More violence. Because the fires…violence.” Maria’s depiction of how she feels on the inside is troubling, and what is even more troubling is the juxtaposition of herself as a smiling student athlete which she believes her teacher sees.

Maria’s inner self-portrait shows how she is filled with complicated and conflicting emotions while her teacher’s view depicts her as a happy athlete who receives validation from teachers. Although praise from teachers is often considered a positive aspect of teacher-student relationships, the findings here suggest this praise could come at the cost of teachers not seeing the reality of students’ daily experiences. In Maria’s portrayal of her teacher’s view of her, she included conversation bubbles with her teacher praising her while speaking to other people. For example, in the conversation bubbles Maria writes, “Helpful student,” “Our athletic student (sic) one of the best,” and “Kind student.” Maria explained how these conversations occur in class saying, “My last year teacher said this about me, to like the tour people. That I am like a helpful student. I used to play, like, sports a lot. So, I'm athletic.” Maria later explained that her teacher often singles her out as prospective students are touring the campus, saying these phrases about her but not to her. Her teacher focuses on Maria’s athletic abilities as well as behaviors that make the classroom more manageable, like her kindness and helpfulness. When asked about these

striking differences between her inner self and her teacher's view, Maria explained, "Differences. It's like frustration was not in here [pointing to the portrait from her teacher's view], then the violence, I guess." It is noteworthy that Maria shared sensitive information with me about her dream during our first meeting, information she believes her teacher does not know. Maria's challenging emotions, anger, and frustration, are rendered invisible as her teacher does not acknowledge them. Instead, Maria believes her teacher predominantly sees her as an athlete.

When I asked Maria to tell me more about her frustration, she said, "Kids frustrate me a little, so it won't come out, so I keep it inside." I asked where she learned this behavior of keeping it inside, and she explained that her parents and teachers instruct her to mediate frustrating situations in class by herself. She says, "They tell me that I can move somewhere else and to keep it in." Maria's anger and frustration are salient to her, yet they are not recognized or validated by her teacher. She has internalized the messages from home and school to suppress her anger. Maria's negotiation of her emotions and outward behaviors are impacted by what she learns from the adults in her life. As the adults in her life expect her to manage her frustration caused by her classmates on her own, they discount her pain without providing her any tools to successfully manage her anger. Her portrait of her teacher's view shows that her teacher is willfully ignorant of Maria's emotional experience.

Maria negotiates how she expresses her emotions based on which characteristics are validated by her teacher. Maria may continue to smile when she is angry and prioritize kindness over advocating for herself in order to maintain her good standing with her teacher. Some scholars refer to this as "doing school" or the performative act of normative ideologies of what a good student looks like based on their socialization at school (Cohen, 1996). As girls focus on

attributes, they believe are desirable to teachers, their true experiences and complicated emotions are rendered invisible. Girls who focused on doing school, discussed receiving praise as an integral aspect of their identity in relation to their teacher. They also discussed the various ways their emotional expression was suppressed through teacher invalidation or harsh classroom climate. All of these factors contribute to the how girls like Lynne and Maria negotiate their identities to resemble their idea of what teachers believe "good" students look like.

Figure 5. Danielle's Inner Self

Figure 6. Danielle's Teacher's View

Danielle's dual self-portrait is another example of how a Black adolescent girl can have an internal experience that is not conveyed in class. When I met Danielle for the interview, she was eager to begin drawing. For her inner self-portrait, she drew an outline of her head and upper body but did not include a face or skin color. Inside the figure she used bright colors giving herself multi-colored bangs and strands of hair falling right above her shoulders. She included a multicolored design along the side of her portrait. She drew a sun in the location of her heart about which she explained that she likes to shine on other people. On the other hand, in her

teachers' view, she depicted herself with dark hair, brown skin, eyes are wide open, lips closed, and hands crossed in front of her. Danielle acknowledged that there were many attributes within herself that other people do not know, including her teacher. In describing her inner self, she explained:

> Most people don't know that, but I like to stay calm. Like when things happen, I try to stay positive. Even, like, because I know that it's a lot going on at school, but I know, 'Okay, I'll make it through today.' And, umm, I drew the clouds because I, I like, like, envisioning things a lot…how the future would be and ask myself questions. I drew this because I just like doing different things. Whatever comes to mind, for the sun, I drew that because I like really shining on others, like helping them out. Being well, being positive.

Danielle's description and drawing of her inner self is vibrant, positive, and loving. She understands that being calm and positive helps her get through hard times in class. She admits that most people do not know these things about her, but they are important to how she operates in the world and specifically in her classroom. Conversely, her portrait of who her teacher sees is restrictive, as her hands are crossed. Strong emotions of fear seem to be conveyed through her eyes. She is no longer shining on people or envisioning the unknown. Her teacher does not see the shining and bright person she is on the inside. From her teacher's perspective, she is a one-dimensional student. Danielle said, "I drew it cuz, like, from a teacher's point of view, I'm mostly, like, more of like a regular, like, academic student. I try to get my grades up a lot. If they go down." To Danielle, her relationship with her teacher is centered around academics and Danielle receiving good grades. Danielle describes the differences in her portraits: "This one [pointing to her teacher's point of view] looks more like how I, like look, look. This one [pointing to inner self-portrait] is more, like, how I feel like." Danielle felt like her teacher only knows her for being a student who sits with hands crossed and receives good grades, but this teacher does not know how she actually feels.

Lynne, Maria and Danielle internally experienced a range of emotions that they were not invited to express in class. The drawings of their inner selves revealed complex emotional experiences that were not reflected in their teachers view of them. It was evident that being curious or angry were not acceptable emotions. Danielle is a clear example of this suppression as she discusses being a visionary and a dreamer who wants to look beyond what is happening in the present day and understand what the future will bring. She wants to ensure that she leaves a mark on the people around her by being positive. She further discusses enjoying envisioning possibilities of the future. When I asked her what she envisions, she explained:

> Like a lot of things. Sometimes if we have, like, prompts in class we'll be like, the tortoise and the hare and I like to, like, I like to just envision things like in the future like, a lot of times when we learn things we learn about like, like how the world was back then I like to envision like, how this like world look if this building wasn't here. What would happen if like, we didn't have TV and stuff like that?

None of these characteristics are evident in her discussion of her teacher nor her self-portrait from her teachers' perspective (Figure 6). Danielle discussed trying to make herself less visible and therefore less of a target by being quiet, helpful, or by hiding. Danielle shared that she experienced bullying and harassment by classmates and explained that she used to feel like a turtle who was scared to come out and so she stayed in her shell:

> I was like, kind of like a turtle, like hiding a lot. Turtle it feels like, almost like your kind of don't want to come out like you're too scared. When you see somebody you kind of want to hide because you don't want others to like, think about you.

This description aligns with Danielle's portrait of how her teacher sees her (Figure 6) in that she tries to hide by being a good student. She explained how she felt pressured to do things she does not want to do. She sees that her friends have problems and she has tried multiple times to help them resolve their issues and acts as a mediator. This classroom climate caused Danielle

stress and anxiety, and she was often overwhelmed by the tension in her class. Danielle explained she felt pressured by students in her class to do things that she may be uncomfortable with. Here she said,

> Sometimes a lot of people like girls, boys will like come up to me and say mean things but I try to stay positive on those and I tried it because my mom tells me like, 'It's okay, it doesn't matter.' And sometimes a lot of people are like, bothering me. They're like, hey, do this do this. A lot of things happen where like people start problems. And then in my class, a lot of my friends there's a certain group of friends who always, like have problems. So, I'm always there and I'm like, 'Hey, why don't you guys just do this and try to help them out?' and its very stressful.

Danielle is quiet and cares how her friends are impacted in the classroom. She expresses empathy and concern for herself and her friends as they navigate middle school. She works to keep the peace and not get into trouble or have problems like the other kids in her class. She finds herself reacting to the tension in the class, leaving little time or energy for her to act in ways that are aligned with her disposition of positivity that would benefit herself. She is using her strengths of calmness and envisioning to help her more confrontational classmates resolve their problems but along the way, she is rendered invisible and stressed out. Her teacher may also benefit from Danielle's strengths of peace-making and conflict resolution.

Maria, Danielle, and Lynne all drew images in which their inner selves were not aligned with their portrait of their teachers view. They all explained that their teacher did not know their inner selves. Lynne asserts that her teacher only focuses on her own work and does not engage with students. Maria's teacher is ignoring possible signs of trauma and clear instances of internalized anger. Danielle is a bright child whose creativity and positive spirit is not being nurtured but is stifled and contained. Remarkably, girls who experienced invisibility and depicted themselves in ways that would be desirable to their teachers all drew faceless inner self-portraits. This may suggest these girls privileged being reflective over representing concrete

attribute. It may also suggest the girls' desire to highlight their essence by decentering their physical appearance. This may also suggest that their relationship with their teacher is void of emotional connection and so they focus on academics. Both findings indicate the primary aspects of the girls' identities are invisible to their teachers.

Asserting agency and freedom of expression

Some girls drew self-portraits that were incongruent, leaving their inner selves invisible to their teachers. But rather than adopting the teachers' desired behaviors, they refused to be invisible and asserted their agency and freedom of expression. Notably, the inner self-portraits of girls who describe their teacher-student relationships as characterized by conflict, punishment and restriction, were incredibly salient as their inner selves occupied most of the space on the paper provided. All portraits of their teachers' perspectives contained negative labels, and most depicted negative experiences with their teacher. These girls describe instances in which they recognized their invisibility and reacted in ways that ensured they were seen. Their negotiation process prioritized maintaining an essence of who they feel they are even when the teacher did not see the same characteristics. For example, Measia shared times in class when her teacher called her names and she asserted her agency by letting out her emotions and reporting her teacher's behavior to the principal. After having a conflict with her teacher, Measia explained, "I went to the bathroom and I started crying, but I told the principal about it".

Figure 7. Bianca's Inner Self

Figure 8. Bianca's Teacher's View

Bianca asserted her agency by crying and expressing her genuine feelings instead of hiding them in class. During the dual self-portrait process, Bianca was deliberate when drawing her inner self portrait but seemed to become distressed when drawing her teacher view portrait. The drawing of her inner self-portrait is contained as it is perfectly outlined and colored in. The same was not true for the portrait in relation to her teacher which nearly contains scribbles around the hair. She clarified that in the portrait she appears to be smiling but she meant to draw a frown. The blue ovals in her eyes are her tears from being chastised by her teacher in front of the class. Her teacher's mouth is intended to be open and yelling at her.

Bianca's self-portrait from her teacher's perspective is a drawing of a situation in which she got in trouble for asking her friend for help when she felt like she did not receive thorough instructions for her assignment. This experience was so impactful that, for her it, represents the entirety of how her teacher sees her. She describes her portrait saying:

> This one is when my teacher is sending me out of class, because I was asking, another student question about we were supposed to do, because she doesn't. She doesn't always give out umm directions. So, she just tells us okay do this, and she expects us to do it like if we know how to do it. So, I was asking another student a question. And she was like go outside. Go! Get out of class because you were talking, and I didn't want to argue with her because then I would get in even more trouble.

Bianca already assumed she would be dismissed if she tried to explain herself to her teacher. Bianca explained that she argued with this teacher on a number of occasions and didn't want to get in further trouble, so she decided to not speak up, but out of frustration she started crying. Bianca did not feel like her teacher saw her needs—as she actually needed help with her assignment—and Bianca therefore felt more comfortable asking a classmate for help than her teacher. In essence, Bianca was excluded from academic time for attempting to complete her assignment. When I asked her how she thinks her teacher sees her Bianca described:

> My teacher, she really doesn't see me anyway because last year, the first time I met her. She made a really bad face at me and she rolled her eyes at me. And then she said that she didn't like me. So that whole year. She said that she wasn't gonna like me and that she couldn't stand me.

While Bianca states that her teacher doesn't see her in any way, she experienced hostile interactions with this teacher. Bianca understood that her teacher didn't have any knowledge of her true self, yet she felt this teacher didn't like her. Bianca went on to explain that her teacher thought she would not be able to keep up academically in the class because it was a combo 6th and 7th grade and Bianca was a new 6th grader.

These conflictual relationships with teachers cause distress and sadness for our most vulnerable girls. Feeling unseen and targeted at the same time led Bianca to have negative feelings and to begin questioning her beliefs about herself. She was clear that her teacher had negative beliefs about her that she did not believe about herself. Bianca remembered, "I felt bad, because of what she said to me that year. Last year, and I didn't really feel good about myself, because I know I was a good person last year." Here, Bianca is negotiating with herself as to whether she is who her teacher says she is, or if she is a good person like she believes herself to be.

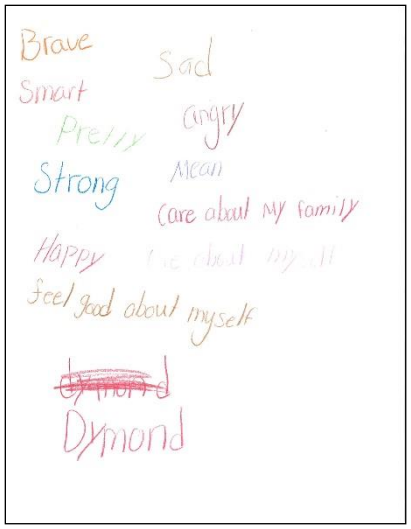

Figure 9. Dymond's Inner Self

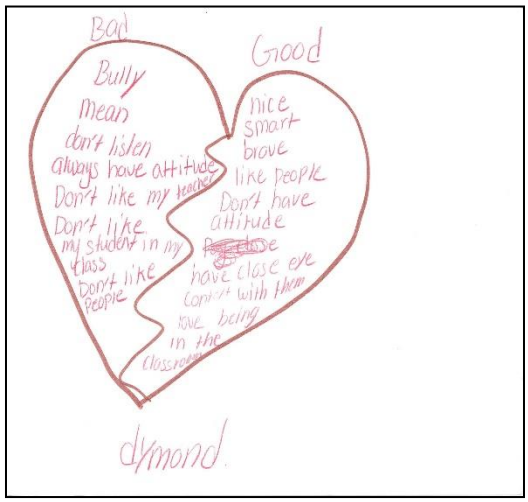

Figure 10. Dymond's Teacher's View

Dymond's portraits visually captures the struggle Bianca expressed verbally. Her portraits depict the negotiation between how she thinks her teacher sees her versus how she sees herself. Dymond used only words to create her inner self portrait and for her representation of how her teacher sees her, she drew a broken heart. I learned that Dymond's father was incarcerated six months before I met her, and she admitted that her behavior changed when he was taken from her. She noticed that she has been sadder and angrier lately. Given her life experiences, she has a positive yet realistic outlook about herself and her behavior. Dymond explained her inner self-portrait :

> This one was how I feel about myself; I think that I'm smart because when like I do my work, I try my hardest. Yeah, so I don't like, give up, because I know that I can do it. I know that I'm mean to people. Because I'm not like a people person that much. So, I just don't like to hang out, I'm anti-social. I'm brave, and I'm smart, and I'm strong, and I always feel good about myself, and I never put myself down, and I keep trying until the end, and I never doubt myself because I know I can finish even though it's hard.

On the other hand, Dymond feels profoundly hurt by her relationship and experiences with her teacher. She represents this pain by depicting herself as a broken heart. Dymond explains that she used a broken heart because she gets her feelings hurt when interacting with

this teacher. Dymond explains, “is cuz like the broken heart is like one side is like bad.” I probed to find out what that meant to Dymond and she responded, “it’s like when you get your feelings hurt”.

While she understands that she does not always behave in ways that are healthy, Dymond feels broken by the ways her teacher interacts with her. She understands the duality of her situation; that she is perceived differently when she behaves in ways that her teacher believes are bad versus good.

> This one [pointing to ‘bad’] is how I think teachers feel about me when I don't listen. When I don’t listen in class. When I get in trouble. In this one [pointing to ‘good’] is when I'm good in class, what they think about me. They think I don't listen is when I zone out on them, they asked me questions, and I don't know.

Dymond explained that sometimes she doesn’t respond to her teacher and “zones out” when she is asked questions to which she doesn’t know the answer. Her teacher then considers her to be acting defiantly, and Dymond ends up being disciplined. The reality is that Dymond is currently not emotionally well due to being profoundly impacted by and has experienced trauma due to her father’s incarceration. Dymond’s sometimes hard disposition and externalized behaviors positions her to have her tender emotions overlooked by various teachers and students on campus. Dymond says, “Sometimes I care, sometimes I don't. Because I was like, I didn’t come to school to be friends with teachers. I came for them to teach me.” Dymond’s experiences at school have caused her to try and harden herself to her feelings. I asked her what her teacher might say if she saw her inner self-portrait. Dymond responded:

> When they see my, my inner side, they'll be like, surprised because they never seen that side of me before. The sad and anger [points to her drawing] and mean. Yeah. Oh, and happy because I'm never happy. Like, in class because I just don’t want to be there.

Dymond's belief that her teacher would be surprised if she saw her inner self portrait means her teacher would be in disbelief if she knew that she experienced sadness and anger. As written in her portrait, she believes her teachers mostly see her as a bully who doesn't listen. She further explained that she tried to be vulnerable and show her feelings by crying when she was being teased. She told a different teacher (other than the teacher she chose for her portrait) and he told her that she did not have a reason to cry. She continued and explained, "They've never seen the sad side of me. Only Mr. Falconer, but he didn't care so, yeah." Dymond's choosing to be vulnerable and cry was an act of refusal to hold in her emotions, but she received the message that her teacher did not care about her feelings. She discussed times when children made fun of her for her father being incarcerated and teachers dismissing her feelings of sadness. She shared an experience with a classmate, stating:

> *Dymond:* His name was Mike, and he was talking about my dad. We were telling him to stop, because my dad's in jail. And that's when it wasn't funny. So, I started crying. And then felt angry, mad. But I didn't do nothing because I didn't want to be in trouble.
> *Darielle:* And did any teachers see what happened?
> *Dymond:* Yes. Mr. Hawk But he told me it wasn't a reason to cry.

Dymond was vulnerable in the moment she was bullied by her classmate and broke down crying when she was teased. She felt justifiable anger and sadness which deserved to be met with tenderness but was instead met with dismissal. He teacher told her that her genuine emotional response was not valid. I later asked her if she would share her feelings with teachers instead of letting her emotions out on her classmates, and she reminded me that in this situation, she had tried to tell Mr. Hawk, but he "didn't care." Dymond has experienced multiple instances in

which her needs and emotions were not cared for leaving her feeling invisible.

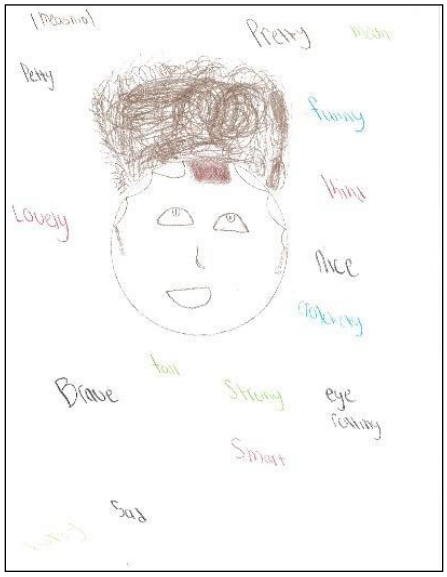

*Figure 11.*Meashia's Inner Self

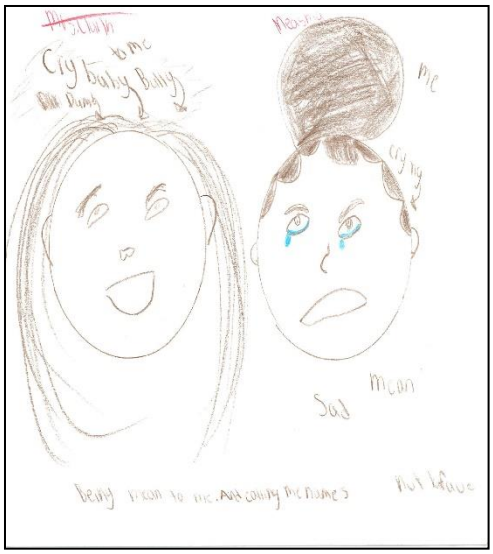

Figure 12. Meashia's Teacher's View

Meashia was eager to meet with me and expressed her desire to speak with me again if I needed her to. She was in a particularly vulnerable emotional state when we engaged in the interview as her mother recently passed away. For her inner self portrait, Meashia drew herself smiling and centered an array of words that describe the complexity of who she is. She explained that she drew her eyes looking up at all of the words that describe her identity. There was a balanced variety of favorable characteristics like lovely, pretty, kind, funny, and brave as well as behaviors like crotchety, petty, and eye rolling. When reflecting on her portrait, Meashia is aware that in different situations, her behaviors change. In considering the words she included in her drawing, Meashia explained:

> I did 'kind' because I'm nice to some people, sometimes. I did 'nice' because I can be mean, nice and unfair stuff like that. I feel like I'm nice when I'm in a good mood and if I'm in a good mood. If I'm in a good mood that means I either have snacks or that people I don't like are not at school.

Meashia's portrait of how her teacher sees her depicts her crying and sad from being called names by her teacher. She has depicted this by drawing her face with tears and a frown.

She included multiple labels including “crying,” “sad,” “not brave,” and “mean.” She drew her teacher and wrote “crybaby,” “dumb,” and “bully,” indicating that these are names her teachers calls her. Measha’s negative experiences with her teacher leaves her in tears. In her portrait, not only has is her pain invisible to her teacher, she has been bullied.

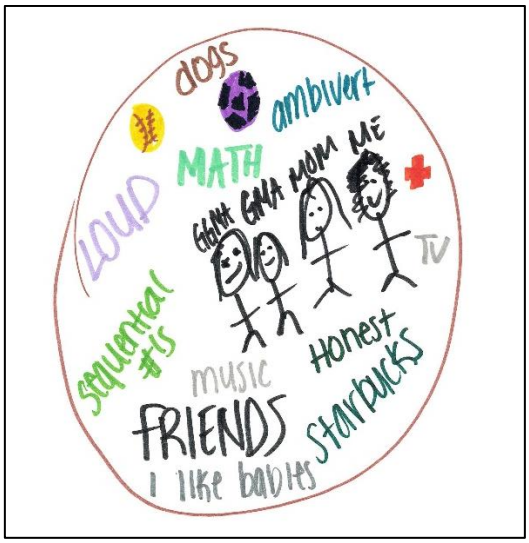

Figure 13. Jordan's Inner Self

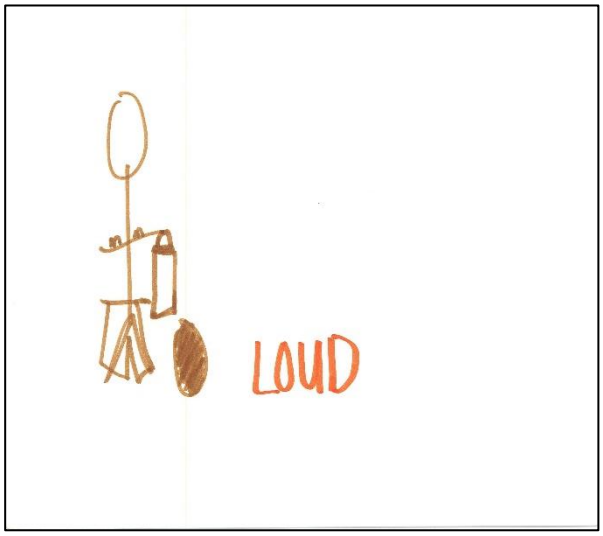

Figure 14. Jordan's Teacher's View

Jordan represented her inner self enclosed in a circle which can symbolize safety. She includes representation of her family, noting that they are important to her identity. She writes about things she enjoys like math, dogs, and babies and includes defining characteristics about herself that include “honest,” loud, and ambivert. She has nuanced understanding of herself as a person that has multiple layers. While drawing, she took her time to choose specific colors and attributes that accurately describe her. Jordan contemplated her self-portrait, stating:

> Umm what did I just learn? I’m an ambivert. Because in our, class we were learning about extroverts and introverts. We learned that like if your both you’re an ambivert. So, I- sometimes I’m an introvert, sometimes I’m an extrovert, so I put ambivert.

Jordan was very intentional as she took her time to decide which words best fit her personality. She describes the complexity of her inner self emphasizing that she is not one

dimensional. Girls are often presented with only one way that they can be and here, Jordan shows a refusal to fit into any norm. While she sometimes feels very quiet and reflective, she is also loud and boisterous. She identifies with television characters who embody these dichotomies. Talking about a television character she likes, Jordan said, “She's really unemotional until something bad happened, like when she lost her baby. She seems like she has no heart, but she does.”

To Jordan, being loud can be beneficial since she saw many doctors on television being loud and using their voice as a powerful tool. Jordan asserted, “Like, being loud could help you with this... Being a doctor. I watch a lot of doctor shows and they're always loud, yelling at each other.” Jordan believed that her being loud could benefit her, but she was often reprimanded for being loud and assertive at school.

When I asked Jordan to draw a picture from her teacher’s perspective, she said, “I don't really like my teachers.” Jordan took a few minutes before she would actually draw a picture because she didn’t want to think about how her teachers saw her since she didn’t feel they had a good relationship. She decided to draw a depiction of her P.E. teacher with whom she had multiple conflicts. In her teacher view portrait, she drew only herself, depicted as a stick figure, and included the word “loud.” Jordan was invested in discussing and drawing how she feels on the inside but resisted reflecting on how her teacher saw her. She later shared that the only things her teacher knew about her is that she played sports and she had friends. Other areas of Jordan’s life were not known or explored with this teacher.

Notably, all of girls’ portraits contained vast differences in their depiction of themselves versus how their teachers see them. They depicted their inner selves as a mix of desirable and undesirable attributes whereas their teachers’ views were overwhelmed with negative labels and

expressions. The girls expressed intense sadness and anger from their experiences with teachers. Their sadness and anger are viewed as disruptive and unsubstantiated. These girls are viewed through a lens of deviance because of their disposition. These experiences render the inner selves of these girls invisible while their outer behaviors are hyper visible to punishment.

Teacher's lack of accountability for their own behavior. A sub theme emerged out of the narratives of two of the girls in which they discussed their teachers' lack accountability for their actions. During the interview process they shared situations that were highly significant to their experiences in the classroom, including first-hand experiences and instances in which they witnessed their teachers exhibiting harmful behaviors in class that went unacknowledged. Dymond explained how her negative behaviors are punished but her teachers are permitted to express harmful behaviors. Many of the girls exerted agency and refusal of wrongdoings by teachers by telling their principal, telling other teachers, and even making a case as to why their teacher should be fired.

Dymond stated:

> The reason I think they think I don't like the teacher is because like when teachers do something or say something about me, I react and then like if me and other people talk about them. The things that teachers be saying, and then when we go tell they don't care. And when we do, when we do it, and we get in trouble. It's not fair.

Dymond believes her teachers don't her like her because she stands up for herself when she feels disrespected by them. She even tries to tell on her teacher to other adults, but their inaction makes her feel like they don't care about her. She compares this to times when she or other classmates say something that is considered inappropriate and they are reprimanded. She calls out this double standard and laments that it's not fair. She sums up this dichotomy saying,

"Teachers they talk about kids and then nothing happens to them. Kids talk about teachers, we get in trouble".

When I probed, asking her to explain what she meant when she said teachers talk about her, she explained that she knows teachers talk to each other about students. Multiple girls shared that this particular teacher would tell a Black paraeducator when they misbehave who then chastise the girls them again. They would be pulled aside by the paraeducator and reprimanded for their in-class behavior.

Darielle: What do you mean she talks about you?
Dymond : Like. It's just like, talk to other teachers.
Darielle: What do you think should happen when she does that?
*Dymond***:** I think that teachers should get fired.

This highlights how expectations of students are not modeled by their teachers and administrators. Children are held accountable when they misbehave or hurt other's feelings yet the same does not always apply to the adults in schools. Dymond calls for action just like when she is reprimanded and believes deeply that teachers should be held accountable for their actions even if that accountability looks like being fired. From the girls' perspective, having adults talk about their behaviors is not appropriate. The girls seemed to consider this "gossiping" by educators to be a behavior they would be punished for doing.

When girls speak to other adults on campus about their experiences with their teachers, they frequently dismissed, leaving their feelings invisible. To hold their teachers accountable, multiple girls shared with me that they reported their teacher to the principal. Measha went to far as to try to find evidence online that her teacher was not fit to teach. She shared this information with the principal. Likewise, when Bianca's feelings were hurt by something her teacher whispered in her ear, she went and told their principal. She shared the following situation:

> *Bianca:* Yeah, okay, and I forgot what she whispered in my ear, so I was like okay, and then I walked out of the room. And I started crying and I went to Miss Jones, the principal, and I told Miss, and Miss Jones didn't do anything. So, I was like, 'Okay,' and then I just wipe my tears and my face, and I just went inside.
> *Darielle:* How did you feel when Miss Jones didn't do anything?
> *Bianca:* I was mad. And I felt bad because Miss Jones is a principal, and she hired that teacher. So, if she wasn't going to do anything about it then why tell her, because she really didn't tell the teacher anything.

The girls felt a strong sense of injustice explaining that if they or their classmates say mean statements, they get in trouble whereas when teachers hurt student's feelings, nothing happens to them. When other adults on campus also do not respond, it leaves these girls feeling further invisibility.

Visible: Impact of Positive Teachers Gaze

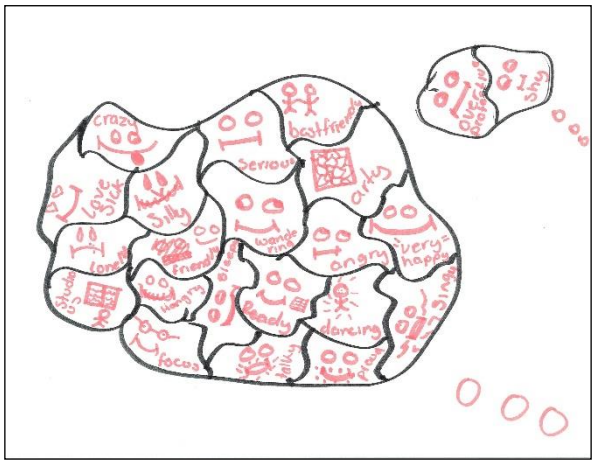

Figure 15. Kailie's Inner Self

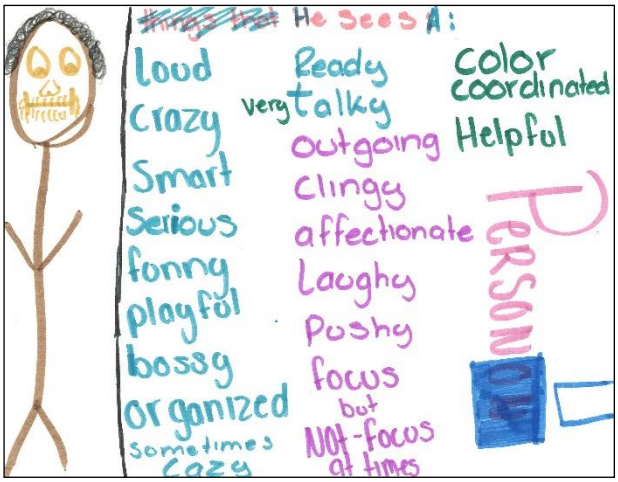

Figure 16. Kailie's Teacher's View

Kailie decided to draw her portrait about Mr. Hawk, her current history teacher. She described having a safe and secure relationship with him as she has known him since birth. Kailie exemplifies how a positive teacher-student relationship, where she feels fully visible, begins with the teacher recognizing students' humanity. She intended her portrait to first be read as "he sees a person." Viewers can then go back and fill in blank with all the descriptive words

she included. One could read it as “he sees an affectionate person” or “he sees a ‘sometimes crazy’ person.” Kailie captured how Mr. Hawk sees her humanity in a complicated array of emotions and behaviors. Girls whose visuals showed congruency and similarities in how they talked about their perspective of their identity and how their teacher saw them were labeled “visible.” Kailie understands that Mr. Hawk has a nuanced understanding of who she is as he sees her as focused but not focused all the time. He knows she is smart and playful and can be serious when she needs to be.

Visual and interview data suggested that Kailie feels known and seen by Mr. Hawk. When asked how he would respond if he saw her portrait, she said, “He'd smile and then shake his head.” She describes how he knows she’s affectionate even though she does not show that side to many people. The following correspondence further demonstrates Kailie’s understanding of her emotional expression.

> *Kailie:* I don't act really affectionate towards people because usually people would be like, "What are you doing?" Because people are weird like that, but I know I'm affectionate because I like hugging people and I like making handshakes and dancing.
> *Darielle:* How does Mr. Hawk know that you're affectionate?
> *Kailie:* Because I hug him all the time, we have a handshake.

Kailie believes Mr. Hawk knows the complexities of her inner and outer attributes. She shares a trusting relationship with him that she does not share with many others. While she thinks she may be rejected if she is affectionate with others, she knows Mr. Hawk will welcome her affections as they even have a personalized handshake. All of these together help Kailie feel seen and fully visible.

Positive Teacher-Student Relationships Bolster Girls Sense of Self

In some instances, the girls seemed to have an increased sense of self at school due to being truly being seen by their teachers. This was evident through their portraits of their

teachers' view which were more detailed, vibrant, and positive than their inner self-portraits. The girls confirmed this as they discussed how their relationships with their teachers can transform their mood each day they attend their class. For example, Magali's inner self portrait is represented as a face with a straight line for lips and eyes looking down. She uses only two colors: light brown, for her skin, and black for her features. Her facial expression looks pensive. She explains that her portrait represents the varied emotions she experiences and how she often feels bored at school.

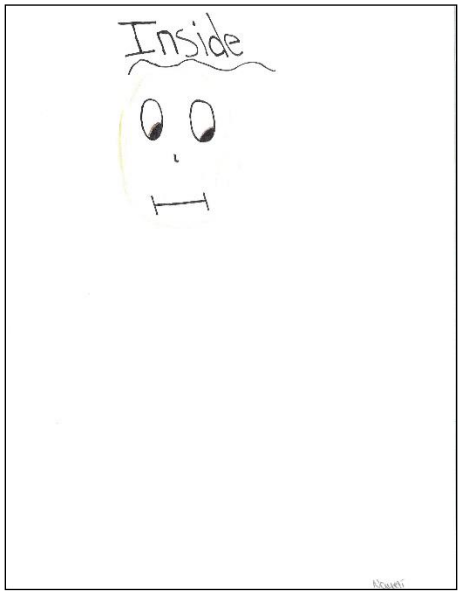

Figure 17. Magali's Inner Self

Figure 18. Magali's Teacher's View

> *Magali:* The reason why I did that, because it's kind of like I always have mixed emotions. I can be happy at a time, but then I can also be mad. Depending on when it is and that's kind of just showing that I'm usually always bored.
> *Darielle:* Okay, what in this picture did you draw that lets us know that you were bored?
> *Magali:* The way my mouth is. And it's like, and it's showing that there's nothing much to do. There has to be something to make me happy in order to change it. I'm just looking off to the side. Just thinking about what to do next and what else I can think of.

In her portrait of how her teacher sees her, Magali used a brighter variation of brown as her skin tone. She portrays herself as smiling, with long brown hair and included the colors green, blue, and pink. The use of color indicates positive emotion to the viewer. She made a list of all the things her teacher believes about her including being nice, smart, respectful, and outstanding. None of these characteristics were mentioned or listed in her inner self portrait. When describing her portrait and relationship with this teacher, Magali says, “My teacher, she always thinks I'm good, I don't know, and she thinks I'm nice, smart, respectful, and understanding. It makes me happy because she's really nice to me.”

Magali’s relationship with Ms. Jones motivates her to be better. Her teacher lifts her spirits. Magali says, “Even if I feel like I’m not doing my best, she always makes me feel like I can do it.” The positive teacher-student relationship acts as a surrogate of confidence and belief in herself. When Magali feels down about herself, she is able to use her teachers’ confidence in class to get her work done.

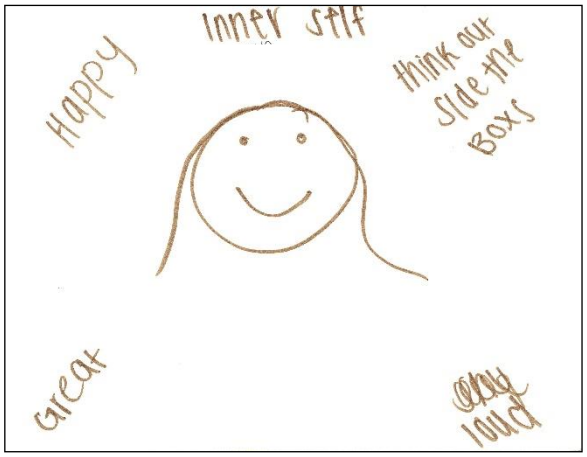

Figure 19. Na' Ima's Inner Self

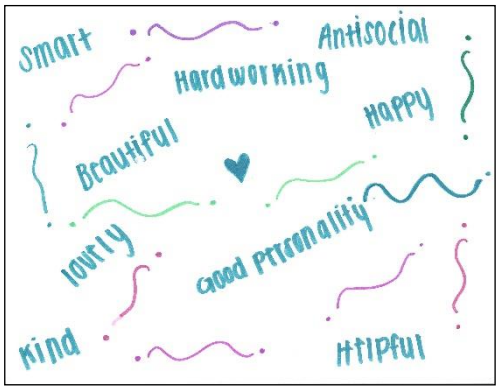

Figure 20. Na' Ima’s Teacher’s View

Na’Ima drew her self-portrait as a face with dots as eyes and a curved line for a smile. She included words like “happy,” “great, “and “loud” and thinks outside the box (which she later said she meant for the other portrait). She chose to only use brown and completed this drawing

quicker than her portrait from her teacher's view. Na'Ima seems to have an overall positive view of herself as she describes enjoying being happy. She is also a self-proclaimed "loud person." Pointing to her portrait (Figure 19) she says, "Happy inside—I feel happy because it's like a good feeling. Except for always being mad. Cuz when like, I feel like when somebody is mad. It comes off on other people being mad. And when you're mad it's like your whole day is off." She understands that anger may not only negatively impact herself but also others around her.

Conversely, her portrait from her teacher's view looks like a celebration with many colors including purple, blue, pink, and two shades of green. A blue heart is at the center of the page which is filled with words to describe her: smart, beautiful, lovely, kind, hardworking, happy, good personality, helpful, and antisocial. "My teacher, she's like, she's like, very like outgoing and wants everyone, like, wants her kids to succeed and stuff like that and I feel like this is the stuff that she thinks about me." The sheer number of words as well as the detail suggest Ms. Jones thinks very highly of Na'Ima possibly having a more positive view than Na'Ima has of herself.

Also noteworthy is what differs in Na'Ima's dual portraits. For instance, "loud" is not included in her teacher's view of her, but "anti-social" is. She says, "I'm like a very loud, person… like, sometimes I be loud at the wrong times and then they tell me to lower it down. I'm just loud that's just how I am." Even though she feels like she is loud, even at times where it may be inappropriate, she does not feel like her teacher sees her through this lens. Na'Ima later described that she often feels anti-social at home and at school, this being something she feels like she can work on. Na'Ima explains that her teacher is helping her become less anti-social which describes as not wanting to talk to people she does not know.

Moreover, when asked if teachers knew their inner selves, these girls either emphatically said yes or said their teacher did not know all of it but knew most of it and would want to know all of it. Na'Ima said her teacher would be able to identify her portrait just by looking at it. "I think she will know it's me. Because the stuff I put. And how well she knows me." When asked how her teacher would respond she said, "Miss Jones' the type of person… She'll be happy, like she wants me to feel like this inside. Yeah, cuz she tells us that we should think about what nobody else have to think about us, that we should always feel good about ourselves. Because we're just good people." Na'Ima has had numerous positive experiences with her teacher that make her feel seen, and she believes her teacher would be able to identify her by looking at a page of characteristics. Kailie, who describes having a positive relationship with her teacher, honestly admits that Mr. Hawk may not know everything about her but does indeed have a desire to know.

> *Darielle:* Do you think Mr. Hawk knows this part of you, your inner self?
> *Kailie:* Not all of it.
> *Darielle:* Does he want to know?
> *Kailie:* Probably, he's always asking questions and stuff.

She goes on to describe how happy he would be if he saw her portrait. She feels Mr. Hawk would respond happily because her portraits are authentic and genuine. When I asked Magali if her teacher knew her inner self, she felt like her teacher did not always know but if she found out she would be accepting of her.

> *Magali:* Probably sometimes but not much because I always show that I'm happy around people.
> Darielle: Do you think that she wants to know?
> *Magali:* I feel like if she knew, she wouldn't treat me differently, but she still knows and understands because a lot of people feel like that, but they just don't show it.

Magali reflects that when she feels negative feelings, she keeps them to herself and looks happy to others. There is an emphasis on her teacher being understanding. She is not bothered that her teacher does not know all of the details of her inner self because she is assured that it could be safe for her to share these feelings with this teacher.

Visible: They see a whole person

Girls who spoke of having close relationships with their teachers included visual texts and oral texts that explained the complexity of their relationships. These relationships were not void of discipline or tense moments. The girls describe feeling seen as whole people who had areas in their life that they can work to improve. Their visuals have words that represent inward characteristics and characteristics exemplified through outward behavior. They also included aspects of their identity that may seem opposing. Many of the girls who used words, included words that characterized their positive attributes and described areas of improvement. In her portrait, Na'Ima wrote that her teacher knows she has a good personality even as she can also be anti-social at times. Na'Ima pointed to her portrait and explained this seeming dichotomy, "A good personality, because I'm like anti-social and that's something I feel I could work on because I don't talk to people, I don't like to talk to people I don't know." Na'Ima was reminded about her tendency to be antisocial with people she does not know after doing an activity led by her teacher Ms. Jones in which a group of girls stood in a circle and were tasked with saying something they like about the others. Na'Ima admitted that this was hard for her "because I feel like when we were in the group, when we have to say something. And it was kind of hard for me to like speak with them and interact with them." On the other hand, her teacher sees her as having a good personality. As Na'Ima explains, "Like if you really get to know me, I like cracking jokes, like to make you laugh." She admits that she has been disciplined by her teacher

who responds in a loving and encouraging manner. Na'Ima describes appreciating how her teacher's approach is different from other teachers who she explained were more punitive in their approach. Naima explains:

> I just like how she come at you. Like she gives you warnings then she comes at you in a good way, meaning like. She will have a good time with you she'll talk to you regularly, she'll be like I know you could be better and I want you to better instead of being like this because I'm not used to seeing you like this. Yeah that's how I feel.

Kailie also discusses receiving discipline from her favorite teacher that does not feel punitive but helpful. She remembers, "He tells me to stop talking, or get serious. And to stop bossing people around and to get focused." She seems to be the leader of her friend group. Mr. Hawk also giver her advice on her friend choice, something that Kailie appreciates. She states, "Well, we talk about the people I hang out with because I usually get in trouble because I play around a lot. Yeah. He was like, 'You're hanging out with the wrong crowd, and your mom wouldn't like that and you need to get your act together.' We were talking about it." These girls describe discipline as dialogue instead of punishment. They did not seem to have internalized these experiences as core to who they instead as areas they can work to improve.

Intimate, caring relationships

"And when I go to her class, she just makes it feel like I'm at home and with someone who actually cares about me". Magali, 12

Having a caring teacher can transform a student's attitude about school. In the quote above, Magali, who struggle with getting up early and coming to school, it is important to have a teacher who can make you feel like you're at home. Intimate and caring teacher-student relationships were characterized by warmth, connection, fun, and a sense of knowing. Girls described feeling welcomed and cared for by the culture the teacher set in the classroom as well as by the teachers' direct behaviors. Magali describes how being in her teacher's classroom

transforms her energy from being low to being happy. I asked her if she had any high moments with her teacher and she could not think of just one moment. She felt like every moment with her teacher was a positive experience.

> *Darielle:* Can you think of a really high moment that you've had? Sometimes we call it a sunny spot, like a sunny day.
> *Magali:* That's mostly all the time when I go to her class, because every time I walk in, she always says "Hi" and when I leave, she always gives me a hug or something nice.

Magali's view of her teacher exemplifies what characteristics are important to establishing caring and loving classroom environments for some Black girls. She felt seen because her teacher verbally and physically greeted her every day. The girls highlight how important it is that they share fun times with their teachers inside and outside of the classroom. Kailie describes how her outside relationship with Mr. Hawk increases her comfort with him. Sharing that they even have a secret handshake:

> I've known him since before I could walk. He was my auntie's teacher, my older sister's teacher, and my brother's teacher. I've known him for the longest time. He gives good advice. I don't always understand it, but I figure it out over time. He says a lot of crazy jokes that most people don't get, but I'll be the first one to get something, and we'll just be laughing about it…I hug him all the time, we have a handshake.

Na'Ima emphasizes the balance that occurs in Miss Jones' class. She remembers having a lot of fun moments with her, and she knows that when it's time to be focused they all get to back to work. In this example, her teacher included elements of Black culture that are familiar to many Black children, listening to the music of their parents' time which she calls "old school" music. The teacher intentionally includes the children in this activity by deeming them DJs for the activity, thus giving them power and agency during this classroom activity.

> We be playing around, and stuff and she would turn on her old school music and we would just be jammin' and stuff. And she be talking about some… us being all her DJs in the back and we just be like having a good time. She likes to see us happy she likes to umm see us like be around and socialize with people when it comes to work it's time to do our work when it comes to work and when it's time to play we can play.

These teachers are able to convey a love and care while disciplining students and carrying out an academically focused classroom. Na'Ima admits that sometimes she has trouble focusing and talks during times where she should be working. "Like as a kid in her class like. As a kid, yeah, I do talk here and there but when it's like time to get my work done, I make sure I get my work done and I'm on top, so, yeah." She is given warnings and never excluded from the classroom community because of her behavior. Having a close and responsive relationship provides the foundation for Na'Ima to see how she doesn't have to be stuck in her behavior, but she can refocus and get back to work.

> *Na'Ima:* I'm like a very loud, person… like sometimes I be loud at the wrong times and then she tells me to lower it down. I'm just loud that's just how I am.
> *Darielle:* When you do that, what does Miss Jones Say?
> *Na'Ima:* Sometimes she laughs. She laughs. Sometimes she just be like lower it down a little bit.

Na'Ima has come to an acceptance of herself because she knows she will still be loved and not punished for being who she is. Overall, the girls feel there is an unconditional acceptance. Kailie and Na'Ima describe being disciplined by their teachers, but this experience does not negate their positive and loving teacher-student relationships. Magali talked about the deep sense of acceptance she feels from her teacher which she believes is why she doesn't get in trouble. She is allowed to be herself. Magali stated:

> I don't think I really got in trouble by her ever because it's like, I don't know. I don't really act differently around her. I just act myself. Magali. And I feel like I don't have to be different because she just makes me feel comfortable and I don't have to change anything.

Magali doesn't feel like she has to act any other way than her genuine self when she is with Ms. Jones. She is able to freely be herself; something credits for why she doesn't get in trouble.

High Expectations

The girls also discussed knowing that their teachers want them to succeed and want Black people to succeed. This is conveyed through their curriculum as they get to learn about Black people and through field trips to colleges. Na'Ima asserts that she has two teachers who she knows want her to succeed. Referring to Mr. Hawk, Na'Ima stated:

> He wants us to be on top and Mr. Hawk too, he's the type of person that wants you to be on top, and stuff like that. He wants you to like graduate with good grades and honors and stuff like that. He wants you to be on top, not just his work but everybody works he wants you to have good grades so you can not only make him proud make your family proud too.

Na'Ima understands that Mr. Hawk and Ms. Jones' high expectations for the students to succeed is not just about the current moment, but it's about their long-term academic success. Their success is not only for them or to make their teachers happy, but it is also to benefit their families. Na'Ima goes on to describes how behavior and academic success in middle school can impact college trajectory:

> She wants us to go to college; that's her biggest thing. She wants us to go to college. And some of us to stop like goofing around. So, we can be ready for high school and college. So, we can graduate from there too. Because she like really wants us to go to college. She has us go to like field trips and check out colleges and stuff. She asked us to be on the right path and go to college.

These expectations come with support and a belief that girls can improve. Teachers explicitly tell these girls that they can do better, and they take the time to help them with academic work. Magali explained her teacher's investment in her: "Even if I feel like I'm not doing my best, she always makes me feel like I can do it. She pushes me to my limits. When she teaches me, even if I don't understand it, she always has time to help." Magali feels that even when she is not sure of herself, her teacher is sure of her.

Na'Ima, Magali, and Kailie expressed how their teachers knew their behaviors, skills, and areas for improvement as well as their strengths. Their teachers had high expectations for

them personally, academically, and behaviorally. The girls discussed feeling seen and affirmed by their teachers during times of conflict and times of closeness. They described feeling immensely cared for through their teachers positive and constructive feedback.

These girls are free to behave in ways that are true to themselves and are affirmed for positive behavior and are disciplined for undesired behavior. Girls who talked about having these types of balanced experiences with the teacher they chose to depict in their teacher-view illustration, drew very vibrant portraits even in comparison to the portraits of their inner selves. They all used a wider variety of color in their teacher-view depiction than they did of t their inner self-portraits. Images where the girls' portrayal of their inner selves were aligned with their perception of how their teachers see them used visuals and words (oral texts) to describe how they were viewed by their teachers. Their portraits and their discussion of their relationships with their teachers focused on their inner qualities and abilities.

Hyper Visible-Invisibility in Early Childhood through Adolescence

Girls who experience invisibility or visibility with their current teachers all shared experiences in early childhood through adolescence in which they felt invisible yet hyper visible. This seemed to be rooted in their teacher's assumptions of perceived wrongdoing. Some girls specifically expressed being impacted by gendered-racialized rules and attitudes from teachers and other students. Danielle discussed feeling different because she is often the only Black person in class that she explained had mostly White and Mexican students. At times, this difference left her feeling invisible and at other times it caused her to be hyper visible and stand out. While it seemed some teachers and parents tried to teach children that being different is positive, these girls often are made to feel like they don't belong in academic spaces.

The experience of being invisible and hyper visible in the early years had a profound impact on the school experiences of the girls in this study. Danielle shares a memory from her elementary years in which she felt invisible as she felt left out from a classroom performance:

> We were doing a performance and I wanted to dance a lot, and I was trying really hard. And I had all the grades, but she [her teacher] wouldn't choose me because she chose the people... a lot of the other people. She chose all the other girls. Like everyone. She told me I couldn't go, and I didn't know why. Cuz I was young at that time. Actually, no, you just can't go and everyone else got to go but I was just waiting.

For young children, participating in school activities that foster their creativity are important for identity development. Engaging in public speaking is a way for children to safely practice using their voice in ways that elicit positive praise. Not being chosen to participate in a dance performance with her classmates was salient as Danielle recalled important moments in her school history. Although Danielle recalled trying to improve herself by practicing the dance routine, her efforts and pain of being left out were invisible.

Na'Ima described multiple instances in first grade and second grade in which her teacher denied her access to basic classroom activities. She highlighted the difference between how she viewed herself and how her teacher saw her even as a six or seven-year-old child. Na'Ima describes her younger self as shy and innocent which didn't shield her from the assumptions of wrongdoing projected by her teacher. Na'Ima believe her teacher treated her differently because her teacher was Latina and held prejudiced beliefs about Black people.Na'Ima remembers:

> I was in second grade and she was Hispanic. And I asked her if I can work with the other kids. Cuz she just had me like in a different group…Cuz I didn't do nothing wrong or nothing. And then I asked her, if I can go use the restroom and she was like no you can't do nothing. I'll never forget that day I asked to use the bathroom and she was like no I cannot use the restroom. So, I was just sitting there, sitting there, then I asked her again can I use the restroom she said no. So, then I had an accident, and then everybody was making fun of me and stuff. And then I had to move my color down to red.

In this example, Na'Ima offers a depiction of how Black girls are rendered invisible and hyper visible in the same situation. She was not allowed to play with the other children which could send the message that she was doing something wrong. Then she was prevented from using the bathroom for which she experienced teasing and was punished using a shame-based in-class discipline system in which green represented good behavior and red represented bad behavior. The experience of not having her needs met and having her innocence be invisible has an impact on how girls view both themselves and school. Na'Ima remembers that she was more comfortable to be herself at home but felt scared to speak in class. Na'Ima explains that her negative experiences at school changed her behavior. Na'Ima states:

> But I was innocent. I was just shy. And I wasn't like outspoken like I am now. So, like I was just I was like shy inside the box shy but at home it was a whole different other me. And ever since then, I've spoken and learned that I should speak up for myself.

Na'Ima calls out the reality that as a young Black girl she was not viewed as innocent or shy event though that is who she believed herself to be. She learned that teachers may not always see her through that lens. Even as an adolescent, she directly connects this experience of not having her basic needs to why she was outspoken and loud during elementary school. Similarly, Bianca also shares a situation in which she was restricted from using the bathroom:

> So, I've only argued with the teacher once, because the teacher got on my nerves. Just because I was up, and I was going to go to the bathroom. She got on my nerves. She was like, 'Sit down,' and I asked her twice if I can go to the bathroom. And she was like, 'Okay,' and then when I got up, and I got to the door, she, she got mad and she was like, 'Why are you up?' and I said, 'Because I'm going to the bathroom.' So, then I got mad and the teacher got mad because I was up, but I asked the teacher. I was going to the bathroom.

In this situation, Bianca explained that she asked multiple times to use the restroom and when she got up to go to the bathroom, she was chastised for being out of her seat. Meashia explains feeling unjustly treated for doing something as simple as putting on her jacket at a time

that the teacher did not agree with. Teachers often have many reasons for not wanting students to move around the classroom that are often rooted in maintaining order. In this situation, Meashia was told she moved "too much." She further explains:

> When she sent me out because I put my jacket on. We were doing our quick writes. Yeah, we were doing, quick rights last year and I got up to put my jacket on and then I sat back down, and she told me to get out. I think she said like, because you move too much. But that was the first time I moved. People move all the time.

How much movement is acceptable is subjective and at school, and teachers have the power to decide how much is too much. For Meashia, she had not moved too much because it was her first time moving; she also seems to believe the rule is arbitrary: As Meashia put it, "People move all the time." From early childhood through adolescence, these girls shared experiences in which they felt like their needs, desires, and opinions were dismissed. On the other hand, they felt hyper visible and surveilled for behaviors that are typical classroom behaviors like going to the bathroom and putting on a jacket. In these situations, the girls experience both invisibility and hypervisibility.

Methodological Findings

Black Girl Gaze: Toward a Methodology for Black Girls Healing through Self Reflection

As a set, the dual self-portraits that center the 'Black girl's gaze' resulted in a visual experience exhibiting the many dualities of being a Black girl in U.S. schools. Through this exercise, a deeply reflective process, Black girls assumed power and agency over who they are as they visualized the essence of their inner self and the self that is seen by teachers. This section will outline how the dual self-portrait process informs the expression of Black girls' identity and potential to contribute to visual research methodology.

The girls' portraits were vastly multimodal in that they used objects, oral texts, symbols, and drawings of people to represent the ways they understand their identity. Black girls used

multimodality to express emotions and experiences that were difficult for them to discuss even after drawing them. For example, Dymond quickly knew she wanted to represent her portrait from her teachers' perspective as a broken heart (Figure10). This image is visually stunning yet unsettling particularly in the context of a classroom. The symbolism of a broken heart is inherently emotional and the only words that Dymond could come up with to describe what she meant was "when your feelings get hurt." She was able to also write words within the heart to describe the instances in which her feelings get hurt in relation to her teacher. Dymond was able to express an emotion that most people can feel when they see a broken heart that even adults may have a difficult time explaining. The visual nature allowed for this expression without needing to rely on words.

Given the dualities of being a Black female in America, girls also assume multiple identities as they navigate school. This methodology lends itself to being useful in documenting the dichotomous and varied essence of Black girlhood. Patricia Hill Collins' concept of self-determination explains that Black women maintain internal understandings of their true selves that may not be seen or validated by the dominant society (Collins, 2000). Black women's true selves are only exposed in safe environments, often with other Black women. The dual self-portrait process guided by me as a Black woman provided the space for Black girls to reflect on their process of self-determination. Black girls navigating the systems rooted in discrimination may also need to determine when and where it is safe to be their true selves. During this project, my insider identity created a space of knowing, something the girls identified. Measha readily referred to how she was proud to draw her "baby hairs" a term often used to describe an aspect of Black hairstyles.

This process has the potential to contribute to the question, "What does the process of self-determination look like for an adolescent Black girl who is just learning and deciding who her true self is or will be?" The dual self-portrait process may be visual documentation of the self-determination process known to many Black women. The dual self-portrait methodology begins intentionally with a time for the girls to reflect on their inner selves and who they believe they are before engaging in any discussion about how they are viewed from an outside lens. They document how they feel about themselves, void of judgement or restriction, and draw strictly from their perspective. The Black girl gaze is central not for the consumption or learning experience of any outsider but for the purpose of self-reflection and acceptance. It presents an opportunity for girls to exercise agency and consider their feelings in ways "in ways they have not been previously given the space to do. A supplementary benefit of the dual self-portrait process is the contribution of Black girls telling their truths about their identity, personality, and relationships.

The second aspect of the process is Black girls reflecting on their relationships with their teachers. Often, girls' experiences are not considered when discussing teacher-student relationships and interactions. As girls draw themselves from the perspective of their teacher, the power hierarchy of traditional teacher-student relationship is reversed. Girls are able to consider how their teacher may see them, feel about them, or experience them. This process of reflection is one that many girls are not afforded the opportunity to discuss, and this methodology centers girls' experiences in ways similar to participatory research.

Meant to be a celebration of Black girlhood, an acceptance and acknowledgement of pain that is so often overlooked, the dual self-portrait provides a safe space to process emotions that may not be safe to show in school. Taaffe's Black Girl Gaze is rooted in a "need for envisioning

and creating spaces that allow for vulnerability, listening, arts creation and love" (2016, p. 9). Likewise, girls described how they valued the opportunity to reflect on their emotions. Measha shared that she rarely got to discuss her feelings with anyone, and she did not like to write in diaries:

> *Darielle:* What did you think about doing this type of drawing?
> *Measha:* I think it was fun and get to like to tell your feelings to other people.
> *Darielle:* You get to tell your feelings?
> *Measha:* I don't really write my feelings in diaries.
> *Darielle:* You said you usually only write them in diaries?
> *Measha:* No, I don't write my feelings.
> *Darielle:* Oh, you don't write your feelings in diaries. Oh, but you did it on this one.

Drawing lends itself to creative people whose needs are not met by solely discussing or writing about their experiences. Often, researchers and teachers rely on verbal and written practices as ways for children to reflect. Pairing drawing with verbal reflections allows for fun and expression in ways that interest students. In particular, Measha shares how she rarely is given the opportunity to express her feelings to other people. She makes the distinction that she does not write in diaries but enjoyed talking to a person. Diaries are often viewed as a solitary experience which may not interest her as she may need validation of the feelings she is experiencing.

Self-Reflection

This methodology was useful to facilitate self-reflection and discussion in a meaningful way. Danielle noted, "I might have learned like, like how I really picture myself." The process provided the space for self-reflection and illumination of her true self. She was able to honestly visualize how she understand and makes meaning of who she is and how she presents in the world. Na'Ima explained that the process helped her to actually reflect on her life and think about experiences she has had that inform how she thinks about herself. She said, "I had to think

like about some stuff, like as I was writing them, I was thinking about the times like when I help people and stuff like that. Kind [pointing to the word "kind" in her portrait] I was thinking about all the kind moments and how I make people laugh and not let them just be sad all day or being depressed or like if they had a bad day. Just lift up their spirit and make them laugh." Na'Ima also was able to think through and understand which experiences make up her identity.

Magali shared that this experience of self-reflection may have acted as a catalyst for change. Magali was happy to have such an in depth look at herself and believes this will help lead her to greater happiness. This process "makes me feel like I know more about myself because it's showing how I feel, and it can probably change it by making me feel like I can be happy more on the inside." She expressed often having mixed feelings or feeling bored and after this visual exercise she believes she may feel happier.

Focus on Emotion and Essence

The dual self-portrait process illuminated the complex emotional lives of Black girls in a way that has not been centered in educational research. The girls were able to express the complicated ways that emotions present in their lives without having to choose the perfect words. They were able to leverage drawing to talk about instances of intense negative emotions. Black girls expressed their complex emotional lives in a number of ways, with some focusing on using signifiers of sadness like tears while others drew faceless portraits, the focus points of their internal experience of themselves. The primary focus of most of their inner self-portraits was on feelings and disposition. They expressed feeling sad, happy, frustrated, lonely, and bored.

The decentering of oral language allowed for girls to visually articulate otherwise complex concepts. They visualized and described their essence by representing their inner selves as faceless where most of their drawings were contained in the body. The lack of focus on the

face seemed to lend itself to a deeper discussion about their essence and their emotions. Other girls chose to use objects, like thought clouds and circles, to represent their inner selves. Many girls utilized visual and textual representations to depict their inner selves. One girl chose to solely use text to represent her inner self.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

This study was conducted to understand how girls conceptualize and visualize their multiple identities as they navigate the power hierarchies of traditional classrooms. This chapter will provide an overview of the significance and urgency of the topic and reviews the methodology used in the study. The major sections of this chapter summarize the findings; I then offer interpretations and recommendations.

In recent years, a growing number of educational research has focused on the experiences of Black girls in school. Scholars have highlighted how Black girls are overrepresented in school discipline and experience a "chilly" classroom climate and punitive teacher-student relationships which all contribute to increased mental health strain (Evans-Winters, 2015; Morris, 2016). How Black girls feel about themselves and their relationships impacts their emotional well-being. A Black feminist lens is needed to understand the nuanced experiences of being a Black female child in U.S. institutions. As researchers seek to explain the experiences of growing up as a Black girl, many fail to center Black girls' voices in their research, policy, and reform efforts. Historically, researchers have relied on deficit-based studies to explain the realities of Black girlhood.

For some Black girls, negotiating classroom politics and relationships includes the molding of themselves to fit into predetermined standards of what qualifies as a good student while balancing their internal desires resulting in the creation of dual personas (Henry, 1998;

Cohen, 1996). This negotiation between their feelings and desires and their desire to be validated by teachers rarely aligns. In this study, I wanted to understand how Black girls understood and visualized their multiple identities as they navigate the power hierarchies of traditional classrooms. Given that 83% of K-12 teachers are White women (Bunch, 2013), the girls in this study navigated various levels of hierarchy due the stratification of race, gender, authority, and age. Utilizing a Black feminist framework, and in contribution to the developing Black Girlhood pedagogy, I chose a methodology that would center the voice and gaze of Black adolescent girls as I sought to understand their identity. Few studies center how Black girls feel about themselves and how they are experiencing their teachers, so I set out to answer the following questions:

1. How do Black adolescent girls visually and verbally express their inner selves?
2. How do Black adolescent girls depict their in-school identities in relation to their teachers?
3. How does the drawing-elicitation interview process inform the expression of Black girls' identity?

In order to adequately center these girls' perspectives, I chose a drawing-elicitation interview process which specifically centered drawings (visual texts) completed by the participants, and followed them with in-depth, one-on-one interviews about the visual texts, all of which was focused on the participants' school experiences. I did this with 10 African American/ Black girls ages 11-14. Rooted in phenomenological approach, this study sought to understand the essence of what it feels like to be a Black girl, specifically in relation to her teachers. The dual nature of the portrait ,which represents the girls from two perspectives, best captures the duality of developing an identity as a Black girl in school.

Summary of Findings

A thorough analysis of the visual textual data, interview transcripts, and researcher memos revealed that Black girls use multimodality to express their identity. The girls in this

study drew objects, words, symbols, and faces to depict their inner selves. Notably, many of their inner self portrait were faceless while their teachers' view included faces and whole bodies. Likewise, inner self-portraits centered their emotional experiences, disposition, and overall essence of their identity. Participants' inner self-portraits revealed that Black girls have complex, internal, emotional experiences. These Black girls had nuanced understandings of who they are and how they present in the world. They were aware of and represented many dichotomies and dualities within themselves. When discussing their inner selves, no girl explicitly named themselves as Black or a girl but nevertheless aligned themselves with attributes they believed were associated with being Black, specifically being a Black girl; characteristics included being brave, strong, caring, kind, and having an attitude.

As Black girls depicted themselves from the perspective of their teacher, a central theme of *visibility* and *invisibility* was evident. Some girls had established relationships with teachers that rendered these girls' inner selves invisible. Attributes that were included in the inner self-portrait were not included in the portrait from the perspective of the teacher. These girls were not viewed as a whole person, rather as an "academic student" or a troublemaker, leaving them with the duality of knowing who they believe they are in contrast to how their teacher views them. These dual identities were visualized in their respective dual portraits, with some pairs seeming to have been drawn by two completely different people. Girls described negotiating these relationships in different ways. Within these relationships, in which girls' true selves were overlooked and invisible, some girls engaged in "doing school," a concept used to describe Black girls (Cohen, et al., 1996). I described this as instances where girls hid their true selves, and outwardly expressed emotions and behaviors deemed acceptable for Black girls like happiness, helpfulness, and kindness, while suppressing socially unacceptable behaviors like anger, rage,

and fear. On the other hand, some girls expressed a refusal to be invisible. This looked like crying in class when their feelings were hurt, reporting their teacher's actions to the principal, and challenging rules based in White middle-class ideologies. These girls often experienced more conflict with teachers and peers than non-Black students, as their behaviors deviated from the notion of a good student.

The drawing-elicitation process provided the means for Black girls to express the duality and dichotomies of their experiences as Black girls in U.S. schools. Specifically, the dual self-portrait process allowed girls to express how they feel their teachers see them juxtaposed to how they see themselves. The dual nature of the visual exercise was fitting and useful for emotional expressions, celebration, and truth telling.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to Relevant Literature

Research throughout the decades has impressed the importance of positive teacher-student relationships characterized by care and concern. Scholars contributing to the upcoming field of Black Girls Studies and Pedagogy write about the need for a politicized ethic of care that is rooted in love. Findings indicate that girls' self-efficacy is improved as they interact with teachers who are loving, set boundaries and maintain high expectations (Lane, 2017).

This study's finding, that loving teacher-student relationships can transform and improve school experiences for Black girls, aligns with the notion that a politicized ethic of care is necessary for fulfilling school experiences for Black girls. Additionally, this study confirmation previous research: that some Black girls' needs, emotions, and aspirations are unknown to their teachers and effectively renders them invisible. As demonstrated by previous research, stereotypes of Black girls as troublemakers and overly sexual contribute to the distortion of their true identities (E.W., Morris 2007; M. Morris, 2012; Evans-Winters, 2017). As policy and

teachers focus on the needs of boys and become influenced by dominant narratives that Black girls are excelling academically, Black girls in school can become "invisible to the naked eye" (Omolade, 1994, p. 137-144). Black girls who are excelling academically still encounter gendered-racism and discrimination which impacts their emotional well-being. Previous research found that Black students expressed that both adults and peers at school were unaware of their true selves (Odumosu, 2015). Through visual texts and interview data, Black girls have reiterated that their teachers do not truly know who they are, and they expressed the emotional impact their teacher's actions have on their lives. While some girls seem to maintain a confidence about themselves despite negative interactions, other girls need more intentional support to develop positive self-concepts.

Girls with quiet personalities and dispositions were most interesting to me as they also seemed to experience a spirit murder that would most likely go unnoticed as they internalized their mistreatment. Scholars Henry (1998) and Cohen (1993) write about the little discussed reality that some Black girls engage in behaviors intended to hide themselves from the hostile classroom climates as a means of self-preservation. This often looks like being quiet, not standing up for themselves to students or teachers, remaining emotionless, or only expressing happiness. Cohen (1993) posited when Black girls do school, they often receive adult validation, though they possibly receive less attention and undoubtedly do not receive individualized nurturing or care. Ruth Nicole Brown (2009) admonishes that invisibility does not equate to powerlessness and visibility is not always powerful. This is particularly important to consider in light of the immense academic success of Black women in higher education. These women were most likely girls who learned to do school as a way of maintaining control and power over their situation, therefore excelling in school. It is also likely that they became accustomed to

suppression of emotionality, creativity, and true self-definition. Often, in overcrowded classrooms, students who are quiet and conform to classroom culture are preferred to teachers who are overwhelmed.

These visual texts also illustrate a concept that when Black children are invalidated and persistently punished, they are victims of spirit murder (Love, 2015). Although these girls drew pictures of specific teachers, this is not something that is inflicted by one teacher. Spirit murder is a systematic process that begins in early childhood. The girls in this study shared stories of the impact adverse early childhood classroom experiences have on their sense of self and future behaviors. The girls explicitly remember being left out of classroom activities and vowing to be loud and outspoken as an attempt to be seen.

Self-Determination

Black women have learned to survive and thrive within the education system by relying for years on coping strategies used by our ancestors. Audre Lorde describes how Black women "become familiar with the language and manners of the oppressor, even sometimes adopting them for some illusion of protection" (Lorde, 1984, p. 114). Collins notes that sometimes, Black women will hide their self-defined perspective when in the presence of the oppressor. Girls in this study visualized inner selves that were outside of what they considered appropriate for their classrooms. Danielle notably depicted her inner self as a brightly colored visionary who loved to shine on others, yet her in-class self was grey and restricted at her desk. Girls discussed being academic while in the classroom and holding in their frustration to appease the adults in their lives. Like Lorde wrote, these girls learned which behaviors the people in power over them considered acceptable and adopted these behaviors .

The results of this study have provided a space for witnessing the process of self-definition as these adolescent girls are negotiating their identities. Collins (2001) asserts that, throughout history, Black women come to terms with the reality that there may be discourse about who they are that they know is not true. The adolescent girls I spoke with are in different stages of defining themselves for themselves.

Some girls in this study exhibited a refusal to not be their true self regardless of the presence of those in power over them (i.e. teachers). Some girls embodied a sense of refusal to conform or even appear to have conformed and instead asserted agency to be expressive and tell authority figures when they were not happy. Reynold and Hicks (2016) suggest that girls who are unapologetically Black and deviate from their teacher's understandings of how girls should behave experience increased conflict with teachers. Throughout history, people from marginalized groups respond differently to the pervasive oppression they face. Scholars note that some Black women try to align with oppressive racialized-gendered notions of femininity and respectability that require them to make themselves small, while others resist the notions through advocacy and self-definition. This generation is actively questioning respectability politics as it is influenced by the social movements that demand Black Lives Matter and celebrating Black Girl Magic. As Aimee Cox wrote in her ethnography about Black women and girls navigating systems of oppression, "Black girls of this generation read the ways the ways they are captured in the white gaze and adult gaze and respond with their own self-possessed, and often politically informed choreography" (2015, p. 30). Coming of age in the age of social media means adolescent girls have access to information about racism that takes many forms, even subtle forms of discrimination.

The methodological findings of this study align with current dialogue about conducting research for and with Black girls. By utilizing drawing methodologies in her study with Black girls, Venus Evans-Winters found her researcher-participants were able to express experiences others had dismissed (2017). Likewise, the dual self- portrait exercise flipped the power dynamics in two ways: 1) The main source of data was a set of visual texts generated by Black girls, and 2) The first phase of analysis consisted of Black girls reading their own visual texts and making meaning of them. Claudine Taaffe (2016) submits the Black Girl Gaze is a necessary contribution to the field of visual methodology. She asserts the use of photography as advantageous in understanding who Black girls believe they are and how they show up in the world. She continues that exhibiting their photos publicly is not only a way to circulate counternarratives meant to inform the perspective of outsiders, including educators, but a way to undergird the agency prominent in Black girl expression.

Taaffe writes that centering the Black Girl Gaze "is a political project wherein the starting point is ourselves. More specifically, our work is not targeted toward only the gaze of others" (2016, p. 14). The dual self-portrait process aligns with the visual theory of the Black Girl Gaze and allows for the visualization of emotions and experiences that have already happened or will happen in the future. Drawing is not bound by the here and now; it does not need to be explicitly tangible and therefore is as boundless as the imagination. For this reason, the Black girl gaze provides a less restrictive way for girls to challenge cultural classroom norms that relegate students to being passive consumers of their teachers' knowledge and beliefs. Girls were able to give unfiltered opinions on what teachers could do better.

Implications and Conclusions

The methodology of drawing-elicitation interviews based on dual self-portraits has implications for education and Black Girlhood Studies research. Drawing-elicitation

methodology and visual inquiry are under-utilized in the field of education. Specifically, in this study, the drawing elicitation process provided the foundation to develop a methodology that centers the gaze and voices of Black girls. I utilized an expressive art exercise and coupled it with reflective questions meant to deepen students' comprehension of art to develop a methodology that centered the Black Girl Gaze for healing and self-reflection. This methodology moves beyond colonized notions of research as unbiased or objective and centers the emotion as valid data. Black girlhood scholars emphasize the importance of incorporating art in schooling of Black girls. I submit it is just as necessary to integrate arts into research and healing efforts.

Education

One notable outcome of this study was to highlight K-12 institutions' responsibility to focus on the emotional lives and development of its marginalized students. Teachers need to understand that their words and actions and the culture they set in the classroom impact the self-concept and experiences of Black girls in their classes. There needs to be a greater understanding among teachers and administrators that most Black girls have already experienced racism and sexism in society, and this frames their experiences with White authority figures. Educators can build trust by affirming Black girls' experiences and paying attention to imbalances of power in the classroom.

Current teacher preparation programs are lacking when it comes to adequately support teachers to teach and engage Black girls in ways that support their multiple Teacher candidates are hungry for theoretical and practical ways to transform learning environments into equitable spaces of knowledge construction. The foundations of Multicultural Education currently taught in most teacher education programs affirm the realities of our cultural, pluralistic society yet they do not prepare teachers to understand the differing power relationships that exist within those

differences (Gorski, 2010; May, 2003; Sleeter, 2001). It is necessary to move beyond ideas that stop at notions of multiculturalism and cultural competence but also address teacher ideology. This ideology is best addressed when students first enter undergrad as liberal arts majors where all classes should include an element of anti-bias pedagogy. Anti-bias pedagogy "provides teachers a way to examine and transform their understanding of children's lives and also do self-reflective work to more deeply understand their own lives" (Derman-Sparks, 2010, p. 2). If potential teachers begin reflecting at the beginning of their education process when they enter teacher credential programs, they will be ready for more critical interrogation of power, privilege, and oppression.

An innovative approach to teacher training is needed to begin to change inequitable educational experiences for Black girls in school. Teacher education should include gender-conscious dialogue that addresses the intersections of race, class, and gender. There is variance within the experience of being a Black girl, and there are experiences that are unlike that of Black boys or girls of other ethnic backgrounds. When Black girls communicate with peers and teachers in school, they are perceived through a lens of stereotypes and biases held by educators. Providing teachers, the proper tools to be effective educators requires gender bias training with an anti-bias perspective during preservice and in-service education, targeting the specific needs of African American girls. This training should have informational aspects on the unique intersectional social positioning of African American girls as well as an ongoing reflective component.

I propose educators be led in critical teacher reflections during in-service and preservice training as a strategy to deconstruct harmful ideologies that lead to biased interactions in the classroom. These critical teacher reflections should require participation in regular, small group

and one-on-one coaching sessions where educators use videos and narratives of their classroom interactions to reflect on their classroom practices. It is often necessary to come face-to-face with the realities of your own practices to best begin to change. One-time professional development courses that do not require ongoing reflection and guided practice are often less effective at transforming teacher practices.

Drawing from the work of teacher-researchers, it is clear that self-reflection is an integral component of teaching for liberation and transformation and can enable teachers to support Black girls more fully (hooks, 2014; Miller, 2014). Critical teacher reflections should require educators to question the underlying forces of their behaviors and the impact their practices have on their students. Through questions like, "Which students are being served when I practice this way?" and "Whose voices or needs are being valued in my class?" educators come into a greater consciousness of the impact of their personal values and biases. Black girls benefit when educators are aware of the ways in which gendered racial stereotypes and assumptions manifest in their classrooms. As teachers deconstruct ideas rooted in sexism and racism, they can more fully engage with students of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Critical teacher reflections may decrease instances of conflict as teachers begin to self-reflect on the ways their biases influence the perception of conflict in the classroom.

Policy

There is a need to revise disciplinary policy to include a clear connection between the intention behind a disciplinary practice and the implementation of discipline. It was clear the girls in this study did not fully understand why they were being disciplined. They often felt the punishment was an overreaction and did not understand the connection between their action and the punishment. They discussed feeling the rules enforced by their teacher were not relevant to

real life situations. The girls were so often disciplined for moving around the classroom freely in ways that resembled surveillance. Children should be free to move around the classroom without fear of being reprimanded. Much of teachers' intention behind wanting Black girls to be seated is rooted in the fear that they will lose control of their classroom. As evidenced by findings from this study and previous work (Brown, 2009), teachers who have rapport and trust with students often do not need to regulate movement or noise level. Ruth Nicole Brown's after school program Saving Our Lives Hearing Our Truths (SOLHOT) operates under the rules that no adult is allowed to tell a Black girl to be quiet or that she is too loud. Instead, Brown pushes the adults and girls to cultivate relationships and authority where mutual respect is abundant (2009).

Beyond policy change, we need a change in mindset. In order to develop policy and practices that support the healing of Black girls, we need educators and policy makers who see the humanity and innocence in them. In her seminal book *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in School,* Monique Morris asserts the need for "healing informed responses to problematic student behavior" (2016, p. 193). Trauma-informed practices are characterized by co-created rules and policies that highlight student voice. Teachers need support from mental health professionals in order to adequately educate the students in their classrooms. Often teachers are expected to cover academic content and emotional literacy as well as promote students' physical health. It is the responsibility of policymakers to provide schools with adequate mental health support, so teachers and students have more tools to maintain healthy mental states.

Conclusion

In this study, I have presented the potential of a research methodology grounded in Black feminist theory and Black Girlhood theory as a way of centering the emotional worlds of Black adolescent girls while critiquing power dynamics in the classroom. The visual texts and

narratives shared as a result of the methodological process suggest that a safe, familiar space was essential for Black girls to express their true feelings about themselves and their relationships with their teachers. This methodology also provided space for the celebration of the potential ways in which Black girlhood can be nurtured by teachers who enact a politicized ethic of care and love. Black girls need more spaces and opportunities to tell their stories. As girls tell their stories they better develop a strong sense of self and act as examples for other girls.

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Appendices

Appendix A: *Recruitment Letter*

Recruitment Language: Oral and Email Script

This script will be used for both oral and email recruitment.

Email Subject line: Participant recruitment for dissertation on identity development of African American girls in middle school

Dear Parents and Guardians,

My name is Darielle Blevins, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Joint Doctoral Program in Education at San Diego State University and Claremont Graduate University. I am conducting a study on the impact of school experiences on African-American girls' identity development. I will be asking middle school girls to draw self-portraits to visualize their identities then conducting follow-up interviews based on their drawing.

Interested individuals will first be asked to complete a brief demographic survey to determine if they meet the study criteria. If participants meet the criteria for the study, you will be extended an invitation for your child to participate in a drawing exercise and an interview with me. If you choose to participate in the interview, it will be conducted at the Jacobs Center or the Jackie Robinson YMCA. The estimated time for the drawing is about 15-20 minutes and anticipated duration of the interview is 30-45 minutes. The estimated time for completion of the School Experiences Questionnaire is about than 5 minutes.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary, and you or your child may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Because the study will involve interviews which will be video and/or audio recorded, the research participation will not be anonymous. However, the research materials will be viewed by researchers on the study and all identifying information will be kept strictly confidential. The video/audio recordings, transcriptions, and all other data will be kept on a secure usb drive and stored in a locked, secure location. The results of the study as well as some of the drawings collected may be reported at professional conference presentations and published in academic journals; however, identifying information will not be included and drawings will only be presented with your permission.

If your child meets the following eligibility criteria and are interested in participating in this study, please contact me at darielle.blevins@cgu.edu:

1. Identifies as a girl
2. Between 11-14 years old or in 6th through 8th grade.
3. Identifies as African-American or Black
4. Willing to participate in the study.

Please feel free to forward this letter to individuals who may meet the eligibility criteria. Thank you.
Respectfully,
Darielle Blevins, Behavior Specialist, MA

Appendix B: *School Experiences Survey*

School Experiences Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions about your current school year

1. Have you experienced informal discipline at school?

Circle all that apply: Calls home, classroom-based discipline, prevented from break/recess)

Rate how often this happens

A. Never
B. Infrequent (1-2 times a year)
C. Occasionally (1-2 times a Month)
D. Often (1-2 times Week)
E. Frequent (3-5 times a week)

2. Have you experienced formal discipline at school

Circle all that apply: (referral, detention, in school suspension, out of school suspension, expulsion)

Please circle any of the following that applies to why you were disciplined

A. "Excessive" Talking
B. Violence
C. Aggression
D. Hairstyle
E. Fashion Choice
F. Following Directions

3. How often did a teacher reprimanding you in front of other students or teachers?

A. Never
B. Infrequent(1-2 times a year)
C. Occasionally (1-2 times a Month)
D. Often (1-2 times Week)
E. Frequent (3-5 times a week)

Appendix C: *Parental Survey (Only if recruited online)*

Parental Screening Demographic Questionnaire
Thank you for your interest in having your child participate in this study.
Please fill out this demographic survey to determine whether your child meets criteria for the study.

What gender does your child identify?

- ❑ Girl
- ❑ Boy
- ❑ Non-Binary

Indicate what ethnicity(s) and/or culture(s) your child most identifies with? (ex. White, Black, African American, Asian)

[_____]

What grade is your child in (if it is summer please mark the last grade you completed) ?

❑ 6th ❑ 7th ❑ 8th ❑ 9th

Please provide your preferred contact information if you would like your child to participate in this study.
❑ Email Preferred: _____❑ Phone Preferred: _____

Appendix D: *Visual Text Elicitation*

Dual Self Portrait

I. **Introduction:** Thank you for agreeing to talk to me. This interview will last about one hour. I am interviewing Black girls who are in middle school to hear their stories about what it's like to be in middle school and how they feel about themselves.

II. **Context/Prior Knowledge:** I am first going to ask you to draw a self-portrait. This self-portrait will represent how you feel about yourself.

III. **Inner Self Portrait:**

A. Take a moment to go inside yourself and think about what you know about the inside of yourself. Think about your inner self for a few moments.

B. When you are done thinking I would like you to create a self-portrait of the inner you- with drawings, words, or symbols".

IV. **Outer Self Portrait**- Now take a moment to think about a teacher you had last school year who you spent a lot of time with who has disciplined you before. Can you draw a portrait the represents the way your teacher sees you.

V. **Inner Self/Outer Self-*Exploring the visuals***

A. What's going on in this portrait? What do you see that makes you say that? What else can we find?

B. How does this drawing represent who you are?

C. How does this represent how your teacher sees you?

<u>Personal Response</u>

D. Do you notice any differences between your inner and outer self-portraits?

E. How do you **FEEL** when you see yourself in this drawing

F. When do you feel the most like this person in the inner self portrait?

G. Did you **LEARN** something about yourself from your drawing?

H. If you could use one word to describe yourself in your inner self portrait what would you say. OUTER

Appendix E*: Interview Protocol and Questions*

Open Ended Interview Questions

Teachers Point of View

A. Can you describe your relationship with this teacher?
B. What would your teacher say about your self-portrait?
C. Can you describe a high and low moment with this teacher?
D. Do you think your teacher wants to know about your inner self?

Teacher-Student Relationship

I. Tell me about a time you were in trouble with this teacher
    i. What happened?
    ii. How did the adults at school respond?
    iii. How did you feel about their response?
    iv. How would you want them to respond?
2. Can you think of a time you were upset and your teacher supported you?

II. **Identity Now I want to take a moment and ask you questions to get to know you and learn more about your identity.**

A. How would you finish the sentence Tell me about yourself?-"I am…"
B. What are important parts of your identity- who you are?
C. How do you like to express your identity (fashion, hair, speech?)
    1. How did you come to see yourself this way?
    2. Have you always felt this way? How has your understanding of yourself changed over time?
    3. Have you ever felt conflict in your identity, as you have described it? In what ways?

Student Identity

1. How would you describe yourself as a student?

Race: When we talk about being Black what do you think of?
Sub-Question Prompts

4. Tell me in your own words what it means to be Black?
5. Tell me in your own words what it means to be a Black girl?
6. What have your parents told you about being Black, what it means?

7. What does your school(peers, teachers) tell you about being a girl/teen? A Black girl/teen?
    a) **Can you tell me about a time when your teacher talked/taught about Black women?**
8. Is what you think about being a Black girl different from how other people think Black girls should act/feel/think
    a) How do you deal with (negotiate) situations in which you are asked to choose or pick out certain parts of your identity?

III. Overview of School experience

Now I'd like to hear about experiences you had when you were younger. We are going to talk about Kindergarten, first, or second grade. We are going to focus on your favorite teacher of those grades. Can you choose one teacher from one of those grades? Can you visualize the classroom and the teacher? What was this teacher's name?

SAY: *You said your teacher's name was [Teacher's Name]*

1. What was your relationship like with this teacher?
    1. What were you like as a student that year?
    2. How do you think [Teacher's Name] saw you as a student?
    3. Did this teacher like you?
2. Do you feel this has had an impact on how you feel about yourself today?

We talked about your favorite teacher, now have you had a teacher or adult at school that you remember being in trouble with? What grade were you in? What was their name?

3. Tell me about a time you were in trouble in [grade]
    3. What happened?
    4. How did the adults at school respond?
    5. How did you feel about their response?
    6. How would you want them to respond?
    7. If you could tell your elementary teachers something about yourself, what would you want them to know?
    8. How would your teacher describe you?

IV. **Exclusionary Discipline**

A. I would like to ask you some questions about your school discipline.

1. Can you describe a time when you got in trouble in middle school? What grade?
2. What is your opinion on the way your school discipline's girls? What is your opinion on the way Black girls are disciplined? Is it fair? Is it the same as other girls? Please explain.
3. How would you suggest your school deal with discipline issues for girls? For Black girls?

V. Invisibility

A. What would happen if you showed your true self in class?

Do you have questions for me?

Appendix F: *Parent Consent*

PARENTAL CONSENT & AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE VISUALIZING GIRLHOOD STUDY

STUDY LEADERSHIP:

We are asking you and your child to join this research study. This study is led by Darielle Blevins, a doctoral student of Education at Claremont Graduate University and San Diego State University. Dr. Linda Perkins, a professor of Education and Gender Studies at Claremont Graduate University is her supervisor.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the research is to learn about girls' experiences at school and how they view their identity.

ELIGIBILITY:

To participate in this study, your child must (1) Identify as a girl; (2) be in middle school or 11-14 years old; and (3) identify as Black or African American.

PARTICIPATION:

As your child's guardian, you may be asked to complete a brief demographics questionnaire about your child that we believe will take about 5 minutes. We will ask your child to complete a drawing activity, school experiences survey and an interview about their drawing and school experiences. We believe all of the activities we will ask your child to complete will take about 60 to 75 minutes.

1. Drawing Activity:

Your child will be asked to think about her identity and draw a picture that represents different parts of her identity. We believe this part will take 15 to 20 minutes.

2. School Experiences Survey:

Your child will be asked to complete a brief survey about her experiences at school with teachers. We believe this part will take about 10 minutes

3. Interview:

Your child will be invited to participate in an open-ended interview for about 35-45 minutes to share about her drawing and school experiences.

Participating in this study is completely voluntary.

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH:

The risks that you and your child run by taking part in this study are small. If she feels emotional or uncomfortable during the interview process, she is free to not answer or let me know that she wishes to stop or take a break from the interview.

The potential risks may also include loss of privacy and or confidentiality. To minimize this risk, we will put the electronic research materials we collect (i.e. audio recordings) on a password protected USB only accessible to the researchers involved in this study. Physical forms of the collected data (e.g. drawings, surveys) will be given identification numbers and will be stored in a locked cabinet accessible only to the researchers involved in this study.

There may be new findings developed during this research which might your participation in this study. These new findings will be shared with you.

CONFIDENTIALITY :

Because we will video and/or audio record an interview with your child, your child's participation

will not be anonymous. However, the research materials will only be viewed by the researchers and all identifying information will be kept strictly confidential. The video/audio recordings, transcriptions, and all other data will be kept on a secure USB drive and stored in a locked, secure location. When this research project is complete, all the research materials collected will be destroyed after three years.

The results of the study as well as some of the drawings collected may be reported at professional conference presentations and published in academic journals. We will not include any identifying information in conference presentations or in any written works.

BENEFITS:

There are no benefits for participating in this study. Participation will help me finish my doctoral degree.

COST:

Participation in this study will involve no cost to you.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:

You and your child do not have to participate in this study. If you and your child choose not to participate in this study, there will be no consequences.

COMPENSATION:

You or your child will not be paid to participate in this study.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

If you or your child has any questions about the research right now, please ask. If you have any questions about the research at a later time, please contact Darielle Blevins at Darielle.blevins@cgu.edu.You may also contact Dr. Linda Perkins at linda.perkins@cgu.edu. The university's ethics committee, also called the IRB, has approved this project. You may contact the IRB with any questions about research ethics, risks, or benefits at (909) 607-9406 or at irb@cgu.edu. A copy of this form will be given to you if you wish to keep it.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE: Your signature below means that you understand the information on

this form, that someone has answered any and all questions you may have about the Visualizing Girlhood Study, and you voluntarily agree to participate in it and consent for your child to participate.

Name of Participant/Guardian_____

Signature of Participant/Guardian_____Date_____

Name of Child Participant_____

***Appendix G**: Child Assent*

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN
The Visualizing Girlhood Study
We are asking you to be a part of a research study. This study is led by Darielle Blevins, a doctoral student in Education at Claremont Graduate University and San Diego State University. Dr. Linda Perkins, a professor of Education and Gender Studies at Claremont Graduate University is her supervisor.

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS STUDY?
The purpose of this study is to learn about girls' experiences at school and how they view their identity.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY?
To participate in this study, you must: (1) Identify as a girl; (2) be in middle school or grades 11-14 years old; and (3) identify as Black or African American.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU ARE IN THIS STUDY?
If you choose to volunteer for this study, you will be asked to draw a picture, complete a brief school experience survey and be interviewed. All of the activities will take about 60 to 75 minutes. During each activity, we will ask you if you want to participate in the next steps. You are welcome to stop at any time for whatever reason. Participating in this study is completely voluntary.

1. Drawing Activity:
You will be asked to think about your identity and draw a picture that represents different parts of your identity. We believe this part will take 15 to 20 minutes.

2. School Experiences Survey:
You will be asked to complete a brief survey about your experiences at school with teachers. We believe this part will take about 10 minutes

3. Interview:
You will be invited to participate in an open-ended interview for 35-45 minutes to share about your drawing and school experiences.

DO YOU HAVE TO BE IN THIS STUDY?
No, you don't. You do not have to participate in this study. No one at Claremont Graduate University or San Diego State University will be upset if you do not begin or complete the study.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH?
The risks of this study are pretty small. If you feel emotional or uncomfortable during the interview process, you are free to not answer or let me know that you wish to stop or take a break from the interview. There is a slight risk that the personal information we collect about you might be stolen, but this information is as secure as we can make it. We will lock all collected research material in a cabinet that only the researchers will be able to access. We plan to keep this information for three years after the study is finished then all materials we collect (recordings, drawings and surveys) will be destroyed.

WHO WILL KNOW ABOUT YOUR STUDY PARTICIPATION?
Your privacy will be protected, and we will not reveal your identity in anything we write or present about the study. To protect your privacy, we will only use a code number as your temporary ID and a pseudonym, which is a name you can make up, when we write or present about the study.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO BEING IN THIS STUDY?

There are no benefits for you personally. Participation will help me finish my doctoral degree.

DO YOU HAVE TO PAY?

Participation in this study will involve no cost to you.

WILL YOU BE PAID FOR BEING IN THE STUDY?

You will not be paid for being in this study.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS STUDY?

If you have any questions about this research study right now, please ask. If you have any questions later about this study, please contact Darielle Blevins at Darielle.blevins@cgu.edu. You may also contact Dr. Linda Perkins at linda.perkins@cgu.edu. The university ethics board (also called the IRB) has approved this project. You may contact the IRB by calling (909) 607-9406 or at irb@cgu.edu. A copy of this form will be given to you if you wish to keep it.

ASSENT

If you would like to be in this research study and someone has answered any and all of your

questions, please sign your name on the line below.

Signature of Participant _____Date_____

Name of Child Participant_____