Brown Sugar and Spice: Exploring Black Girlhood at Elite, White Schools

by

Bethany J. Young

Department of Sociology
Duke University

Date:_____
Approved:

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Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Supervisor

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Lynn Smith-Lovin

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Jessi Streib

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Sarah Gaither

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Tyson Brown

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Black girls who attend elite, predominantly white schools face a host of unique challenges and tasks in achieving a positive, resolved gendered-racial identity; they must learn to reconcile external and potentially negative definitions of Black girlhood while making their own meaning of being a young, Black woman. I take an intracategorical approach to understanding the development and experience of this intersectional identity in a predominantly white, elite independent school. This study highlights Black girls lived experience in this specific context to reveal how their multidimensional identities develop, shape and are shaped by their schools. First, I explore the sources on which the girls relied to better understand their Black girl identities. Second, I examine the relationship between school context and the girls' romantic experiences and romantic self-concept. Last, I investigate whether and in what manner school settings influence second-generation, Black immigrant girls' identity development. Using data collected from fifty semi-structured, narrative style interviews, I find that in elite, white school settings, (i) Black girls were the most influential figures in one another's identity development process; (ii) their white school contexts limited Black girls' romantic opportunities in ways that contributed to a negative romantic self-concept; and (iii) in elite, white school settings, second-generation Black immigrant girls developed hybrid identities that integrated their ethnic heritage, their experiences in America as Black girls, and their experiences of difference and desire for racial community at school.

Dedication

This is for my parents. You gave me everything you had so that I could choose the life I wanted for myself.

This is for my sisters, by blood and by choice.

This is for all of the brilliant, beautiful Black girls figuring out who they are.

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Acknowledgments

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1. Introduction

> Certain things always made me feel like the outsider of the outsiders. There's everybody, and then this group that's already marginalized, and I was already outside of *that* group. If you imagine an aquarium, and then the Black people are the fish in the tank, I'm like that one little thing that eats the algae. I'm there, I'm a part of it but you're not really seeing me. I'm there, but I'm not really there. You're there for the sharks, you're not there to see the algae eaters even though we're pretty important.
> -India, eighteen-year-old senior

Existing research on Black girls' development and wellbeing is shaped by concerns for girls "at risk." There is a growing body of research on the challenges faced by Black girls in urban centers, trapped in poverty, or pulled into the school-to-prison pipeline (Crenshaw et al. 2015). However, we know much less about Black girls along other points of the socioeconomic spectrum, located in contexts with varying racial compositions. Although most middle- and upper-class Black girls do not face the same urgent concerns as their more economically disadvantaged counterparts, the challenges they do face merit exploration. They exist at the intersection of relative class privilege and racial *and* gender subordination (Parks 1996). Understanding their experience allows us to better understand the "distinctive mixture of advantages and disadvantages" inherent in the development and experiences of intersectional identities and the role of context (Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach 2008). Studying Black girls in the process of learning—and the early stages of experiencing—this identity in elite, white spaces sheds light on the vulnerability of Black middle-class privilege and it unpacks the consequences of their existence in these spaces. In this study, I will contribute to the growing field of research on Black girls by exploring their stories of self-discovery and survival in elite,

white schools. I explore the sources Black girls in elite, white schools use to understand their Black girl identities; how their school context and Black girl identities interact to shape their romantic experiences and romantic self-concept; and how their school settings influence second-generation Black immigrant girls' identity development. Using data collected from fifty semi-structured, narrative style interviews, I find that in elite, white school settings, (i) Black girls were the most influential figures in one another's identity development process; (ii) their white school contexts limited Black girls' romantic opportunities in ways that contributed to a negative romantic self-concept; and (iii) in elite, white school settings, second-generation Black immigrant girls developed hybrid identities that integrated their ethnic heritage and their knowledge of the Black-American girl experience and culture.

Black girls at this intersection of race, gender, ethnic and class identity have been rendered culturally invisible (Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach 2008; Hancock 2007). Because they are not typically the center of research about race or conversations about gender, their experiences and identity development receive minimal attention (Carbado 2013; Collins 2000; Crenshaw 1991; King 1988). Further complicating analysis of this identity are the additional factors, class and context (Pattillo 2013; Lacy 2004; Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006; Bonilla-Silva 2003; Arrington 2001). Members of the Black middle and upper classes traverse multiple, dissonant racial contexts on a daily basis (Lacy 2004). They may live in Black neighborhoods, attend Black churches and spend time with Black relatives but also work, learn and socialize in predominantly white workplaces, schools and social settings (Wingfield 2012; Lacy 2004; Feagin and Sikes 1994). The Black

middle and upper classes must make subtle changes to ease interactions in either setting, requiring they juggle and constantly recalibrate aspects of their identities (Wingfield 2013; Stewart 2008; Jones and McEwen 2000; Feagin and Sikes 1994). Horvat and Antonio (1999) concluded that Black girls attending elite white schools experienced "symbolic violence" as a result of the gulf between their individual habitus and the wealthy, white school habitus. The elite, white school habitus was characterized by "dominant members'" sense of entitlement and assumption that "all members of the community function in society in the same way that they do, with significant class resources and a sense of privilege based on their color (white) and class" (Horvat and Antonio 1999:326). The clash between the values and ways of being emphasized in their schools versus their own values and ways of being placed the girls in a constant struggle to fit in (Horvat and Antonio 1999).

The girls in this study faced several challenges. In the first chapter, I examine how the girls' identities unfolded given their distance from traditional Black worlds, which typically serve as a support during Black adolescents' identity development process. Despite their minority status at school, the girls developed a "thick sense" of *Black girl identity* (Mills 2015). This meant that they demonstrated a high degree of self-identification as Black girls such that this identity was "significant to [their] sense[s] of [themselves] and [their] life projects" (Mills 2015:54). Close relationships with other Black girls in their school settings strengthened their self-identification. In fact, thirty (60%) of the respondents listed their Black, female peers as influential figures in their identity development process. Their peers were the teachers and assessors of identity

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(Jenkins 2008). The girls' peers performed this role by demonstrating to one another the spectrum of Black-girl identities; encouraging one another to adopt and explore their Black girl identity; and delivering judgements about the authenticity and propriety of the girls' self-presentations.

In the second chapter, I investigate the girls' romantic experiences within their elite, white school contexts. The Black girls in this study attended elite, predominantly white schools in which their physical, attitudinal and behavioral presentations of femininity conflicted with white norms (Ispa-Landa 2013; Holland 2012; Horvat and Antonio 1999). Despite participants' desire to date, they had difficulties identifying willing partners and fulfilling relationships within their school environments. In this study, I find that the constraints their predominantly white school settings placed on their romantic opportunities did, in fact, shape Black girls' self-concept; their feelings about Black women's place in society; their feelings about Black men; and their willingness to engage in romantic relationships at all.

In the final chapter, I explore a smaller group within the larger sample: seventeen daughters of African and Caribbean immigrants. Black girls with immigrant parents attempted to reconcile several identities (Imoagene 2017). The ways of being they learned from their families and ethnic communities sometimes contradicted what they observed among Black-American neighbors and friends, both of which were at odds with modes of (white) femininity they saw in their schools (Imoagene 2017; Balogun 2011; Butterfield 2004). Previous research predicts they will choose one of these identities, usually a strong ethnic identity, because of the social esteem and rewards associated with

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their parents' immigrant status (Waters 1994). However, the second-generation immigrant daughters in this study took an alternate path. In the face of overwhelming whiteness, the girls found comfort, community and self-worth in their ethno-racial identities. In educating others about their identities, they developed a deeper connection to that identity. This included relationships and interactions with white peers and teachers where they taught others about their families' cultures. It also encompassed interactions with their native Black peers, which highlighted similarities and common experiences they shared with native-born Black Americans. Simultaneously, their proximity to other young women who held liberal views of womanhood, *and* their exposure to a range of gender expressions and roles shaped their concept of their second-generation Black girl identity. The girls placed a high value on their parents' home countries' cultures and traditions, but also saw value in Black-American and other cultures, particularly with respect to gender roles.

2. Chapter 1: Black Girl 101

2.1 Introduction

In the late 1990s, elite, independent schools saw an increase in Black student enrollment (Ohikuare 2013). The state of schools in Black neighborhoods, the creation of programs to educate Black parents about these institutions and accompanying financial aid incentives led many families to enroll their children (Anderson 2017; Brewster and Stevenson 2014; Arrington and Stevenson 2006). Explaining their decisions, parents cited wanting to give their children "the opportunity to succeed" and preparing them to "interact with all people" (Brewster and Stephenson 2014; Jones 2016; Hill 1997). As a result of this decision, many Black children found themselves in predominantly white, wealthy schools far from their neighborhoods, friends, and families (Anderson 2015). This study investigates the consequences of that transition for Black girls' identity development, specifically how it shaped their understandings of what it means to be a Black girl and the sources from which they drew those meanings.

In 1995, the National Association of Independent Schools commissioned a study to investigate the consequences of attending white, independent schools for Black children (Arrington and Stevenson 2006). Among the challenges they faced, students expressed feeling isolated in schools where "there [were] not a lot of kids . . . quite like [them]" and few opportunities "to interact with [their] own culture" (p.27). Teachers didn't understand them, would "label [them] as ghetto," and although "they would never . . . be mean, had certain attitudes towards" them (p.29). To cope, students reported

"try[ing] to fit in with anyone," "to get on with everyone," and trying "not to be one of the ones who separates themselves" (p.61). They negotiated interactions aware of the expectation that they adjust their behavior and adopt manners to make themselves acceptable to whites (Horvat and Antonio 1999).

Black girls navigated these spaces differently than their male counterparts. A male student observed, "White guys treat Black girls differently. White girls treat Black girls differently and with [Black] guys it's not as different" (Arrington and Stevenson 2006:161). Another male student explained that "an average [male] athlete can do alright" socially, but "you have to be next to God to get out of that mold of just being another Black girl" (p.41-42). Indeed, sports have proven central to the social success of Black boys in racially mixed schools because sports emphasized physical ability instead of race as the status criterion (Ispa-Landa 2013; Stroot 2002). Boys "drifted towards" an athletic identity, but Black girls did not "drift towards anything in particular, besides each other" (Arrington and Stevenson 2006:102). Black girls "ha[d] a harder social time because there's this stereotypes that the most attractive girls are blonde haired, skinny and blue eyes" (p.55). For girls, gender identity was communicated primarily through physical appearance (Ispa-Landa 2013; Arrington and Stevenson 2006). There was not a non-racial path by which Black girls could successfully integrate the white social scene. Because adolescent identity is powerfully shaped by peer relationships, these experiences of isolation and rejection may make it difficult for Black girls to understand their identities positively (Furman and Shaffer 2003; Larson et al. 1999).

In this study, I seek to expand the field of research on Black girls by addressing whether and how they come to understand and adopt *Black girl identities* in elite, white spaces. Overall, the girls in this study had a "thick sense" of *Black girl identity* (Mills 2015). This meant that they demonstrated a high degree of self-identification as Black girls such that this identity was "significant to [their] sense[s] of [themselves] and [their] life projects" (Mills 2015:54). Close relationships with other Black girls in their school settings strengthened their self-identification. In fact, *thirty of the respondents (60%)* listed their Black, female peers as influential figures in their identity development process. Their peers were the teachers and assessors of identity (Jenkins 2008). The girls' peers performed this role by demonstrating to one another the spectrum of Black-girl identities; encouraging one another to adopt and explore their Black girl identity; and delivering judgements about the authenticity and propriety of the girls' self-presentations.

2.2 Literature Review

Researchers across psychology, sociology, and social psychology have long theorized about the process of identity development. Theories explaining this process build on the premise that, from an early age, we have a wealth of information about the organization of society (Heise 1979). This information includes the rules for categorizing and ordering ourselves and others (Tajfel 1974; Heise 1979; Smith Lovin 1987; Stets and Burke 2003). The challenge in the face of the matrix of available identities "is to find, create and define [a] place" among them (Tajfel 1974:67). Although this challenge begins at birth and continues into adulthood, it reaches its height in adolescence (Decuir-Gunby 2009; Kroger 2007; Tatum 2003; Erikson 1994). One's ultimate identity is derived from

the "knowledge that [she] belongs to [a] social group [] with some emotional and value significance" attached to that membership (Tajfel 1974:72). Individuals learn their social categorization, "assessing [themselves] as being more or less typical of or similar to the group" and develop an "affective commitment . . . or a sense of closeness to a group" (Hughes at al. 2015:27).

The first step in this process is "recognizing [one's] identity in socially defined terms" (Berger 1966:107). Through interactions with others, individuals internalize the social definitions of their identities (Miller and Major 2003; Slaughter-Defoe 1995; Steele and Aronson 1995). Individuals then engage in an ongoing process of negotiating group memberships with the primary goal of achieving "a satisfactory concept or image of" themselves (Tajfel 1974:68). When possible, people choose identities about which they feel positively; an individual's affective orientation to their identity may change across settings and interaction partners (Stewart 2008). Having others accept one's declaration of identity is part of achieving a positive self-concept and requires that "one be able satisfactorily to perform it, to actualize it" (Jenkins 2008:123 (citing Barth 1969); Hughes et al. 2015:27; Smith Lovin 1987; Heise 1979; McCall and Simmons 1978).

2.2.1 Black Identity Development

Cross (1978) and Helms (1993) describe identity negotiation for Blacks. Cross (1978) and Helms (1993) argue that individuals progress through stages in a manner reflecting their feelings about themselves (personal identity); their reliance on one racial group over another as a reference "to guide their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors" (reference group orientation); and their "deliberate affiliation or commitment to a

particular racial group" (ascribed identity) (Helms 1993:5). "Pre-encounter" identities express a preference for whiteness over Blackness, believing that personal effort and conformity to white standards guarantee acceptance by white society (Helms 1993). Following an "identity shattering" experience revealing the inescapability of race and racism, "encounter" identities emerge, characterized by "confusion, hopelessness, anxiety, depression, and eventually anger and euphoria" (p.26) related to the "frantic, determined, obsessive, motivated search" for a new Black identity (Cross 1978:85). Following the "decision to become Black" (Cross 1978:85) and the search to discover what this means, "immersion" identities "withdraw into Blackness and a Black world" (Helms 1993:28). This identity is inflexible, externally determined and dominated by "a Black ascribed identity and reference group orientation at the cost of personal identity" (p.28). "Emersion" identities then surface, integrating what makes the individual unique with an understanding that "Blackness influences who [she] is" (p.28). "In developing a stable Black identity, it becomes possible" to reenter white society and "renegotiate one's position with respect to whites" (p.28). Cross (1978) and Helms (1993) outline the path towards an identity which integrates personal identity and racial group membership. They emphasize an individual's relationship to a Black world as key to this process, but they do not address how this process unfolds when an individual has limited access to a Black world. Nor do they consider how other group memberships influence racial identity development.

2.2.2 Gendered-Racial Identity Development

Downing and Roush (1985) and Helms (cited in Ossana et al. 1992) use a similar framework to describe gender identity development. In Downing and Roush's (1985) model of feminist identity development, women move from accepting sex-role stereotypes and male superiority to rejecting traditional sex roles, evaluating their prior failure to question those roles, and perceiving all men as negative and all women as positive. Women, then, seek positive, supportive relationships with other women to express their dissatisfaction with patriarchy (Downing and Roush 1985). In the final stages, women strike a "flexible truce with the world," integrating their personal identity with "positive aspects of being female," adopting a feminist orientation and committing to societal change (p.702). Rather than a particular political or activist orientation, in Helms' womanist identity development model, a Black woman "comes to value herself as a woman regardless of her chosen role" and this shift may not include a commitment to activism (Ossana et al. 1992:403; Boisnier 2003). The womanist model is a gendered-racial identity development model because it acknowledges that identity development is different for Black and white women (Ossana et al. 1992). However, it does not explore the content of that difference or how race and gender interact. Nor does it address the external factors influencing gendered-racial identity development.

Jones and McEwen (2000) address this gap by demonstrating that racial and gender identity development are intertwined. They describe identity development as an integration of one's "center, or core identity, which incorporates valued personal attributes and characteristics" and "externally defined" identity dimensions, i.e., race and

gender (p.408-10). Jones and McEwen (2000) add that context influences the salience of any dimension of identity and how the dimensions interact to form an individual's core self (see also Parks et al. 1996). Jones and McEwen (2000) define context as a group's historical and sociocultural experiences. They explain,

> Salience of identity dimensions was rooted in internal awareness and external scrutiny (e.g., race for Black women), and lack of salience seemed prevalent among those more privileged identity dimensions (e.g., sexual orientation for heterosexual women). Systems of privilege and inequality were least visible and understood by those who are most privileged by these systems. Thus, when difference was experienced, identity was shaped. When difference was not experienced, participants attributed these dimensions as relevant to others. Both privilege and difference mediated the connection with and relative salience of various dimensions of identity and shaped the connection to identity dimensions by the individual.

(Jones and McEwen 2000:410). Experiencing subordination based on a given identity dimension increases that dimension's salience.

For example, gender identity for women develops differently depending upon race, ethnicity, social class or religion (Anderson and Collins 2004; Jones and McEwen 2000; Parks et al. 1996). Parks et al. (1996) surmised that the contrasting experiences of race privilege and gender subordination resulted in the primacy of white women's gender identities. Black women, however, faced race *and* gender subordination, making it difficult to discern which experiences were attributable to which identity dimension (Thomas et al. 2011; Parks et al. 1996; King 1988). Thomas et al. (2011) found that, as a result, Black girls answered questions about their respective gender and racial identities with references to Black womanhood. Their experiences of racism dealt with their gendered racial identities, i.e., realizing that they did not resemble their dolls and were

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not beautiful or recognizing that they were the sole Black person, then the only *Black girl* in an honors class (Thomas et al. 2011). Settles (2006:597) similarly found that "Black women placed equal importance on their race and gender, but the Black-woman identity was rated as more important than either the black or woman identities." Jones and McEwen (2000) complicated the racial and gender identity development models by considering how these processes co-occur and added historical and social context to the development process.

2.2.3 The Role of Physical Context: Understanding Black Girlhood in Racially Dissonant Schools

Physical context is also important to adolescent girls' identity development. Where and with whom socialization occurs shapes what individuals learn about themselves and their places in society (Arrington 2001; Slaughter-Defoe 1995). These contexts, especially when racially segregated, impact inhabitants' feelings about their own and others' racial groups (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006; Jackson, Thoits and Taylor 1995).

Home and school are key "contexts of socialization," where adolescents spend the most time (Arrington 2001; Slaughter-Defoe 1995). Each context "has its own set of rules signifying appropriate behavior, the attributes that are valued more than others, and how people are supposed to interact with one another within and across communities" (Arrington 2001:4). These places are where an individual learns "how to be as a person, including how to be as a person who belongs to one, or more, racial communities" (Arrington 2001:4; Decuir-Gunby 2012; Hughes et al. 2006; Richardson 1981). Children

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observe, then imitate and adopt identities they deem most valued in their environments (Buckley and Carter 2005; Arrington 2001; Stevens 1997). For Black children, home is where they learn "self-respect and pride concerning their racial identity" (Peters 1985:165). Home is where they learn "the norms and values of the [B]lack world," begin to "feel comfortable moving about in this world, and … develop an affinity for other [B]lacks" (Lacy 2007:156) so that Blackness becomes "something [they] *are*, rather than something [they] *do*" (p.168). It is also where their guardians attempt to prepare children to face racism outside of the home and impart lessons about racial heritage and cultural traditions (Hughes et al. 2015; Hughes et al. 2006; Richardson 1981). These lessons and experiences at home form the foundation of a positive racial identity, but when children leave home, they confront conflicting messages (Marsh et al. 2012; Arrington 2001; Slaughter-Defoe 1995).

Although neighborhoods, religious gatherings and extended families are outside of the initial home context, it is the transition to school that marks the most "significant point of discontinuity" in socialization (Slaughter-Defoe 1995:280). Black children carry their racial pride and home culture—"historically ignored or devalued"—into their school contexts "where white culture, the dominant culture in American society is encountered through … teachers and administrators (of whom 95% are white)" (Arrington 2001:6; Slaughter-Defoe and Johnson 1988). The discontinuity is starker for Black children transitioning into racially dissonant, predominantly white, contexts where teachers, administrators *and* classmates represent the dominant culture (Marsh et al. 2012; Anderson 2001; Rosenberg & Simmons 1972). Like adults who travel between a Black

world and predominantly white professional settings, Black children are confronted with negative stereotypes and treatment (Wingfield 2009; Feagin and Sikes 1994). Spending time in racially dissonant contexts during childhood— when children "are striving to attain a sense of who they are and what they stand for—may have a negative impact on children's feelings of racial closeness" (Demo and Hughes 1990:372; Ispa-Landa and Conwell 2015). Children in these settings are less likely to feel positively about their racial identity and more likely to report lower levels of self-esteem; experiencing "direct" racial prejudice in the form of teasing or name-calling; and understanding Blacks' place in the American racial hierarchy (Demo & Hughes 1990; Rosenberg & Simmons 1972). They also "tend to compare [themselves] unfavorably with those around them" (Rosenberg 1986:187). Black children learn to modulate aspects of their identities that are received differently in school and at home (Stewart 2008; Horvat and Antonio 1999).

This study investigates the complexities of this experience for Black girls. Black girls attending racially dissonant schools must reconcile their gendered-racial identity in a setting hostile to their intersectional identity and both of its component parts (Holland 2012; Wilkins 2012; Horvat and Antonio 1999; King 1988). In her study of a bussing program, Ispa-Landa (2013) found that Black girls were chastised for failing to adopt standards of white femininity and because their outspoken nature encroached on racial territory reserved for Black boys. The girls defied their white hosts' attempts to categorize them simply as Black (because Black boys are the prototype) and as girls (white girls are the prototype) (Carbado 2013; Collins 2000; Crenshaw 1991). Although Ispa-Landa (2013) does not examine how this influenced the development of a Black girl

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identity, her research highlights the contradictory expectations Black girls face in predominantly white schools (see also Holland 2012; Wilkins 2012).

Because teenaged girls seek acceptance and belonging, they attempt to reconcile contradictory expectations without damaging their social prospects (Stewart 2008; Furman and Shaffer 2003; Horvat and Antonio 1999). They may temper their problematic characteristics and behaviors and imitate the attributes valued by the majority (Stewart 2008; Buckley and Carter 2005; Arrington 2001; Stevens 1997). In Horvat and Antonio's (1999:338) study, Black girls accepted that the clash between their "individual habitus" and their school's wealthy, white habitus would require them to engage in "the work of 'fitting it'." They accepted that it was "their responsibility to make others feel comfortable, to conform to organizational standards based on color and class, and to do so at some personal expense" by changing "their speech, their dress and even their aesthetics to approximate the norms of the organization and smooth their way in that world" (Horvat and Antonio 1999:338-39). Horvat and Antonio (1999) reveal the emotional toll Black girls pay to fit in, but the authors do not show if and how they achieved a Black girl identity in spite of their otherness.

The present study shows that Black girls accomplished this task by creating insular Black-girl communities within their predominantly white schools. I show that, within these communities, Black girls formed close friendships and mentor-mentee relationships. The girls each contributed to a collective understanding of what it meant to be a Black girl. The evidence presented here demonstrates that the girls relied on another to better understand their Black girl identity and to develop skills for surviving in a

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hostile environment. By forming close friendships and establishing Black-girl spaces, they conquered the challenge of achieving a positive identity within an environment that dismissed them.

2.3 Data and Methods

2.3.1 Participants

A total of fifty Black adolescent girls, ages fourteen to eighteen, attending predominantly white independent schools on the east coast participated in this study. All of the study participants self-identified as middle or upper class based on characteristics including parents' home ownership, parents' occupation and parents' education. Many described their families' economic circumstances with the caveat that their families would be in more favorable circumstances if not for the expense of private education. Thirty-seven of the girls had at least one parent with a bachelor's degree. Eighteen had at least one parent with an advanced degree. I used a snowball sampling approach to select participants. I formed a relationship with an organization that provided support to Black students in independent schools; the organization referred several initial participants and those interviewees referred additional participants.

2.3.2 Interviews

Interviews were semi-structured, narrative-style, video and audio recorded. The interviews began with open-ended questions about participants' school and home lives, then moved to targeted identity questions. The responses analyzed here were guided by open-ended questions about participants' initial adjustment to their schools, how adjusted they felt at the time of their interview and their friend groups. Then, I explored gendered-

racial identity more explicitly by asking, "Where did you learn about Black womanhood?" (Appendix A).

2.3.3 Data Analysis

Using open-coding techniques, I reviewed transcribed interviews for major themes (Marsh et al. 2012; Strauss and Corbin 1990). After identifying themes, I grouped the responses by theme and reviewed them together. After this second review of responses by theme, I organized responses into discrete categories. I repeated this process several times, combining and expanding thematic categories until a coding scheme emerged (Marsh et al. 2012; Strauss and Corbin 1990). Next, I reread the interview transcripts and applied codes. After all of the interviews were coded, I identified quotes that best responded to the research questions.

2.4 Results

2.4.1 Between Two Worlds

The girls in this study described their position as perched between two worlds. One of these worlds was their school world, in which they spent the majority of their lives, and which was occupied by extreme whiteness and extreme wealth (Wilkins 2012; Stewart 2008; Horvat and Antonio 1999; Slaughter-Defoe 1995). The other was their home world, which included their Black families; friends that preceded their current high schools; relationships arising from involvement in Black religious institutions; and Black neighborhoods and neighbors who resembled them racially and socioeconomically (Pattillo 2013; Lacy 2007). It was in the latter world that the girls received their earliest lessons about their racial and gender identities (Hughes et al. 2015; Decuir-Gunby 2012;

Lacy 2007; Hughes et al. 2006; Richardson 1981). The Black adults in their home world modeled how to be and the girls received positive reinforcement when they successfully replicated their models (Hughes et al. 2015; Decuir-Gunby 2012; Lacy 2007; Hughes et al. 2006; Richardson 1981). In this racially homogenous environment, learning how to be Black was a subtle, passive education (Lacy 2007). Prior to leaving this world to enter their school world, the girls had not been required to assert or defend their Blackness (Wilkins 2012; Anderson 2001; Slaughter-Defoe 1995).

Upon arriving in their school world, the girls faced expectations that they understand and explain their Blackness (Marsh et al. 2012; Anderson 2001; Rosenberg & Simmons 1972). Their white peers did not share this burden (Horvat and Antonio 1999). This was the point at which difference became an important and uncomfortable fact of life and a crucial moment when the Black girls in this study began to understand that their Blackness made them different (Wilkins 2012; Anderson and Collins 2004; Jones and McEwen 2000; Horvat and Antonio 1999). They began to understand their Blackness as central to the way others perceived and treated them (Jones and McEwen 2000; Parks et al. 1996). And importantly, they learned that there were myriad ways to perform Blackness and that their choice of performance would determine their opportunities for friendship, romantic relationships, and, in some cases, their academic success (Horvat and Antonio 1999).

The participants spent an average of seven to ten hours of their days in school, including the formal school day and extracurricular activities. Accounting for school-sponsored social activities *and* time spent with school friends in their friends' homes, the

participants spent significantly more time in their school worlds than a standard seven-hour school day. By comparison, they spent little time in their home worlds. Replication and reinforcement were more difficult to accomplish in school than in their home world because, here, there were few, if any, Black adult models (Hughes et al. 2015; Decuir-Gunby 2012; Lacy 2007; Hughes et al. 2006; Richardson 1981). Often, the only other Black people in this world were peers.

The girls in this study did, in fact, look to their peers as secondary sources for Blackness. While some of the girls listed mothers, grandmothers and social media, *thirty girls (60%)* indicated that they learned the most about what it meant to be a Black girl from their friends and peers. They replicated their Black peers' behaviors and relied on their Black peers' reinforcement for confirmation that their articulation of Blackness was right. The respondents' peers were the teachers, arbiters and assessors of identity (Jenkins 2008). Below, I outline three ways that the girls' peers performed this role. First, their peers helped the girls realize and embrace the possibilities of a Black girl identity. This included providing opportunities for the girls to see the spectrum of Black girl identities. Second, the girls' interactions with one another allowed them to build a vocabulary based on common experiences related to their common group membership; their interactions encouraged the girls to opt-in to group membership by highlighting their similarities. Last, by explicit criticism, more subtle behavioral cues or social exclusion, peers delivered judgments about whether the girls were *Black enough* or *too Black*.

2.4.2 The School Setting

The girls in this study attended predominantly White, wealthy schools far (culturally and often geographically) from their neighborhoods, friends, and families. It was not just the numerical majority of wealthy, white students and teachers that made the schools white (Anderson 2015; Ispa-Landa and Conwell 2015). Rather, the schools also had a wealthy, white habitus, reflecting the tastes, preferences, and interaction styles associated with wealthy whiteness (Ispa-Landa and Conwell 2015; Bonilla-Silva 2006; Horvat and Antonio 1999). *Twenty-seven* of the girls described how different they felt from their white peers. One participant explained that she and her white classmates were different in many ways, including physical appearance and dress. She said,

> All the girls look the same. White, somewhat tall females with blonde hair. They all wear the same socks. I understand they're trying to be like each other. I guess they just look at each other and I guess just trying to be like one another. I'm just the one who stands out. That's what I attribute it to.

Down to the socks, Michelle, a soft-spoken freshman with a slight southern drawl, described the very specific requirements for acceptance at school (Ispa-Landa and Conwell 2015; Ispa-Landa 2013; Holland 2012; Stevenson and Arrington 2006; Horvat and Antonio 1999). She felt like she could never fully belong among her white classmates (Arrington 2001; Horvat and Antonio 1999). There were attributes, her skin, hair and eye color, which Michelle could not change about herself.

Rudy, a straightforward, sandy-colored junior reflected that the white girls who started with her received very different receptions than she did. She remembered,

> Like, even the new girls … if they were blonde and pretty, they were popular by the first week of school. There was a girl who ran for president and no one had

talked to her before, but they voted for her and now she's like super popular in this area … like ten thousand followers and she's beautiful, but, you know, in terms of substance, she's not really there.

Rudy observed that her fellow new girl's appearance, her embodiment of white standards of beauty—"blonde and pretty"—earned her immediate and total entry into the school community (Ispa-Landa and Conwell 2015; Ispa-Landa 2013; Holland 2012; Wilkins 2012; Anderson 2001; Horvat and Antonio 1999). Taylor, one of the youngest participants at fourteen years old, offered a similar description of her classmates. "The white girls … they wear Lululemon a lot and they wear Nike a lot and Birkenstocks … and the Ugg slippers. So, they're fine with being white. They act white." Though focused on outward appearances, these descriptions evince something deeper—something that manifests itself in clothing choices and hair color. These are the accoutrements of birth and breeding into an elite class (Ispa-Landa and Conwell 2105; Ispa-Landa 2013; Holland 2012; Horvat and Antonio 1999). The girls described a school habitus similar to what Horvat and Antonio (1999) described. Horvat and Antonio (1999) concluded that Black girls attending an elite white school in California experienced "symbolic violence" as a result of the gulf between their individual habitus and the wealthy, white school habitus. The elite, white school habitus was characterized by "dominant members'" sense of entitlement and assumption that "all members of the community function in society in the same way that they do, with significant class resources and a sense of privilege based on their color (white) and class" (p.326).

Laurel attempted a more detailed explanation of the contrast between her frame of reference and her white classmates' perspectives. Laurel, a round-faced junior with a

milk chocolate complexion was well-liked by both white and Black classmates, but she

resisted complete assimilation into the white social scene. In addition to "the way they

dress and wear their hair," she identified other bases of difference. She said,

> On some of the basic levels, the way a Black girl is motivated, they just don't share it. I think they're driven just in a different way. And the fact that they just don't understand. I'd have to sit there and talk to them about dumb stuff, like, I don't like Lily Pulitzer. I don't think any Black person would look at it and be like, "Yeah that's something I want to wear." Just having to talk to them about it and me saying it's ugly. And they're all shook that I said that. Or talking about our crushes and they're talking about white guys and I say a Black guy and they're all shook that I said a Black guy. It was weird to me. And then I just like tried to play into it and then it just wasn't fun.

Laurel explained that she and her white peers had different priorities (Butler-Sweet 2017;

Horvat and Antonio 1999; Hill 1997). She realized that her life was different from their

lives in ways that made connecting—even on a superficial level—difficult. Fitting in

would require her to change her identity and to commit to the additional emotional and

mental labor of either explaining her own tastes and preferences or adopting theirs

(Horvat and Antonio 1999).

Rachel echoed Laurel's feelings. Fourteen-year-old Rachel spoke plainly about

her peers' ignorance. She reported being more knowledgeable about American racial

history and social issues than her teachers and had decided to change schools the

following year. She had friendships with white girls, but she acknowledged that there

were aspects of her life which her white friends could not understand.

> I think my white friends find it funny how I'm so focused. They're always like, "Rachel, relax." Because they just don't care. I mean they don't have to care. We talk about all the crazy stuff they do, and I always laugh. They're wild. Let me just say. Wild meaning there are eighth graders that get drunk wild. That kind of wild. Their parents' alcohol in their basement. When their parents aren't home,

they invite friends over. Their worlds are made for them. Any college they go to they'll be fine. They can make jobs up for themselves and make millions. Most of them I'm friends with are very rich. Like, the people they say top of America rich those are the girls I go to school with: private jets and huge houses. They don't have to work to get anything because their lives are already made for them.

Many of the Black girls in this study viewed their white friends and classmates in this light. Here, Rachel described, almost verbatim, the attitudes Horvat and Antonio (1999) observed among white students at an elite prep school. There, the white girls behaved as though they would "receive an inheritance the world [was] expected to provide" and were ignorant of the fact that their Black classmates held very different expectations for what the world would provide to them (Horvat and Antonio 1999:326 (citing Cole 1977)). Here, the participants' white friends occupied a different world, with different rules despite their shared school space. The girls developed friendships with white peers but also developed an awareness of their own social position in relation to their white friends (Stewart 2008). Their responses also revealed an awareness of their social positions more generally and what their Black girl identities meant to them (Wilkins 2012; Jones and McEwen 2000; Ossana et al. 1992; Cross 1978). Despite early feelings of displacement, respondents drew upon alternative resources to forge Black girl identities.

2.4.3 What Kind of Black Are You?

The responses included in this section show how the girls taught one another the spectrum of Black girl identities. *Seven girls* shared that their friendships provided opportunities for them to explore the variety among Black girls. Hillary, a brazen, brown-skinned sixteen-year-old with her natural hair in shoulder-length twists, attended an elementary school with even fewer Black students than her current high school. Meeting

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Black girls that represented many different Black girl identities was a new experience. She recalled,

> There were so many different types of people that I wasn't used to. Like different types of Black girls because I don't know what kind of Black person you are, and I've never met someone like you . . . And there are other people who are more down to earth or into theater. And then girls that were more emo. And then I was like, "Wow. That's not designated to one race?" You would think the emo girl would be white and then I saw a Black emo girl and I was like, "That's pretty cool." Or the Black girl that only dresses in Aeropostale or Hollister stuff. And I'm like, "I only wear Old Navy, so I don't know about that."

When Hillary arrived at her all-girls high school, she gravitated to familiar friend groups made up of non-Black girls. She learned quickly, however, from her new Black classmates that she was not presenting the appropriate Black girl markers (Butler-Sweet 2017; Wilkins 2012; Jenkins 2008). In her freshman year, Hillary joined "a more diverse group. A couple white friends, Asian, Indian" before a Black girl asked, "'Why are you friends with them? Why aren't you friends with the Black girls?' She was like, 'if you ever want to hang out, we're over there.' And then one day. . .. [Hillary] left the diverse friend group to go to the Black girls and then [she] stayed there for a while."

Her relationships with her Black classmates revealed aspects of the Black girl experience and identity about which Hillary was unaware. One of these was the expectation that she formed relationships with other Black girls. Hillary described another lesson she learned through her Black girl friends.

> She was comfortable being herself. She invited me to a party, and I didn't go but later that night she texts me that the party was wild and all these guys and stuff like that. I was like, "I'm not used to this. What are you talking about?" With all these different people with cursing in the music. This is foreign to me. In the back of my mind, I thought about the middle school that was hot back then and they had the best parties with all these white kids doing all this crazy stuff and I was

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like, "Wow this is great." And then she showed me those parties with all the Black people, and I was like, "This is so different. You guys dance differently. You listen to different music." Is this what it's like to be … I guess you can say Black? Because I wasn't used to it.

Hillary's memory about the party reveals that, at that point, she did not know how to be Black in the way that her new friend was Black (Wilkins 2012). With her friend's input, she felt that her own understanding of Blackness was shallow and her presentation of Blackness was wanting (Jenkins 2008). At this juncture in Hillary's identity development process, she absorbed all the new racial information around her, accepted it as universal and attempted to replicate it (Buckley and Carter 2005; Arrington 2001; Stevens 1997; Ossana et al. 1992; Cross 1978). As she progressed, she became more "circumspect" and began to analyze her observations and experiences to make more independent decisions about "what kind of Black" girl she would be (Helms 1993; Ossana et al. 1992; Cross 1978). Hillary said, "I started seeing myself get like them and then I was like, 'this is not me.' . . . That doesn't feel like me. . . . You either accept me for who I am or not at all." Hillary felt this so strongly that she left the friend group and returned to what she called, "the diverse friend group." She maintained friendships with other Black students whose presentations of Black girlhood were similar to hers and contributed to an overall positive self-concept for Hillary, the individual (Butler-Sweet 2017; Wilkins 2012; Stewart 2008; Lacy 2007). Hillary's progression resembled the timeline Cross (1978) and Helms (cited in Ossana et al. 1992) outlined. Ultimately, she realized that her Black girl identity was not based on her ability to adopt any one particular set of behaviors; she successfully integrated her understanding of what Blackness was—partly based on what she learned in

the Black friend group—with her unique identity (Boisnier 2003; Ossana et al. 1992; Cross 1978).

Lea likewise shared that her Black friends showed her the spectrum of possible Black girl identities. Lea, an eighteen-year-old senior with close-cropped natural hair and an easy sense of humor, described her friend group as made up of Black girls and other girls of color. She said,

> Being with [my friends] and around their families showed me there are so many different kinds of Black women but we still gravitate towards the same few things. Like our hair is one connecting factor. No one likes to get in the pool. No matter how different all Black women are there are just things that are innate and always the same in all of us.

Lea's interactions with Black girls and their families revealed that, despite their shared group membership and many similarities, they also had distinct identities, interests and backgrounds (Helms 1993; Cross 1978). Her friendships taught her that her connection and commitment to a Black girl identity did not require one specific set of attitudes, behaviors or even appearances (Wilkins 2012; Ossana et al. 1992). Her Black girl friends also gave her a space to explore those things she did share in common with them, especially their common experiences at their predominantly white school (Wilkins 2012). The differences she saw among her friends, as well as the similarities they shared, gave her a deeper understanding of her Black girl identity (Wilkins 2012; Ossana et al. 1992; Cross 1978). Lea sought and found relationships with other Black girls that helped her see the variety *and* the common and positive aspects of Black girlhood (Downing and Roush 1985).

2.4.4 Common Ground

Twenty-seven respondents described their friendships with Black girls as revealing common ground (Lacy 2007; Buckley and Carter 2005; Arrington 2001; Stevens 1997; Helms 1993; Cross 1978). Daphne was born in the United States but moved to her father's home Ghana after first grade. She returned to the United States for eighth grade and received her Black-American education at that point.

> It was weird because I was in Ghana in elementary school, so I didn't know a lot of Black things. The underground railroad, slavery not really. Things I was expected to know. The Black National Anthem I didn't learn until last year. I didn't get the basic education but when I came back, I was expected to know things that I just didn't. So, I think [school] is kind of my safe space to bounce ideas off my friends and have discussions so I think a lot of my growing came from there…

Despite her parents' immigrant status, Daphne identified strongly as Black American because of her deep, close friendships with other Black girls; but that had not always been the case. Early in her high school career, she worked hard to fit in, believing she could gain a place with the popular white girls (Cross 1978). Several interactions revealed the fallacy of Daphne's belief and she found solace in Black friendships (Kao and Joyner 2004; Cross 1978). She entered a Black world when she attended a student of color leadership conference (Helms 1993). There, she began to cultivate a close friendship with Felicia, another participant in this study. The girls, each of whom had been in white friend groups, returned to school but withdrew into their friendship.

Daphne shared that this relationship and other Black friendships helped her understand and embrace her Black girl identity in a way that her family had not. She said,

My mom will bring race up, but we don't really talk about. . . . A lot of what I've learned has come through the [school] girls and other family members but not my parents. Actually, not even my family. Mainly my friends. Felicia, BSU, equity board. I'm equity board president at my school which is the diversity working group.

Felicia's friends are all white. I think having Felicia as a friend . . . As we grew closer, we realized a lot of what we talked about was race and how all our friends are white, and it sucks. I think that friendship made me want to see race differently. It forced me to see race differently. I started paying attention to the news like all the shootings and stuff and she's the only one I could talk to.

Daphne listed other potential sources of information on how to be Black, but she concluded that she learned from her peers and not her family—not even her mother (contra Arrington 2001; Slaughter-Defoe 1995). This included close friendships with other Black girls as well as more formal exchanges in school-sponsored groups (Anderson 2015; Harper and Quaye 2007; Downing and Roush 1985). Through Daphne's conversations with Felicia about their shared dissatisfaction with white friendships and their horror over police shootings of unarmed Black women and men, Daphne became more invested in her Blackness (Helms 1993; Ossana et al. 1992; Downing and Roush 1985; Cross 1978). Her commitment to the friendship strengthened her commitment to discovering and embracing her Black girl identity. She had a desire to deepen their bond by understanding their similarities (Cross 1978).

Daphne described another close relationship with a Black girl whose Black girl identity she deemed shallow.

[She] won't acknowledge it unless she has to. *I think it's about who we became friends with.* She's a lifer so all her friends have been white. Like I don't think she has ever been in an environment where she's been among a lot of Black people outside of family events. . . . I was friends with Black people who wanted to be more involved in their community where she was friends with white people and

the Black people, she was friends with acknowledged race but not in a way that was productive to her daily life. I found community in my race. For [her], race is an identifier but it's not everything. It something that's always with me. She can ignore it when she wants to.

Daphne reiterated by comparison the importance of friendships to the development of her Black girl identity. In their predominantly white school world, developing a "thick sense" of Black identity required identifying alternative sources of identity affirmation (Jenkins 2008; Lacy 2007). Daphne described this process as a communal endeavor. Each Black girl in her core group contributed to their shared well of experiences, observations, and analyses of themselves and the world around them. Each Black girl drew from the well. Girls who did not participate in this shared enterprise were left with a void (Hughes et al. 2015; Jenkins 2008; Tajfel 1974). Daphne's Black girl identity stood inflexibly on the strength of her Black friendships (Ossana et al. 1992; Downing and Roush 1985; Cross 1978). Likely because of her late entry into Black girl culture, she had not yet incorporated those unique aspects of her individual identity with her concept of Blackness (Helms 1993; Ossana et al. 1992; Cross 1978).

In the absence of strong Black friend groups, other girls found adult-like figures in their school worlds. *Five respondents* observed that the low proportions of Black students in each respective grade impelled them to form inter-class relationships. Further, participation in student affinity groups such as the Black Student Union provided opportunities for the girls to interact with both older and younger Black students on a regular basis (Harper and Quaye 2007; Downing and Roush 1985). These interactions

were meaningful for respondents who had difficulties forming relationships with their own classmates.

Ella described the importance of her relationships with older Black students at her all-girls school. Ella, a book lover, poet, and self-identified deep thinker spoke in the measured manner of someone who had undergone years of speech therapy. The slightest stutter peppered her otherwise confident and direct responses. Ella started at her school when she was in fourth grade; she had not yet begun to think about her gendered-racial identity.

> When I first came, I was almost swallowed by it before I learned a lot about what it means to be a Black person. . . . When I got there, I wasn't used to being around that many white people. I didn't notice that kind of thing when I was younger. When I got there, even at that age, I realized I was one in a very large group. One thing I remember during class . . . everyone was really fascinated with my cornrows and people kept coming up to touch it. My teacher actually had stop class to tell everyone to stop touching my hair and after that day I wished that I didn't have the hair I had and that I had long, straight hair like everyone else.

Early on, Ella was confronted by her difference without having the tools or support to understand it (Wilkins 2012; Horvat and Antonio 1999; Slaughter-Defoe 1995; Cross 1978). She wanted to belong and, at her young age, belonging meant looking like everyone else. All she knew about her Blackness was that it made her different—a spectacle (Ispa-Landa and Conwell 2015; Stewart 2008; Demo & Hughes 1990; Rosenberg 1986; Rosenberg & Simmons 1972). Ella "always felt a little on the outside up until about sixth grade when [she] started to come out of [her] shell." Her comfort with her Black identity developed as she developed friendships with other Black girls;

her experience changed dramatically when older Black girls took an interest in her

(Hughes et al. 2015; Ossana et al. 1992; Cross 1978). She said,

> Within school I only hung out with one other girl who was also African American. I met her the first day and she was my safe spot. As I ventured out more, I met some older girls who were also African American. And they would sit with me during lunch or just say hi. I just built my own network, so I always had someone, a person of color. That helped me branch out more and help me get to know myself better.
>
> I learned … I remember one girl said to me never let them … anyone tell you, you aren't beautiful. *That was different hearing it from a junior as opposed to my mom or dad.* That helped build me up. They were so supportive. I could always find them if I needed to. They taught me different things. I learned about African American leaders like Angela Davis, Malcolm X and Thurgood Marshall. I also learned how to take care of my hair through my friends.

Ella's earliest racial memory at her school, before identifying Black role models, was feeling unpretty because of her Black hairstyle (Thomas et al. 2011; Settles 2006; Demo and Hughes 1990). Two of the interactions with her role models also related to beauty. Ella remembers entering what felt like a different world and wishing she looked "like everyone else" (Horvat and Antonio 1999; Rosenberg 1986; Cross 1978). Ella's older friend told her, "never let *them* … tell you, you aren't beautiful." These relationships helped to grow her self-esteem, taught her about important Black historical figures and how to care for her hair. These lessons about Black womanhood are typically conveyed by elder family members, teachers or other community members but, in Ella's school world, other students performed this role (Wilkins 2012; Thompson 2009; Buckley and Carter 2005; Arrington 2001; Banks 2000). Ella did speak about her Black mother, other relatives and the hair salon as reference points, but they were parts of a different sphere of Ella's life.

Lizzy provided additional insight into the importance of Black peers in her identity development. Lizzy was a stunning, cocoa-colored eighteen-year-old with a tall, slender frame. In her cool, confident air, she shared that she learned the most about being a Black girl from her "other Black friends."

> I've learned about it I think from my other Black friends and my family but that I think it's different because I think I've learned the most valuable things about what it means to be Black from other Black people in my situation. My family is different because we're all Black but we're all in different parts of life. My equals and other Black people in my situation are where I learn and those are the people I talk to when it gets hard or when I had an only Black concern. What am I going to do about my hair in college? That's something I can't talk about with my white friends and don't really talk about with my parents.

Lizzy explained that her parents and other family did not live in her world and while they could impart cultural knowledge and important history, they could not help her parse out what Blackness meant in her day-to-day life (Arrington 2001; Slaughter-Defoe 1995; Slaughter-Defoe and Johnson 1988). Her "equals and other black people in [her] situation" provided the most valuable tools. She added that, not only were her parents unfamiliar with the world she inhabited, they were in "different parts of life." Lizzy valued her conversations with her father about Black history and what growing up Black meant to him, but he was not qualified to help her decide what being a Black girl meant to her.

Other girls discussed their participation in Black affinity groups as part of their racial education (Harper and Quaye 2007). Until Crystal started at her current school, she "didn't realize how much of a Black person [she] was." She "knew [she] was a Black girl but it never played a part in [her] growing up from kindergarten all the way up to seventh

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grade." She had friends, but "race was never the priority of discussion" (Wilkins 2012;

Arrington 2001; Horvat and Antonio 1999; Demo and Hughes 1990; Rosenberg and

Simmons 1972). That changed when Crystal changed schools in eighth grade. Crystal

was the victim of emotional and physical bullying and one particularly vicious altercation

left her with a concussion (Cross 1978). She missed three months of school and, for

months following the incident, Crystal experienced migraines and cognitive difficulties

which affected her in the classroom. Instead of making accommodations as Crystal

recovered from her injury, she said, the school was "just really demeaning with [her]

capabilities and saying [she] was so behind." Crystal felt certain that if she were "any

other race," she "would have had a larger support group of people who would have seen

[her] differently" (Demo & Hughes 1990; Rosenberg 1986; Rosenberg & Simmons

1972). Crystal did not have a cohesive Black friend group at the time of her interview. In

middle school, she was part of a large group of Black girls but never felt she completely

integrated into the group. Like Hillary, she grew closer to non-Black girls and other

Black girls who found themselves outside the "big Black friend group." Still, she said,

> I've learned the most about being a Black girl at Black Student Alliance and just
> talking to other Black girls. That's where I've learned the most about hair care.
> It's super healthy. I don't straighten it. I put it into protective styles. We talk about
> hair and boys and skin. I feel like what I used to have in the larger group of Black
> girls . . . I learned the most about the Black girls' experiences at a PWI and it was
> nice to connect and bond over similar situations and problems.

Despite feeling alienated by some Black classmates, her interactions with other Black

girls were important to Crystal (Hughes et al. 2015; Downing and Roush 1985). The

common ground they shared gave her the space to understand her unique Black girl

experience and provided a safe space (Anderson 2015; Helms 1993; Ossana et al. 1992; Downing and Roush 1985; Cross 1978).

To this point, the participants spoke about how they learned about their Black girl identities and their peers' involvement in that process. Many of the girls counted their Black friends and other similarly situated Black girls as major influences in their identity development process. They described a first stage of identifying and absorbing information. Next, the girls discussed how this information manifested itself in their identities—what kind of Black girl identity they enacted—and their peers' evaluation of that identity. They also discussed their own evaluations of others.

2.4.5 Black Enough, Too Black, or Just Right?

The girls referenced several criteria in their evaluations of one other's Black girl identities: manner of speech, musical preferences, family structure, attitude and proximity to privilege (Butler-Sweet 2017; Lacy 2007; McDonald 2007; Horvat and Antonio 1999). *Eight respondents* spoke about how they and their peers evaluated the authenticity of one another's identities. Class identity was cited most frequently as the basis for evaluating one another. This was not surprising because Black identity is often tied to also being poor or working class (Lacy 2007).

Chelsea grew up attending predominantly Black schools in predominantly Black and working-class neighborhoods. Chelsea had a relationship with her father but was raised by a single mother as were many of her former classmates and friends. Now a senior, she started at her high school in ninth grade. She and one other Black girl with a

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similar schooling and socioeconomic background joined a small group of current Black girls.

> Me and the other girl were the only ones that came in hip to everything. We knew the music and the slang. And the other Black girls who were … they were very, you know, run-of-the-mill like Denise Huxtable type of girls and we was the only ones who wasn't like that. So, everybody else had two parents and living in these nice houses and we wasn't like that so because of that, I guess, and not even to say we was hood but in a way, right? And they saw that, and they had been in *this* community. And these girls didn't just start these types of schools, they've been in this forever. Even if it wasn't private school it was some wonderful public school because of the neighborhood it was in.

To Chelsea, the most striking differences between herself and the Black girls she encountered had to do with socioeconomic status (Butler-Sweet 2017; Wilkins 2012; Lacy 2007; McDonald 2007). They lived in nice, two-parent homes in well-to-do neighborhoods and had attended private school.

By contrast, Chelsea was "hood." She was bewildered by the new community and despite their differences, Chelsea gravitated to a group of Black girls who were closest to what she was accustomed to (Cross 1978). They were as intrigued as Chelsea was to encounter a Black girl so different from themselves. Chelsea recalled,

> When I get around all these Black girls and they hear me talking this way or they hear me listening to this type of music and this is the stuff they only see on social media for real for real but now they're getting in real life. They want to become that. Now everybody's *hip*, listening to the same music, trying to be ghetto when they know they not. That was too much for me. And being—I'm not going to say hood—but like that type of person and being *hip* in that way.

Chelsea felt that she became a model for them. Her new Black friends saw her as more authentically Black and attempted to replicate those features, which they believed made her Blacker than them. Chelsea did not necessarily disagree. Her description of their

differences reveals that she thought she was more "hip" than the other Black girls; her street smarts, musical preference and swagger made her, not better or Blacker, but cooler (Butler-Sweet 2017; Pattillo 2013; Lacy 2007; Anderson 2000).

After some time, Chelsea began to view her relationship with the other Black girls differently.

> It was a lot of equating your Blackness—and people do it all the time it's not just these girls … Making Black and ghetto synonyms that don't mix. Just because you Black don't mean you gotta be hood. It's not a requirement. It was just too much. I came to a different environment. I wasn't trying to be around the same thing. … It's cool, right, but I've been doing that and now I'm around something different and I want to embrace that and become a different version of me and not necessarily let that me go but let me get some layers.

She also began to detach her definition of Blackness from stereotypes about poor Blacks and she detached herself from friends who could not disconnect the two (Ispa-Landa 2013; Holland 2012; McDonald 2007). Both Chelsea and her former Black friends made judgments about the depth of one other's Blackness (Jenkins 2008). Initially, Chelsea shared her friends' assessments: her presentation of Blackness was more authentic than theirs (Butler-Sweet 2017; Wilkins 2012; Lacy 2007). However, as she spent more time in her school environment, her understanding of her Black girlhood expanded (Boisnier 2003; Ossana et al. 1992; Cross 1978). She decided that being a Black girl could include many different things. The depth and authenticity of that identity was about commitment to success despite her less-than-privileged upbringing and about cultural pride (Helms 1993; Cross 1978).

Denise had the opposite experience with her Black classmates. Denise came from a two-parent, upper class household and had always attended elite, private schools.

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Denise remembered being ostracized by her Black classmates because of her privileged

background (Butler-Sweet 2017; Archer 2012; Wilkins 2012; Lacy 2007; McDonald

2007).

> In middle school I was friends with a lot of white girls. I mean I still am. That
> sounds really weird. I didn't want to be white, but I almost purposefully wasn't
> friends with the Black girls. Those girls weren't from the same neighborhoods as
> me. They'd never gone to a predominantly white school before. Their families
> were of a lesser income and none of those things mattered but it was the fact
> that… They all took the bus together from PG County. They all talked about, "oh
> like all these people are going on these vacations and that's so funny." Jokes like
> that that I could never be in on. So, I never felt like I fit in. We even didn't listen
> to the same music which is insane because now we do. And some of those girls
> are now my best friends but back then there were so many differences. I could
> never be in on the jokes like how long the bus ride was and how the ride home
> was so long, and I live ten minutes away. Or how they would joke about like how
> bougie it was that people belonged to country clubs and that was such *a white
> person thing,* but I belong to a country club. And my family is a part of Jack and
> Jill. And at the time they would, even freshman year, joke about how bougie it is
> and how all those black people think they're better. I felt like I never fit in with
> them. … They made me feel like an outcast. They were very anti-[the school] and
> anti-White.

Even her family's membership in one of the oldest Black social clubs alienated her.

Denise did not feel that she acted or wanted to be white, but she was closer to the tangible

things associated with whiteness than her Black peers and avoided them for that reason

(Butler-Sweet 2017; Archer 2012; Wilkins 2012). Where Chelsea was closer to Black

stereotypes than any Black person her Black friends had encountered, Denise was closer

to white stereotypes than most Black people her Black classmates had previously

encountered. She evaded categorization (Ispa-Landa 2013).

Denise grew closer with her Black classmates as time passed. Their differences

remained and "some of the jokes were still there;" Denise's parents remained married,

she continued to live in a large house in a wealthy neighborhood, her family maintained its membership in Jack and Jill and a country club. However, Denise became best friends with some of the Black girls who had ridiculed her. As Cross (1978) and Helms (1993) predict, an immersive experience marked this transition. Ironically, for Denise, it was a Jack and Jill conference.

> I think it's because of Jack and Jill. I became close with the Black girls at the end of freshman year. I think it's because it was my first teen conference at that time. They call it the Wakanda for Black people. It's all Black people and we all went to predominantly white schools. And being in that environment being with all those people made me love being Black so much and wanted to stay in that environment. But when I came back to school after the weekend I was like, "Why are there so many white people? Where are the Black people? I need to find them." And I knew them and had been friends with them, but I was like, "Why wasn't I better friends with them all along?"

After her immersive experience, Denise returned to school and sought something similar. The conference—her proximity to other Black students growing up in circumstances similar to hers—spurred Denise to find a Black community within her school (Helms 1993; Ossana et al. 1992; Cross 1978). After the conference, Denise released definitions of Blackness that tied it to socioeconomic status (Butler-Sweet 2017; Wilkins 2012; McDonald 2007). The girls grew, learned more about each other and realized there was a lot that united them (Downing and Roush 1985).

One of the commonalities which brought Denise closer to her Black classmates was the realization that she had to approach life differently from her white friends in order to be successful (Butler-Sweet 2017; Hardaway and McLloyd 2009; Horvat and Antonio 1999; Hill 1997). She remembered a white friend explaining that, to be popular at school Denise would "have to cater to them and act how they [wanted] her to act." To

Denise, that meant becoming a "follower … dressing just like them, shopping at the same stores, giving up part of [herself]" (Horvat and Antonio 1999). It also meant "partying and drinking" and other "dangerous and destructive" activities. Denise was a highly motivated, high performing young woman who prioritized her academic success. Her white friend's way of thinking was incompatible with her goals. When she started high school, she realized that she and her Black classmates agreed on what Black girls must do to be successful in their environment. They had experienced "similar struggles … things [her] other friends just couldn't understand."

> They automatically get it. I don't have to explain a lot of things. Basically, they just get it. Sometimes we've had different experiences because of SES. Some had gone to PG public schools and had never seen a white person before [our school]. Some were like me and had always gone to private school. But either way they just get it even though there are some differences. And the other people just don't get it. Some of them really think they do, and they really try but they don't realize…

Although Denise maintained some of her white friendships, she found a safe space in her Black friend group at school as her awareness of the differences between herself and her white friends grew (Hughes et al. 2015; Hardaway and McLloyd 2009; Downing and Roush 1985; Cross 1978).

Toni had a similar experience because of her class position. Toni played basketball competitively from a young age. She played for her school's team and also competed in more serious outside leagues. Toni's father, who initially opposed sending Toni and her older sister to private school, feared that his daughters would get lost in their predominantly white school environment and found an all-Black team for Toni (Lacy 2007). Confirming her father's concerns, Toni remembered feeling out of place.

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The first season I felt like I didn't belong there. All of these girls grew up in really different situations than I did, and I felt like I wasn't Black enough almost and that culturally I was behind, and I didn't really know that part of myself. I needed it to see and appreciate and value and not be ashamed of the Black side of me because I've been called an Oreo before which now, I would take offense to [someone saying] that I'm white inside … I was even called that on this team when I first met them. I didn't like being called that because I don't want to seem like I'm trying to be someone else.

Toni's past experiences made her timid about how her new teammates would receive her. Toni was aware that her upbringing had separated her from a large portion of the Black community and that she presented many of the signals associated with that distance (Butler-Sweet 2017; Archer 2012; Wilkins 2012; McDonald 2007; Arrington and Stevenson 2006; Arrington 2001; Slaughter-Defoe 1995). Reflecting on what initially felt like barriers to friendship, Toni said,

I think talking white and some things I did because of how I grew up. [They] would then call me confused. I realized that the only … It was silly things like if a song was playing in the background and I was singing the words they'd be like, "omg why are you singing that song?" Or one time at a restaurant I ordered quinoa and they were like, "what are you eating? That's so white." … I think the way I talked was different. My friends looked different.

Toni's teammates evaluated those parts of Toni they could access quickly: her speech, her food and music preferences to assess her Blackness (Butler-Sweet 2017; Wilkins 2012; Jenkins 2008; Lacy 2007; Horvat and Antonio 1999). Toni admitted that she made the same quick judgments, but after spending more time with the girls understood they had more in common than those superficial markers.

Just because I talk more properly or I've had a better education than you doesn't make me any less Black, it just means I grew up differently. … I think seeing that I wasn't any different from these girls and I looked just like them and there was nothing that separated me from them besides how I grew up. I feel like just seeing that we both have the same experiences outside of where we go to school really

helped me to get out of my bubble. Now I just laugh and brush [the teasing] off. I'm like, I'm not confused.

Toni concluded that she and her teammates were equally Black despite their differences (Archer 2012; Cross 1978). She began to understand her Black girl identity as a more open and fluid concept that did not require any particular behaviors or attitudes (Ossana et al. 1992; Cross 1978).

Hillary and Lizzy were open about judgments they made about their Black classmates' behaviors and attitudes. They found that their Black peers acted *too Black;* they felt their Black peers' behavior confirmed negative stereotypes about Black girls. *Fifteen of the girls* expressed a preoccupation with stereotypes; they resisted altercations with their white peers and being loud or outspoken in an effort to avoid confirming negative stereotypes. Hillary and Lizzy were less focused on the authenticity of their Black peers' racial identities, but on how their *white* peers evaluated displays of Blackness (Archer 2012; Wilkins 2012).

> I don't really know how to say it but like I would consider myself someone who's more like. I don't know how to say it. I guess more white. And there were Black girls who were more Black. I don't know to say it. So, they were like. It was different because I had never encountered someone who was Black and acted like that in a school environment. … I feel bad saying they act more Black. What a stereotypical Black person would act like.

> It was more so the like twerking inside school that I was like, "What!" They turned up the music really loud or they themselves would just be really loud. … They're talking like oh um uh … and they just … I don't really know how to say it. It's kind of like they talk how you would see Black people talk on T.V. and you're like, "But this is at school and there're all these white people at school. Why aren't you talking like the rest of them?" And I guess they were comfortable with themselves talking that way.

Lizzy was equally apologetic about her evaluations of her peers.

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> I don't want to be judgmental of other girls but there have been times where I'm thinking, "Oh, do you know the rules?" I question in my head like you need to act a certain way and maybe that's just me maybe I think those rules for myself. I think it's great that other Black girls express themselves in other ways but sometimes I do become self-conscious when I hear another Black person say something or react to something and I just think this is bad for all of us. It's unfortunate. It's just the way I check myself.

Neither girl made a value judgment of their peers' presentations themselves; rather, they questioned the propriety of certain types of expression in their school settings (Anderson 2015; Archer 2012; Wilkins 2012; Hardaway and McLloyd 2009; Wingfield 2009; Lacy 2002). In fact, Hillary acknowledged that her father spoke in the manner she described, but she described it as casual and acceptable among familiars but never in mixed company. Lizzy echoed Hillary's concern. She feared that her Black peer's enactment of stereotypically Black personas and behaviors damaged the perceptions of the entire Black community within the school (Ispa-Landa 2013; Archer 2012; Holland 2012; Lacy 2002).

Their judgments were driven by their fear of negative stereotypes that could negatively impact their school experiences (Ispa-Landa 2013; Archer 2012; Holland 2012; Lacy 2002; Horvat and Antonio 1999). They represented the precarious position Black middle-class girls occupy as they attempt to maintain ties to their Blackness while succeeding in a majority white space (Anderson 2015; Archer 2012; Lacy 2002). For them, this meant ignoring their white classmates' slights or tempering the presentation of their Black girl identities to make white classmates comfortable (Archer 2012; Lacy 2002). Hillary's and Lizzy's accounts represented a different, yet consistent version of the identity policing other respondents in this chapter have described (Jenkins 2008).

2.5 Conclusion

For the Black girls in this study, identity was not a wholly individual matter; it was a collaborative and collective effort. Black girls' gendered-racial identity development is a complex process that relies, in part, on access to a Black world (Helms 1993; Cross 1978). Due to the segregated nature of American neighborhoods, many Black girls are immersed in Black worlds (Massey and Denton 1992). Their homes and neighborhoods house Black role models; facilitate exposure to various presentations of Blackness and familiarity with Black cultural norms; and affirm that the girls belong in the spaces they inhabit (Lacy 2007; Buckley and Carter 2005; Arrington 2001; Decuir-Gunby 2012; Hughes et al. 2006; Richardson 1981). When they leave Black settings and enter white settings, they are received differently; they confront standards and expectations at odds with a central part of their selves and they lose access to a critical aspect of positive gendered-racial identity development (Marsh et al. 2012; Arrington 2001; Slaughter-Defoe 1995; Rosenberg & Simmons 1972).

The school settings, governed by white norms and policed by white peers and adults, were inhospitable to the girls' explorations of their Black girl identities (Horvat and Antonio 1999). Because the primary goal of adolescent relationships is affirmation and acceptance, Black girls initially accepted that the clash between their "individual habitus" and their school's wealthy, white habitus required them to engage in "the work of 'fitting it'" (1999:338). It was "their responsibility to make others feel comfortable, to conform to organizational standards based on color and class, and to do so at some personal expense" by changing "their speech, their dress and even their aesthetics to

approximate the norms of the organization and smooth their way in that world" (p.338-39). But, as the girls in this study realized, even complete transformation would not garner them popularity, or even acceptance (Helms 1993; Cross 1978). Daphne, for example, explained that, despite the concessions she made in pursuit of acceptance by her white peers, she merely achieved the status of a "sometimes friend." The white girls whose friendship she sought would "be like, 'Oh, it's Daphne. There she is.' But it was never like, 'where is Daphne?'"

Daphne's remarks capture the overwhelming sentiment among participants: even with great effort, they could only hope to be *allowed to exist* in the space; they were rarely valued (Horvat and Antonio 1999; Stevenson 1997). In search of acceptance under those circumstances, the girls had little room to explore who they were. So, when Daphne identified friends that did value her, and affirmed her existence in a way that was neither incidental or casual, she was free to delve into the process of learning who she was as an individual and as a Black girl (Helms 1993; Downing and Roush 1985; Cross 1978). The girls in this study each described a similar trajectory and, by the time of their interviews, had created or discovered Black-girl spaces within their school settings (Ispa-Landa 2013; Arrington and Stevenson 2006; Horvat and Antonio 1999; Downing and Roush 1985).

In ways that their parents and other Black adults in their home worlds could not, Black girl friends taught one another how to be and survive as Black girls in their school environments (Furman and Shaffer 2003). These relationships sometimes took the form of mentorships between older and younger Black girls or as fellow members of affinity

groups. Even these less than intimate interactions were outlets for the girls to learn about themselves and others and to formally participate in school life through organized activities, which allowed them to feel connected to their school communities (Harper and Quaye 2007; Furman and Shaffer 2003). This study contributes to a richer understanding of how marginalized identities can emerge and develop in hostile environments. By telling the stories of a previously overlooked population, this study also expands the field of research on Black girls.

3. Chapter 2: They Love Me Not: Black Girls' Experiences of Romantic Rejection in Elite, White Schools

3.1 Introduction

The last twenty years of research on Black, heterosexual, middle- and upper-class women have been marked by growing interest in their romantic plight (Romano 2018; Banks 2011; Childs 2005; Crowder and Tolnay 2000). Despite evidence that college-educated Black women are more likely to marry than their less-educated counterparts—but still less likely than similarly situated white women—the conversation has focused on highly educated women in prestigious occupations (Romano 2018; Raley et al. 2015). Not limited to academic scholarship, the public media and pop culture icons have weighed in, conducting exposes, writing advice books and even dramatizing this subject in film (Story 2012; Harvey 2011; Davis and Karar 2009). Across media, the objective has been explaining and resolving Black women's difficulties in finding and maintaining romantic relationships (Banks 2011; Crowder and Tolnay 2000).

One common explanation for the alleged crisis is interracial romantic partnering (Livingston and Brown 2017; Crowder and Tolnay 2000). Several studies explore Black men's choice of non-Black women as romantic partners (Wilkins 2012; Banks 2011; Childs 2005; Crowder and Tolnay 2000; Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan 1995); non-Black women's sexualization of Black men, which contributes to their willingness to engage Black men as partners (Spell 2017; Collins 2004); and non-Black men's aversion to Black women (Lin and Lundquist 2013; Slatton 2012; Feliciano et al. 2009; Hurtado 1989). Others suggest that Black women are apprehensive about dating non-Black men

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due to a fear of rejection and a belief that choosing Black men reflects their commitment to the Black community (Banks 2011; McClintock 2010; Folan 2008; Childs 2005; Romano 2003).

Another popular argument is that Black women forgo romantic endeavors in favor of academic and professional pursuits (Clarke 2011; Boyd 1989; Johnson 1979; Mommsen 1973). A related argument is that—because these women prefer Black male partners with similar academic and professional backgrounds (Banks 2011; Clarke 2011; Childs 2005)—the pool of marriageable men has been reduced by mass incarceration, unemployment and underemployment (Sawhill and Venator 2015; Lichter et al. 1991; Wilson 1987). Their presence in majority white universities and professions further reduces their pool because Black men are either underrepresented or partnering interracially and the women's attractiveness is judged against white race-gender norms (Wingfield 2012; Clarke 2011; Crowder and Tolnay 2000).

Although the research outlined above focuses on Black women beyond the college context, related literature suggests that similar forces shape heterosexual young women's and girls' romantic prospects (Spell 2017; Wilkins 2012; McClintock 2010; Carver et al. 2003). Raley and Sullivan (2009) found that, among Add Health participants, Black girls were less likely than non-Hispanic white girls to be in romantic relationships. One potential explanation for this difference is the ratio of Black boys to girls (Raley and Sullivan 2009). Black boys drop out and face grade retention at higher rates than Black girls, so girls outnumber boys in schools (Raley and Sullivan 2009). And, although several studies document young adult and adolescent preferences for

same-race partners (McClintock 2010; Joyner and Kao 2005), Black boys are more likely than Black girls to choose and be chosen by other-race partners, *especially "in schools with less opportunity to pair up with a person of a similar race"* (Carver et al. 2003:40 (emphasis added); Ispa-Landa 2013; McClintock 2010). The racial makeup of school environment strongly predicts Black girls' dating behavior (Raley and Sullivan 2009).

This study focuses on heterosexual Black girls' romantic experiences within the school context. The Black girls in this study attended elite, predominantly white schools in which their physical, attitudinal and behavioral presentations of femininity conflicted with white norms (Ispa-Landa 2013; Holland 2012; Horvat and Antonio 1999). Black girls in these schools were effectively shut out of the dating market because potential partners in their school context viewed white girls as more desirable (Spell 2017). Despite many participants' desire to date, they had difficulties identifying willing partners in their school environments; they met rejection from white and Black romantic prospects alike. Existing research on professional and college women predicts this outcome (Childs 2005; Crowder and Tolnay 2000); however, existing research does not sufficiently explore adolescent girls' romantic experiences or how these experiences shape identity. In this study, I find that the constraints their predominantly white school settings placed on their romantic opportunities did, in fact, shape Black girls' self-concept; their feelings about Black women's place in society; their feelings about Black men; and their willingness to engage in romantic relationships at all.

Relying on the girls' stories, I explore the ways their romantic experiences shaped their beliefs about themselves, their orientation to others and their expectations for their

futures. Some girls internalized these negative experiences; they allowed romantic rejection to diminish their self-esteem and questioned whether a` fulfilling partnership was possible for them. Others refused to engage in romantic relationships. Instead, they focused on activities and endeavors that compensated for the positive relational reinforcement denied them in romantic relationships. In their stories, Black girls attending predominantly white, elite schools framed themselves as romantically undesirable outsiders or as strong and focused young women whose commitment to academic success did not leave room for romantic relationships. Their stories about romantic experiences were ultimately stories about identity; the narratives revealed the girls' as they saw themselves and as they wished to be seen.

3.2 Literature Review

Adolescent romantic experiences have psychological and emotional repercussions that outlast adolescence (Meier and Allen 2009). These experiences powerfully shape identity and influence how adolescents approach future relationships (Meier and Allen 2009; Carver et al. 2003; Furman and Shaffer 2003; Welsh et al. 2003; Larson et al. 1999). Teenage romantic experiences are crucial to "romantic self-concept," which includes feelings of attractiveness and acceptance as well as "global self-concept and perceived competence" (Furman and Shaffer 2003:5). They also inform other key aspects of overall identity, including "moral and religious values, political ideology, career [aspirations]," and internalization of gender roles (p.5). There are important emotional, intellectual and physical exchanges involved in intimate adolescent relationships which influence the development of adolescent identity. This study draws on theories about

emotional stress related to romantic rejection and research documenting Black women's responses to romantic rejection to investigate how romantic rejection in predominantly white schools shaped Black girls' identities.

3.2.1 Negative Romantic Experiences and Adolescent Identity Development

In their study of young and middle adolescents, Larson and Asmussen (1991) identified the school context as "the most common context of negative emotions" (p.26) and romantic relationships as "the most affectively charged domain … and … the single largest source of stress" for adolescents (Welsh et al. 2003:192-93). Girls were more likely than boys to attribute emotional stress to romantic relationships (Joyner and Udry 2000). One likely explanation is the role peer relationships play in adolescent identity development. Peer relationships represent a teen's first opportunity outside of the family context to learn how others perceive them (Meier and Allen 2009; Furman and Shaffer 2003; Erikson 1968). Others' reactions to their self-presentation provide cues for understanding which attributes garner acceptance and which lead to rejection (Furman and Shaffer 2003; Erikson 1968). Romantic relationships provide more specific feedback about an adolescent's gender presentation and the behaviors that make one more or less attractive to others (Furman and Shaffer 2003). In response to these messages, individuals may alter their behaviors to make themselves more attractive (Furman and Shaffer 2003). Romantic relationships, the most emotionally relevant for adolescents, powerfully shape identity through experiences of acceptance and rejection. Individuals who frequently encounter romantic rejection—which amounts to rejection of their identities—will likely incorporate these experiences into a negative self-concept accompanied by feelings of

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anger, shame, anxiety, isolation and apprehension about future romantic pursuits (Downey and Feldman 2006; Furman and Shaffer 2003; Welsh et. al 2003; Larson et al. 1999).

When romantic failures are attributed not only to "self-identity" but also to a stigmatized group identity, stigmatized group members are at a high risk for negative emotional responses and social disengagement (Mendoza-Denton et al. 2002). Mendoza-Denton et al. (2002) explain that people may experience rejection "on the basis of personal characteristics" *and* "based on direct or vicarious experiences related to status characteristics" (p.896). Because stigmatized group members are frequently "targets of discrimination and prejudice," they are "particularly likely to develop expectations of rejection by those who do not share their stigma and by social institutions that have historically excluded or marginalized them" (p.897). Status-based rejection is context-dependent; individuals are likely to perceive it in settings from which they were historically excluded, and which presently reflect "the values and norms of a higher status group" (p.914; Steele and Aronson 1995). Not only does status-based rejection negatively impact individuals' "sense of acceptance and well-being, their social relationships, and their achievement," it also promotes anticipatory anxiety about future encounters (Mendoza Denton 2002:914). People learn to assess certain rejections as status-based and, in turn, associate their stigmatized status with rejection.

This study explores heterosexual Black girls' experiences of romantic rejection in predominantly white school settings. Early in their school careers, they were punished socially for their gender-related behaviors which were out of line with their school

settings' feminine norms (Ispa-Landa 2013; Arrington and Stevenson 2006). Even in single-sex school settings, the respondents experienced isolation and rejection from peers and perceived it as status-based. They understood that their treatment related to their differences: their skin color, hair texture, body type, manner of speech and dress. When they entered romantic relationships and experienced rejection in that context, they likewise attributed it to their gendered-racial identity. Not only did the girls' rejection experiences adversely impact their self-concept, their experiences also cultivated a sense that Black women, as a group, were undesirable and at an extreme disadvantage in the dating market.

3.2.2 Black Women and Girls' Responses to Romantic Rejection

More than other groups of women, heterosexual Black women described their romantic lives as shaped by race (Romano 2018; Wilkins 2012; Banks 2011; Clarke 2011; Childs 2005; Romano 2003). They believed their opportunities for successful and lasting partnerships were limited by their place at the bottom rung of the gendered-racial hierarchy (Childs 2005). College-aged Black women identified racism as not only limiting their access to romantic partners, but also shaping their preferences (Romano 2018; Banks 2011; Childs 2005, Romano 2003). Women in Child's (2005) study asserted that "no white person can understand; you just want to be with someone who knows what prejudice feels like without having to explain how it feels" and questioned, "if whites still think you are inferior, why would I or any Black person want to be with one?" (p.550-51). They also perceived that potential partners found them undesirable (Romano 2018; Ispa-Landa 2013; Holland 2012; Wilkins 2012; Childs 2005).

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Black women's and girls' perceptions about their romantic prospects are corroborated by a substantial body of research. In a study measuring online dating patterns, Lin and Ludquist (2009) found that ninety percent of men would not consider dating Black women. Using the same dataset, Rudder (2008) found that white, Asian and Latino men rated Black women's attractiveness as below average. White men in Slatton's (2014) study described Black women as "domineering," "bitchy," "aggressive" and unattractive (p.72). Some proclaimed that it was "black women's own fault, because of these personal attributes, that they are unwanted by white men" and argued that their "domineering, neck wagging attitudes would have to pretty much disappear" because "no man wants that, not even black men" (p.73). The men also shared that they were "rarely attracted to black women" because of their physical features: "'coarse' or 'nappy' hair; 'black' facial features, 'big lips,' and 'wide noses'; dark skin; and 'larger' and 'disproportionate' body shapes" (p.40). White men in the study who explored relationships with Black women characterized the relationships as sexual or short term. Black men have also voiced their preference for non-Black romantic partners. Miles (2013) recalled overhearing one "black boyfriend tell[] his buddies how he preferred white women" and another ex-boyfriend said that "he didn't care that [she] was breaking up with him because he could go out and get a white woman, which was what he really wanted anyway." Black adolescent boys in a racially-mixed high school explained that their Black female classmates "were unpopular and sexually undesirable" because they were "ghetto" and "loud" (Ispa-Landa 2013:219).

It is not surprising, then, that Black women expressed disappointment, disenchantment and ultimately disinvestment in romantic endeavors. Black women experienced their frequent rejection as "demoraliz[ing]," "devastating," "disrespectful," and "degrading" (Miles 2013; Childs 2005). They reported feeling that the rejection was not just personal, but also amounted to rejection of Black women "collectively as a group" (Childs 2005:554). One woman said that contending with white racism was hard, but that it was "even harder to have [Black] men act like white is better and systematically choose white women … because it feels as if no one values your worth as a woman" (p.554). Although Black girls attending suburban schools reported their awareness that neither white nor Black boys were romantically interested in them (Ispa-Landa 2013), this researcher could not identify any studies that documented their responses to that rejection and how it shaped their identities.

This chapter attempts to fill the gap in the literature by retelling Black girls' stories of romantic rejection in an elite, white school context and examining rejection's impact on their identity development. Respondents revealed that romantic rejection was commonplace, expected and attributable to their Black girl identities. Being a Black girl was at the root of their rejection experiences, which impacted how they viewed that identity and its implications for their futures. Overwhelmingly, the girls doubted their near-future romantic prospects. Some expressed wanting a relationship, but they questioned whether potential partners shared that desire. Their narratives gave voice to feelings of isolation, deficiency and low romantic self-worth. Others denied any relationship hopes and claimed that their busy schedules and future aspirations did not

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leave space for romantic endeavors. Their strong, independent, unemotional facades belied a deep fear of rejection. Their narratives projected their aspirational selves, unbothered and untouched by male rejection based on their gendered-racial identity. Before a more in-depth description of this process, an overview of the research methods is presented.

3.3 Data and Methods

3.3.1 Participants

Fifty Black adolescent girls, ages fourteen to eighteen, attending predominantly white independent schools on the east coast participated in this study. Thirty-seven were enrolled in all-girls schools and the remaining thirteen students attended co-ed schools. Three participants attended boarding school. All of the study participants self-identified as middle or upper class based on characteristics including parents' home ownership, parents' occupation and parents' education. I used the snowball sampling approach. My relationship with a non-profit organization providing support to Black families enrolled at independent schools led to several participants who referred additional participants.

3.3.2 Interviews

Interviews were semi-structured, narrative-style, video and audio recorded and ranged in duration from forty-five minutes to three hours. The interviews began with open-ended questions about participants' school and home lives then moved to targeted identity questions. The responses analyzed here were guided by open-ended questions about participants' initial adjustment to their school environments, how adjusted they felt at the time of their interview and their friend groups. Then, I explored their romantic

experiences more explicitly by asking the girls, "What is your dating life like?" and "who are you interested in dating?" (Appendix A). Participants provided detailed narratives about their romantic experiences.

3.3.3 Data Analysis

Using open-coding techniques, transcribed interviews were reviewed for major themes (Marsh et al. 2012; Strauss and Corbin 1990). After identifying themes, I grouped the responses by theme and reviewed them together. After this second review of responses by theme, I organized responses into discrete categories. I repeated this process several times, combining and expanding thematic categories until a coding scheme emerged (Marsh et al. 2012; Strauss and Corbin 1990). Next, I reread the interview transcripts and applied codes. After all of the interviews were coded, I identified quotes that best responded to the research questions.

3.4 Results

School contexts shape romantic opportunities and romantic experiences, in turn, shape adolescent identity (Raley and Sullivan 2009). The Black girls participating in this study attended elite, predominantly white schools in which their physical appearance and gender performance placed them in conflict with their school's norms and, consequently, at the bottom of the social hierarchy (Ispa-Landa 2013; Holland 2012; Childs 2005; Horvat and Antonio 1999). As a result, the girls had limited dating opportunities (Spell 2017). Existing research predicts this outcome; however; existing research does not explore how these experiences shape Black girls' identities.

In this study, first, I explore how predominantly white school settings constrained Black girls' romantic opportunities. Because Black girls were perceived as undesirable, they had few if any opportunities for romantic engagement. When opportunities did arise, they were in the form of casual sexual encounters, which many girls found unsatisfying and emotionally damaging. Next, I examine the relationship between negative romantic experiences and Black girls' overall self-concept; their beliefs about themselves; their orientations to others; and their expectations for their futures. The girls responded to actual or anticipated rejection in one of two ways. Some girls internalized rejection, allowing negative encounters to damage their personal self-concept and their gendered-racial self-concept. They framed themselves as romantically undesirable outsiders who did not fit white gender and beauty norms. Other girls rejected romantic interactions completely or claimed to be unaffected by them. Although they framed their relationship status as driven by personal choice, it appeared to be driven by a fear of rejection and a desire to feel powerful instead of romantically marginalized. This group undertook creative identity work to reclaim agency; they framed themselves as strong, focused young women whose commitment to academic success did not leave room for romance.

3.4.1 How White, Elite Schools Shape Black Girls' Romantic Opportunities

Study participants described limited or non-existent dating opportunities within their school contexts. First, they attributed the dearth of romantic opportunity to their male peers' general preference for non-Black girls (Ispa-Landa 2013; Wilkins 2012; Carver et al. 2003). Girls also spoke about "hook ups" as the norm for romantic

interaction, which they regarded as unfulfilling (Freitas 2013; Hamilton and Armstrong 2009).

"They're Just Not That into Us Here"

Crystal was one of *thirteen respondents* that discussed her male peers' disinterest in Black girls. Crystal's round, dimpled-face and Afro puffs gave the impression of a light-hearted, happy-go-lucky teenaged girl. She smiled often throughout our interview but spoke freely about the many lows she had experienced at her school. She described herself as extremely optimistic, adventurous and happy until she arrived at the school. Her time at the school made her tentative. Early on, she struggled to find female friends that understood and supported her, so identifying opposite-sex romantic interests was a daunting task. Crystal said,

> All the Black guys I know at other private schools are into white girls or light skinned girls or everything but a Black girl. And they're just like, "No it's just about our interests and we just get along." I understand some people have a type and that's fine, but all of your friends are like that too. And I heard someone say, "I'm just not into dating Black girls." I don't know what that means but it's kind of hard because I don't even let myself get to a crush. Because I'm not insecure. It's just more logical to me to say, "Would they like me?" It's so sad but personality—me as a person—isn't what I'm nervous about. But not just are they interested in a Black girl, but a dark skinned, tall black girl. I'm 5'10. My friends in public school tell me that wouldn't be an issue for me in public school. I thought maybe it was me, that I'm not attractive enough. *It's just the area and the private school mentality*.

Here, Crystal highlights the importance of physical and cultural context (Raley and Sullivan 2009; Carver at al. 2003). She speculated that she would have a fuller dating life if she attended public school in her predominantly Black neighborhood. She attributed her diminished dating options to Black boys' expanded options for racial partners in their

racially mixed school environment (Ispa-Landa 2013; McClintock 2010; Carver et al. 2003). Although contact theory predicts that both Crystal and her Black male counterparts should have increased access to interracial partnerships, Crystal's narrative reveals the extent to which, even in integrated schools, Black girls remain segregated (Ispa-Landa 2013; Holland 2012; McClintock 2010). She also introduced the raced and gendered beauty norms which governed her school environment's dating hierarchy (Romano 2018; Wilkins 2012; Childs 2005). Crystal believed that her unusual height—in comparison to white girls—and her cocoa complexion made her undesirable to the boys in her orbit (Slatton 2014). More than a belief, Crystal actually observed Black boys and white boys pass over girls who looked like her.

Nadia described this phenomenon as part of the school culture. Nadia, a soft-spoken sixteen-year-old, had more romantic experience than other participants in the sample. She had been in a committed relationship and engaged in several hookups, the aftermath of which I explore later in this chapter. Her overall melancholy throughout the interview made it clear that she did not feel a sense of belonging or comfort in her school environment. These negative feelings extended to her romantic encounters. To Nadia, the view that Black girls were undesirable was part of the school and local culture. She said, "It's just a mindset a lot of guys in our area have." She continued, "The guys at [our brother school] had said they wouldn't date Black girls, or that white girls are prettier, or that if Beyoncé was white, she'd be prettier." Nadia recalled a "ridiculous" exchange with one of those boys whom she previously counted a friend. He told Nadia, "Darker women are angry and that he's not into them or that every time he's seen one, he says

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she's ugly, but any white girl is pretty." Dark-brown complexioned with the athletic build

of a track star, Nadia was judged against white girls who were different in appearance

and attitude (Slatton 2014; Ispa-Landa 2013). Even Beyoncé could not compete against

the white girls for the attention of her male peers because "pretty" belonged to white girls

at Nadia's school (Slatton 2014). She and other Black girls were labeled ugly and angry,

then shut out of the dating market (Slatton 2014; Wilkins 2012; Banks 2011).

Jessie, a sophomore at a co-ed school, described the difficulties her school setting

posed for dating. Jessie lived with her Filipina mother but had close relationships with

her Black father and extended family. She identified strongly as a Black girl. Jessie had

her mother's sandstone complexion and wore her curly hair in a messy bun atop her head.

At the time of her interview, Jessie was "not really" dating anyone. She explained,

> Because I go to a white school *there's not many options* besides white boys….
> And, like, my experiences with dating, like, white boys. It's strange. It's just not
> what I'm used to. I've never dated a Black guy because I've been going to this
> white school my whole high school life. ... It's not bad, I'm just not used to it. It's
> not something that I usually lean towards. It's just weird because if I were to date
> a Black boy now, it's just that I don't … I wouldn't know how to approach it
> because I wasn't exposed to that growing up. You know, from sixth grade to tenth
> grade, it's all I've been surrounded by. When a Black boy comes up to me and
> says something and, like, I just I don't know what to do and, like, I try to speak to
> them as I would speak. And they say, "Why are you talking like that?"

Jessie held a unique perspective and experience among the study participants. Although

she identified herself as a Black girl, her physical appearance made her more attractive to

potential partners in her school environment (Slatton 2014). In her interviews with white

men, Slatton (2014) found that men who were open to dating Black women preferred

women with light skin and straight hair; women who, in essence, had features the men

associated with whiteness. White boys in Jessie's school did express interest in dating Jessie, but she was not very interested in dating them. She dated them because she did not have "many options" at her "white school" (Spell 2017; McClintock 2010). Like the women in Childs' (2005) study, she found white boys "strange." They did not understand her, nor she them. Jessie also felt uncomfortable dating Black boys due to the time she had spent in white schools (Wilkins 2012; Clarke 2011). She shared that Black boys did not understand her version of Blackness, which she had cultivated in white school settings (Wilkins 2012). Jessie expressed confusion about simple communication with Black boys because of her schooling (Clarke 2011). Her school setting not only shaped her romantic options, but also shaped Jessie in ways that made taking advantage of romantic opportunities outside of school difficult.

Laurel sought out Black boys, outside of her school context. A round-faced junior with milk chocolate skin, Laurel was well-liked by both white and Black classmates, but she resisted complete integration into the white social scene. One thing that made friendships with white girls difficult for Laurel was forced conversation about dating (Horvat and Antonio 1999). She recalled "talking about [their] crushes and [the white girls were] talking about white guys" and when she spoke about "a Black guy, they're all shook that [she] said a Black guy. It was weird." These conversations contributed to Laurel's feelings that her school environment was not supportive of her romantic endeavors (Clarke 2011; Carver et al. 2003). It was not surprising that she identified alternative settings for her actual dating life. Dating within her school context was "very limited" for Black girls, so she and her Black friends "look[ed] outside of [their] brother

schools because they typically don't date Black girls, even if they are Black" (Raley and

Sullivan 2009). Laurel recognized that her school was not hospitable to Black girls'

romantic pursuits, so she expanded her networks.

"They Just Want to Smash and Dash"

Hookup culture was another feature of the girls' school context which

complicated their dating lives (Spell 2017; Freitas 2013; Armstrong et al. 2010; Joyner

and Kao 2005). As a rapidly growing body of literature about dating in predominantly

white universities demonstrates, young adults have "learn[ed] quickly … that the norm is

to be casual about sex" (Freitas 2013). This was also true for this study's participants.

Seventeen-year-old, star-athlete Claudia said, "Guys nowadays just want you and your

body. It's not a lot of relationships; it's just, like hooking up." *Six respondents* spoke

about the hookup culture at their schools. Fifteen-year-old Joy was one of the less-

experienced participants, but observed, "There's a really big hookup culture. You don't

date. I don't even know what you do. You just hook up once or twice and maybe you'll

date and maybe you won't." She eventually concluded that Black girls probably won't

because "most white guys go with the white girls and a lot of the white girls pick the

Black guys." Witty, all-girls school student DeDe prided herself on speaking her mind

and did not mince words about the boys in her school context. According to DeDe, "for

the most part, guys [her] age [didn't] want to date as much as to *smash and dash*," and,

she said, "I'm not about that life." With two exceptions, the Black girls in this study

echoed Claudia, Joy and DeDe's sentiments. The rules of romantic engagement in their

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school contexts required sexual ease and detachment from all girls, but this clashed with Black girls' romantic aspirations and, ultimately, limited their romantic opportunities.

Recent additions to "hookup" scholarship investigate race and gender differences in students' hookup participation (Spell 2017; Ray and Rosow 2009). Spell (2017) found that Black college women reported forty-nine percent fewer hookup partners than white women. One explanation for this is that Black women simply have fewer opportunities for hookups than white women (Spell 2017; Wilkins 2012; McClintock 2010; Childs 2005). An alternative explanation is that Black women and privileged white women have differing orientations to casual sex (Wilkins 2012; Hamilton and Armstrong 2009; Childs 2005). Hamilton and Armstrong (2009) found that because privileged women prioritized educational and professional success over family formation, they were less likely to pursue serious relationships in college. Hookups "allowed [privileged] women to be sexual without the demands of relationships" (p.604). The working-class women in Hamilton and Armstrong's (2009) study found themselves romantically and socially ostracized because their preference for committed, long-term relationships was incompatible with their campus cultures. Black college women in Wilkins' (2012:183) and Child's (2005:552) study reported that white women had more success with Black men because, in their opinions, white women were "easy." White women's sexuality "enhance[d] their desirability" and "enchanted" Black men, "leav[ing] black women with no intimate prospects" (Wilkins 2012:183; Childs 2005:553).

Caitlyn discussed her hookup experiences in a somewhat ambivalent manner. Caitlyn had just returned from Paris the day before her interview. The trip was a

graduation gift from her family, and she spoke excitedly about her preparations to attend

college the following fall. Caitlyn had close Black girl friends outside of school,

including her best friend, but described her close friend group in school as mostly white;

her friends may have influenced her views on hookups (Hamilton and Armstrong 2009).

Caitlyn did not object to hookup culture and had participated in it. Her "type" was "tall,

Black guys" but she had hooked up "with more people besides tall, Black guys." In her

bubbly manner, Caitlyn explained,

> [Dating] is just not something that has ever come up. I never had any boyfriends. It wasn't a big topic of conversation. I didn't really want to. I was fine with having guy friends and not guy relationships, like not really dating. It's been more hooking up. I have my guy friends and the friends that I hook up with and I never really was into dating that much. I was, like, in kind of an exclusive relationship for like a while and my mom thought we were dating but we weren't dating we were just hooking up for a while and that's probably as close to dating as I've been interested in being.

> I think dating in high school is kind of…not artificial, but, it's like, I don't get it. Well, I think because I haven't been in a situation where I, like, really, really, really like someone that I don't really get, like, being so into someone and you date them. I feel like if I'm dating someone it'll be long term, not that we're dating for a few months or a year. I feel like because we're young, it will always be temporary. I don't think it would be like a real actual relationship.

Caitlyn's story about hookups was surprising, not only because existing research predicts

that she would bristle against hookup culture (Wilkins 2012; Childs 2005), but also

because of her apathetic tone (Welsh et al. 2003; Larson and Asmussen 1991). Welsh et

al. (2003) monitored adolescents' emotions throughout a typical school day and found

that girls attributed thirty-four percent of their strong emotions to romantic relationships.

Caitlyn could be an outlier among adolescent girls, or she may have strategically

reframed her experience in a less negative light to avoid a negative emotional response (Wilkins 2012; Snow and Anderson 1987).

Other participants—including several of Caitlyn's classmates—described Black boys' attitudes towards Black girls. Their descriptions suggest that, in a different context, Caitlyn may have found someone she "really, really, really" liked who liked her back and offered her a relationship instead of a hookup (Ispa-Landa 2013; Carver et al. 2003). Arguably, her school's gender-racial context limited Caitlyn's access to boys and, along with its hook-up culture, adversely shaped her relationship prospects (Spell 2017; McClintock 2010). That is an unpleasant reality. Caitlyn may have chosen this alternative narrative because it left her feeling independent and in control of her romantic life instead of romantically isolated and powerless (Wilkins 2012; Snow and Anderson 1987). Wilkins (2012) argued that Black women chose and shared narratives about their romantic lives which "allowed [them] to be seen, and to see themselves, as strong and independent" despite differences between their aspirations and their realities (p.186). I explore more of these re-articulations later in this chapter.

Lizzy was another participant who did not voice dissatisfaction with her school's hookup culture. Eighteen-year-old Lizzy was preparing for her first year at Harvard at the time of her interview. Long, individual braids framed Lizzy's chestnut face and she casually swept them away as she described her hookup experiences.

> I've never dated anyone. I've hooked up with a couple people. The people I've hooked up with have been white. I've talked to some Black guys. At school, with the boys, it's different being at an all-girls school. For, like, school dances and things like that I've gone with white and Black guys. I think only one Black guy. There's a deficiency of Black guys at our brother school. I think there's only four

in our grade, *so that's no choice of my own*. But, yeah, I mean, some of my Black friends have actually said I will not go with white guys. I don't feel that way, I guess, because I grew up around them and *those are the options and that's fine*. I've never had a relationship, never dated anybody, but, yeah, that's what it's been.

"That's no choice of my own." "Those are the options and that's fine," Lizzy says.

"That's what it's been." Lizzy was resigned. Freitas (2013) speculated that accounts like Lizzy's were not indicative of a liberated perspective; rather, they hid feelings of "defeat in the face of hookup culture's dominance" (p.12). Close to half of Freitas' (2013) respondents expressed negative emotions about past hook ups and believed that the hook ups had "robbed them of healthy, fulfilling sex lives; positive dating experiences; and loving relationships" (p.12). Absent other options, Lizzy accepted that hookups with white guys were the extent of her romantic experiences. She accepted it, but she did not choose it, as the white women in Hamilton and Armstrong's (2009) study had. Lizzy was clear, however, that her school context was the reason for her constrained dating prospects (Clarke 2011; Raley and Sullivan 2009; Carver et al. 2003).

Lena attributed her less-than-satisfying romantic experiences to the pervasiveness of hookup culture at her co-ed prep school. Honey-complexioned Lena wore her hair in soft, braided pigtails. She was a competitive soccer player and participated in Jack and Jill as much as her busy training and school schedules allowed. Despite her access to Black networks like Jack and Jill, Lena had not had meaningful opportunities to date. She said,

> I haven't really dated. I was, like, I used to "date" in sixth grade, and eighth grade was the last thing, but I wasn't in a serious relationship. There were a couple—we call them "hookups"—last year. *I would definitely be interested in dating*. I just

don't think, well, a lot of the time the people I'm hooking up with are from GDS. I don't know if they're interested in dating. I don't know if it's a mutual thing. I'm sure if I found someone, I'd be interested in dating. I just haven't found anyone. *I think a lot of kids are just hooking up. I'm not a fan of it. I would kind of just like the romantic thing.*

Lena had participated in hookups but was "not a fan" of them. She was interested in romance and would prefer to date rather than to hook up, but she was unsure if her potential partners shared her preference (Freitas 2013; Childs 2005). There was a mismatch between the girls' stated and potentially hidden romantic aspirations and the romantic opportunities afforded them in their majority white school contexts (Spell 2017; Wilkins 2012; McClintock 2010; Childs 2005). The discontinuity between their romantic hopes and the reality of their school climates created emotional turmoil (Arrington 2001; Slaughter-Defoe and Johnson 1988).

3.4.2 Dating Opportunities Shape Black Girls' Self-Concept

The girls were keenly aware of their place at the bottom of their schools' dating hierarchies. For girls who were unable to identify opportunities outside of school, rejection and invisibility largely characterized their romantic experiences. At this point in their developmental trajectory, positive, affirming and reciprocal relationships were critical to forming positive self-concepts (Meier and Allen 2009; Carver et al. 2003; Furman and Shaffer 2003; Welsh et al. 2003; Larson et al. 1999). Conversely, unrequited adolescent love led to negative emotions, which reflected a negative self-concept; repeated experiences of rejection shape future decisions about romantic pursuits (Downey and Feldman 2006; Furman and Shaffer 2003; Welsh et. al 2003; Larson et al. 1999).

Joy, a fifteen-year-old boarding school student, had little romantic experience,

which she attributed to a shortage of interested partners. She said,

> *It's really hard.* I talk to my other Black female friends about it. *We don't care that much,* but we notice that a lot of the Black girls don't really get chances like that unless they find one of the rare Black guys that actually like Black girls. Because the white guys stay with the white girls and most of the Black guys do too, so the Black girls are just kind of left there. We don't talk about it with the Black guys. … That would just go really badly. They're really defensive. Or they'll just shut you down. *Sometimes it bothers me.* They all pick from the same friend group. The things that bother me the most is that it's most of them that will do it.

Both the form and substance of Joy's narrative reveal the stress her romantic

circumstances caused her. Joy began by saying, "It's really hard;" then revised herself,

saying "we don't care that much;" and landed on "*sometimes* it bothers me."

Understandably, expressing anger about rejection, which was at least partly based on

perceptions of Black girls as angry and unladylike, was difficult to reconcile with

attempts to resist stereotypes (Ispa-Landa 2013; Wilkins 2012; Collins 2004). Joy's Black

girl identity limited the emotions she was allowed to express without experiencing

additional ridicule and rejection (Wilkins 2012). Wilkins (2012) develops the "untenable

social position" created by this clash between personal identity and romantic aspirations

and identity expectations (p.175).

> When black women resist one controlling image, they activate another … Controlling images work together in such a way to make it impossible for black women to occupy an "ordinary," namely, unmarked, social position. Thus, intersectionality does not just imply a unique identity constellation but can require social actors to achieve coherent identities in the face of incoherent identity expectations.

(P.175). Joy's Black girl identity rendered her romantically invisible at her school, but an authentic emotional response to that position would render her hyper-visible. She was effectively shut out of the dating market and, yet, she still feared being "shut down" if she expressed her discontent.

Despite Joy's equivocating, it was clear that she felt unnoticed and undervalued in her school's dating landscape (Childs 2005). What bothered her "the most" was the totality of the rejection; as a collective, Joy's Black male peers only dated white girls (Ispa-Landa 2013; Miles 2013; Wilkins 2012; Childs 2005). Further, Joy's references to her conversations with and the feelings of her Black girl friends revealed that she perceived Black boys' rejection as personal *and* as rejection of "Black women collectively as a group" (Childs 2005:554).

Nadia, who we met in the previous section, was deeply sensitive and spoke openly about how her experiences had challenged her self-esteem. The boys Nadia interacted with were shockingly open with her about their aversion to Black girls, saying things "about Black girls that … ma[d]e it hard for [her] to love [herself]." Like Joy, Nadia "let it slide because she didn't want to argue" and confirm their allegations that "darker women are angry." Black and white boys in her orbit expressed preferences for white skin, then light skin, but rarely her skin (Slatton 2014; Childs 2005). Nadia tried to "stop paying attention to it and the people that would make [her] feel upset with [herself]." That proved difficult because Nadia was a relational person; she sought acceptance and validation through her male and female relationships and frequently met

rejection in both (Furman and Shaffer 2003). She recalled one particularly painful

experience.

> I've hooked up with some people that have made me feel like they're embarrassed of hooking up with me. One guy that was white, I could tell he was embarrassed. He hooked up with some of my friends and all of them were white or Persian or Hispanic and he wouldn't be afraid of saying he did. But with me he was like, "It's a secret. Don't tell anybody." *That was embarrassing for me. I used to not like myself and I thought I was ugly* for a little bit, but I realized he's really whack for that.

> So, then I kind of feel hesitant to put myself out there again because I'm worried someone will be embarrassed of me or not want to say they hooked up with a Black girl or a dark Black girl. I'm trying to not worry that every person I meet is going to be like him.

Joyner and Kao (2005) provide one explanation for Nadia's hookup partner's behavior:

across race-gender groups, young adults demonstrated a weaker preference for

homophily in hookups than in dates. However, Nadia noted that he had not silenced his

other non-white hookup partners, which suggested to Nadia that his embarrassment was

about her Blackness (Slatton 2014; Thomas et al. 2011; Settles 2006; Childs 2005). His

attitude was more consistent with Slatton's (2014) participants who, if they expressed any

interest, characterized their interactions with Black girls as short-term and purely sexual.

Nadia's narrative is evidence of how romantic rejection embeds itself into Black

girls' identities (Furman and Shaffer 2003; Welsh et al. 2003; Joyner and Udry 2000;

Larson et al. 1999; Larson and Asmussen 1991). She reported feeling "embarrassed,"

"ugly" and not liking herself after this experience. It planted apprehension in Nadia about

future relationships which will negatively impact the quality of those relationships for

herself and her future partners (Downey and Feldman 2006; Mendoza-Denton 2002).

Daphne and Crystal took a different approach. Daphne and Crystal, observing experiences like Nadia's, decided to avoid the endeavor completely (Downey and Feldman 2006; Mendoza-Denton 2002). Their anticipatory rejection protected them from the pain of actual rejection, but also kept them from exploring their romantic selves (Mendoza-Denton et al. 2002). Daphne said,

> The guys at [our brother school], they're not very nice to Black girls. All the Black guys would date white girls and all the white guys dated white girls. They were never interested in me, so it was like, I guess white guys aren't for me. *It was like they're not interested in me, so why should I be interested in them? I would never initiate something with them. More of fear. Like I don't need to be rejected. It's not something I'm interested in.*

Daphne was preparing to leave for college without much experience outside of school dances. Crystal adopted the same strategy. Crystal, who had been the victim of severe emotional and physical bullying in middle school, was wary of close contact with anyone in her school environment. She shared,

> I heard someone say I'm just not into dating black girls. I don't know what that means, but it's kind of hard because *I don't even let myself get to a crush …* I'm not insecure; it's just more logical to me to say, "Would they like me?" It's so sad, but personality—me as a person—isn't what I'm nervous about. But not just are they interested in a Black girl, but a dark skinned, tall Black girl. … I thought maybe it was me that I'm not attractive enough.

Interestingly, Daphne and Crystal did not have any of their own romantic experience; they observed and coopted the experiences of others. In this way, they adopted the collective experiences of their group: Black girls in predominantly white schools (Mendoza-Denton 2002). The rejection was not of their personal identities, but of "Black women collectively as a group" (Childs 2005:554; Mendoza-Denton et al. 2002). This is consistent with Mendoza-Denton et al.'s (2002) observation that "people … develop

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expectations of acceptance or rejection based on direct *or vicarious* experiences related to status characteristics" (p.896 (emphasis added)).

Although Daphne and Crystal avoided the entanglements that had caused Nadia emotional distress, the three girls found themselves in the same position. Whether by actually experiencing rejection or merely anticipating it, the girls allowed rejection to diminish their self-esteem and shape their decisions. There is evidence that this preemptive, protective attitude will impact their future relationships, predisposing them to perceive rejection in their future partner's behaviors, to feel insecure and unhappy in relationships and to respond in extreme ways to their partners' perceived rejection (Downey and Feldman 2006). Their approach to avoiding disappointment may manifest in "self-silencing behaviors, including the suppression of their opinions, thus submerging their individual identity within the context of the romantic relationship" (Welsh et al. 2003:189). In attempting to protect themselves, the girls face losing themselves.

3.4.3 Black Girls Reinterpret Their Dating Stories and Recast Themselves

The next group of girls engaged in identity work to create and protect their positive self-concept (Wilkins 2012). The girls in this group refused to engage in romantic relationships in an attempt to avoid rejection, but they did not explicitly characterize their choices in this way (Snow and Anderson 1987). *Eight girls* reported that they were not interested in relationships because they preferred to focus on school. In their stories, the girls framed themselves as strong and focused young women whose commitment to academic success did not leave room for romantic relationships (Wilkins 2012; Snow and Anderson 1987; Goffman 1961).

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Denise came from a long line of high achievers and was committed to continuing that legacy. Her mother finished at the top of her class from a prestigious law school and, when Denise was eight years old, moved her family to take a position in a high-level political administration. Denise grew up surrounded by "really successful," powerful and independent Black women and those qualities were foundational in her understanding of her Black girl identity (Wilkins 2012; Hill 1997). To Denise, being a Black woman meant being "strong but also having to stand by yourself a lot" and "having to be the best" (Butler-Sweet 2017; Hill 1997). She prided herself on her ability to turn negative to a positive and loved the challenge of "proving people wrong" about her.

Denise spoke with an intensity and confidence that made her seem older than her eighteen years. She did not drop this self-assured air when speaking about dating. At the time of her interview, Denise was not in a relationship and responded matter-of-factly, "No, I wouldn't like to be." She felt that she was "good on [her] own" and that "someone else would bring her down." She described herself as "very focused and smart and," she added with a smile, "kind of pretty." Denise continued, "Someone else would hinder me. And everyone is just so immature. Any boy my age is not on my level for sure. I know what I want to do with my life." About Black boys specifically, she said,

> I definitely don't see myself dating a Black man and I don't know why. I think it's because a lot of the Black guys I know are obsessed with white girls. They call them snow bunnies, but I think that's so degrading. The fact that I know there's that mentality definitely makes me subconsciously … When I was wanting to date someone, I feel like I would just gravitate towards another group because I always have that in the back of my mind. All the Black guys now don't think Black girls are beautiful. They're like, "Black girls are so ugly" and I'm like, "Well your mom is Black." So, I think subconsciously I would gravitate away from them because of what I've grown up around.

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A superficial reading of Denise's responses yields the conclusion that she was not interested in dating (Wilkins 2012; Cross 2005).

A closer examination presents an alternative interpretation. Members of stigmatized groups often engage in what Snow and Anderson (1987) call identity work, efforts to "construct[] personal identities that are not a mere reflection of the stereotypical and stigmatized manner in which they are regarded as a social category" (p.1340). The goal of identity work is finding and maintaining "a measure of self-worth and dignity," which is difficult because access to self-worth is unequal and "depends in part on the roles available to us" (Snow and Anderson 1987:1339). One tool for completing identity projects is "fictive storytelling" (Snow and Anderson 1987). The storytellers reframe their personal narratives in ways that enhance their self-concept and promote a sense of agency (Wilkins 2012; Snow and Anderson 1987). Another tool in this endeavor is role distancing, "an active and self-conscious attempt to foster the impression of a lack of commitment or attachment to a particular role in order to deny the virtual self implied" by one's circumstances (Snow and Anderson 1987:1350; Goffman 1961).

Denise may have engaged both of these tools to recast herself as an independent young woman who did not want or need the attention of young men; young men who found her "ugly" in comparison to white girls with whom they were "obsessed." In Denise's narrative, the relevant role was a social position tied to negative stereotypes and limited romantic opportunities (Ispa-Landa 2013; Wilkins 2012; Cross 1995; Snow and Anderson 1981; Goffman 1961). As the narratives in the previous section show, this

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position carries the potential for a negative self-concept (Downey and Feldman 2006; Furman and Shaffer 2003; Welsh et. al 2003; Larson et al. 1999). It is not surprising that Denise distanced herself from that role. She went one step further, completely rejecting the individuals she perceived as responsible for perpetuating her disadvantaged position: Black boys.

Lizzy's narrative was less declarative than Denise's but accomplished similar tasks. Earlier in this chapter, Lizzy spoke about the limited romantic opportunities for Black girls in her school context. She had never had a relationship or dated anyone. Several hookups with white boys were the extent of her romantic experiences. Lizzy accepted that "those [were] the options" and that she did not have much "choice" in her circumstances. She continued this narrative, claiming,

> I don't think I would have liked to [have had a relationship]. I've seen it play out. High school and middle school. When I was young, I thought it would be nice, but as I got older, I was like, right now, I wouldn't be able to see them very much and balance it with school and stuff. And what my parents told me was that when I was 16, I could start, and, at that point, I was like, "I don't have a desire." I could hook up with people when I wanted to but having an actual relationship wasn't very appealing. Even in college I've heard it's more of a hook up culture than a dating culture and I'm okay with that. It could be because I've never been in a relationship, but I feel like I just don't have as much of a desire as some people might.

Where Denise attempted to distance herself from the social position prescribed for her, Lizzy attempted distancing from her cohorts (Snow and Anderson 1987). She declared, "I feel like I just don't have as much of a desire [to be in a relationship] *as some people might*." When asked whether she felt romantically disadvantaged, Lizzy shared other girls' stories.

> I think there have been moments at parties or dances, like, *maybe sometimes I'll notice* the white girls get more attention. *That's something people talk about. It's not so much because when I want to do something, I think it's fine there are options and I can.* My friend actually had an incident where I think, at a dance, we were talking about the next dance and who was going to ask who. We were at a 'girls ask guys' dance and we were talking about the next one trying to scheme or whatever. And there was a guy with nobody to ask and my Black friend was like, "Oh, I'm available. Someone, tell him." They overheard him saying, 'Oh, but she's Black. I can't." She was hurt by that. Maybe it wasn't so overt, but he chose a white girl and it was presumed to be racially motivated. *That's never happened to me.*

Lizzy went to painstaking lengths to distance her experience from her Black friends' negative experiences (Snow and Anderson 1987). "That's something *people* talk about," but not Lizzy "because when [she] want[ed] to do something," she could. Lizzy's friend was rejected by a white love interest, but that had "never happened" to Lizzy. She also invoked differences between her Black friends' racial preferences and her own. Lizzy said, "Some of my Black friends have actually said, 'I will not go with white guys.' I don't feel that way, I guess, because I grew up around them and those are the options and that's fine." What did Lizzy accomplish with this distancing?

Throughout her interview, it became clear that Lizzy viewed her presentation of Black girl identity as more appropriate for her school setting than other Black girls'; other girls were sometimes loud and often confrontational with their white classmates (Butler-Sweet 2017; Archer 2012; Wilkins 2012; Lacy 2007; McDonald 2007). She had close Black friends but had more close friendships with white girls. Lizzy believed that her patient and open approach to white classmates made the difference between her positive school experience and others' negative school experiences (Butler-Sweet 2017; Archer 2012). Creating distance between herself and her friends may have allowed her to avoid

the negative consequences of acknowledging rejection (Wilkins 2012; Childs 2005; Mendoza-Denton et al. 2002). Alternatively, Lizzy's white friendships may have led her to identify more closely with their romantic experiences than her Black friends' (Furman and Shaffer 2003). Lizzy did not want to participate in the commiserating and collective identity building which Wilkins (2012) observed among Black college women discussing their romantic dissatisfaction. She chose, by engaging in associational distancing, to create an identity distinct from her Black peers and to create her own narrative about surviving as a Black girl in a predominantly white setting.

3.5 Conclusion

There is a burgeoning body of research exploring the romantic plight of middle- and upper-class Black women (Romano 2018; Banks 2011; Childs 2005; Crowder and Tolnay 2000). What most existing explorations neglect, however, are Black girls. Because marriage patterns are indicators of a range of other social issues, research has not regarded pre-adult romantic patterns with as much interest, unless the research concerned "deviant" behavior (Crowder and Tolnay 2000). As a result, little is known about Black girls who are not "at-risk." In this chapter, I attempted to build on existing literature about gendered-racial differences in romantic partnering by exploring these differences among Black adolescent girls in elite, white schools. Their experiences contribute to an understanding about the social distance that remains between and within racial groups. Their stories also demonstrate the emotional and psychological consequences for those subordinated by social hierarchies.

The romantic hierarchies in the participants' schools privileged white femininity, which included demure and deferential attitudes, light or white skin, straight hair and slender builds (Slatton 2014; Ispa-Landa 2013; Horvat and Antonio 1999). Most participants in this study did not meet those standards and suffered for it; they were shut out of the dating market (Wilkins 2012; Childs 2005). Prospective male partners in their school contexts found the girls undesirable, which limited the girls' opportunities for positive romantic experiences (Spell 2017; McClintock 2010; Raley and Sullivan 2009). Girls who did garner the interest of boys in their school setting could not achieve the quality of romantic contact they desired, instead, settling for hookups which left them feeling unfulfilled (Freitas 2008).

The girls also described feeling poorly about themselves, doubtful about their attractiveness and apprehensive about pursuing romantic relationships at all (Downey and Feldman 2006; Furman and Shaffer 2003; Welsh et. al 2003; Larson et al. 1999). Interestingly, the girls did not have to have their own romantic experience to suffer the negative emotional effects of rejection; the respondents experienced romantic rejection both directly and vicariously (Mendoza-Denton 2002). Girls who had not engaged in any romantic activities had emotional responses to others' rejection and the prospect of their own rejection. This suggests that the girls viewed romantic rejection as status-based and collective (Miles 2013; Childs 2005; Mendoza Denton 2002). Rejection of one of them felt like rejection of all of them. Irrespective of their personal character, their Black-girl identities guaranteed romantic failure.

Other girls opted out of this collective commiseration. They either rejected romantic interactions completely, as incompatible with their personal goals, or denied that their status affected their romantic prospects; the latter group expressed that they were content with their romantic opportunities and experiences. There were a few factors that distinguished the latter group. The girls within this category had close Black girl friends but shared that most of their friends were white girls. The racial makeup of their friend groups likely led them to find and emphasize similarities with their white friends, girls who may have preferred hookups over committed relationships and whose experiences of romantic rejection were not connected to race (Hamilton and Armstrong 2009; Furman and Shaffer 2003). It is within peer relationships that adolescents learn the most about themselves and begin to prioritize or downplay certain aspects of their identities (Erikson 1968). Through friendships, adolescents learn how they resemble and differ from one another; observing differences that create unequal outcomes between oneself and one's friends is disconcerting (Furman and Shaffer 2003). To avoid this discomfort and the negative emotional consequences of acknowledging their racial and romantic realities, they created alternative narratives (Wilkins 2012; Snow and Anderson 1981). They reframed their romantic realities as their personal decisions, instead of as the product of a racial hierarchy that subordinated them.

Future research should examine Black girls who attended predominantly white schools after their transition into school settings where they were better represented; perhaps, identifying Black women who transitioned from elite, white high schools into historically Black universities would shed light on their feelings about themselves, their

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attractiveness and whether their romantic outcomes changed when they were no longer

hostages to white beauty norms.

4. Chapter 3: *What Kind of Black Girl Are You?*: Second-Generation Black Immigrant Girls' Ethno-Racial Exploration

4.1 Introduction

In one polarizing tweet, Nigerian-born social media influencer Luvvie Ajayi disparaged a native Black-American R&B artist and received fiery backlash from other Black Americans; they accused her of simultaneously profiting from and criticizing Black-American culture (Sensei 2018). And, while expanding roles for Black actors in Hollywood was widely celebrated, many, including American-born Black actor Samuel L. Jackson, questioned whether native-born Blacks were being passed over in favor of foreign-born Blacks, particularly for biopics about Black-American historical figures (Sensei 2018). These incidents ignited a debate among native-born Black Americans, immigrants and their children about the relations between the groups. Second-generation Caribbean-American blogger "Lisa a la Mode" weighed in on the conversation, recounting the judgments about native-born Blacks she had inherited from her family.

> While I had always heard family members speak with disdain about Black Americans, it wasn't until I was a teenager when I learned that this us vs. them mentality spanned across West-Indian cultures. When I'd hear West-Indians attributing certain stereotypes to African Americans, I found myself nodding in agreement. We were different, I insisted. We were educated. Our children were better behaved. We were hard-working. Our food tasted better. African Americans, we said, gave us all a bad name. And while we would befriend them in public, in private, we'd deride them for being stereotypical.

(Lisa a la Mode 2018). Nadege Seppou (2017) shared her personal journey, from making similar assessments about Black Americans and avoiding categorization as a Black American, to acknowledging that her place in the American racial order did not privilege

her foreignness. She counseled her fellow second-generation immigrants that "in your country you were just you, no color attached to your identity, but now you are black" and advised them to "stop saying I am Nigerian, I am Zimbabwean, or I am Kenyan" because "America doesn't care about any of that, in America you are simply black." She admitted that she tried "to fight, deny, and resist … newly prescribed blackness because a ladder of racial hierarchy exists in America" but quickly learned that "blackness put[] [her] at the bottom of this ladder irrespective of the educational or financial status [she] acquire[d]" (Seppou 2017). Statements like these have sprouted across the internet in response to recent pop culture moments, highlighting the perceived differences between Black immigrants and native-born Black Americans (Sensei 2018; Seppou 2017). These controversies brought to light what had been an unspoken tension among Blacks of all ethnicities in the United States: there is a division between ethnic and native Blacks (Waters 1996).

This study examines these differences among a previously overlooked population: Black girls of American, African and Caribbean descent attending predominantly white independent schools. A substantial body of research describes the process by which Black Americans arrive at a fully resolved Black identity (Cross 1978). Still other research documents the racialization experiences of first-generation Black immigrants (Ho 1995); however, few accounts exist documenting the racial-ethnic identity development process of second-generation immigrants (e.g. ,Waters 1994) and even fewer, if any, examine the intricacies of this experience for girls in racially and ethnically dissonant settings.

Black girls existing at this intersection of race, gender, ethnic and class identity have been rendered culturally invisible (Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach 2008; Hancock 2007). Because Black girls are not typically the center of research about race or conversations about gender, their experiences and identity development receive minimal attention (Carbado 2013; Collins 2000; Crenshaw 1991; King 1988). Further complicating analyses of this identity are the additional factors, class and context (Pattillo 2013; Lacy 2004; Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006; Bonilla-Silva 2003; Arrington 2001). Members of the Black middle and upper classes traverse multiple, dissonant racial contexts on a daily basis (Lacy 2004). They may live in Black neighborhoods, attend Black churches and spend time with Black relatives but also work, learn and socialize in predominantly white workplaces, schools and social settings (Wingfield 2012; Lacy 2004; Feagin and Sikes 1994). The Black middle and upper classes must make subtle changes to ease interactions in either setting, requiring they juggle and constantly recalibrate aspects of their identities (Wingfield 2013; Stewart 2008; Jones and McEwen 2000; Feagin and Sikes 1994). Horvat and Antonio (1999) concluded that Black girls attending elite white schools experienced "symbolic violence" as a result of the gulf between their individual habitus and the wealthy, white school habitus. The elite, white school habitus was characterized by "dominant members'" sense of entitlement and assumption that "all members of the community function in society in the same way that they do, with significant class resources and a sense of privilege based on their color (white) and class" (Horvat and Antonio 1999:326). The clash between the values and

ways of being emphasized in their schools versus their own values and ways of being placed the girls in a constant struggle to fit in (Horvat and Antonio 1999).

Black girls with immigrant parents juggle another identity: their ethnic identities (Imoagene 2017). The ways of being they learn from their families and ethnic communities may contradict what they observe among Black-American neighbors and friends; both are at odds with modes of (white) femininity they see in their schools (Imoagene 2017; Balogun 2011; Butterfield 2004). Previous research predicts that they will choose one of these identities, usually a strong ethnic identity, because of the social esteem and rewards associated with their parents' immigrant status (Waters 1994). However, the second-generation immigrant daughters in this study took an alternate path.

The convergence—sometimes discordance—of their racial, ethnic, gender and class identities *and* school settings led to ingenuity. In the face of overwhelming whiteness, the girls found comfort, community and self-worth in their ethno-racial identities. In educating others about their identities, they developed a deeper connection to that identity. This included relationships and interactions with white peers and teachers where they taught others about their families' cultures. It also encompassed interactions with their native Black peers, which highlighted similarities and common experiences they shared with native-born Black Americans. Simultaneously, their proximity to other young women who held liberal views of womanhood, *and* their exposure to a range of gender expressions and roles shaped their concept of their second-generation Black girl identity. The girls placed a high value on their parents' cultures and traditions, but also saw value in Black-American and other cultures, particularly with respect to gender roles.

As a result, they developed identities that reflected each of these influences and eschewed none. Before a more in-depth description of this process, an overview of existing research then the research methods are presented.

4.2 Literature Review

4.2.1 Voluntary Black Immigration

Over the last fifty years, the Black immigrant population in the United States has nearly tripled in number (Waters et al. 2014; Joseph and Hunter 2011; Deaux et al. 2007; Kent 2007; Logan 2007). Immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean account for close to 10 percent of all Blacks in the United States (Foner et al. 2018; Logan 2007). The rapid growth of this segment of the Black population complicates an already complex racial order in this country. Immigrants bring with them what Roth and Kim (2013) call "an anticipatory understanding of U.S. racial hierarchies and attitudes." They also bring their home country's racial hierarchies and attitudes and attempt to resolve the differing systems while resisting being absorbed by them (Rogers 2001; Waters 1994). It is this foreign racial sensibility that distinguishes the identity formation process for the daughters of Black immigrants from that of their "proximal hosts"—native Black girls in America (Imoagene 2017; Joseph and Hunter 2011).

Prominent sociological and psychological descriptions of Black-American identity development center on racial understandings gained in opposition or in comparison to whiteness (Cross 1978; Helms 1993). They outline a process whereby Black youth are made aware of their minority status through negative interactions with racial others or observations of mistreatment based upon race (Helms 1993). Cross

(1978) and Helms (1993) argued that individuals progress through stages in a manner reflecting: their feelings about themselves (personal identity); their reliance on one racial group over another as a reference "to guide their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors" (reference group orientation); and their "deliberate affiliation or commitment to a particular racial group" (ascribed identity) (Helms 1993:5).

Cross' (1978) framework is incompatible with the Black immigrant experience. Typically, Black immigrants come from countries with majority Black populations and do not establish their racial identities in opposition to whites or through a lens of disadvantage (Ifatunji 2016; Foner and Napoli 1978; Ho 1995). Understanding their racial identities did not necessarily include the traumatic experience Cross (1978) described, nor was the potential for upward mobility attached to race (Vickerman 2016). Instead, merit and hard work, especially in the realm of education, were the greatest predictors of success (Vickerman 2016). In the absence of prior minority experience, some argue, Black immigrants may be less mistrustful than their native Black-American counterparts of the racial majority in their new countries (Ifatunji 2016; Rogers 2001). Scholars investigating the Black immigrant experience conclude that enjoying majority status in their home countries made them less "racially conscious" than their proximal hosts and, therefore, "less likely to believe that their racial status restricts their opportunities for social mobility" (Ifatunji 2016:114 (explaining "model minority hypothesis"); Vickerman 2001; Ogbu and Simmons 1998). In fact, some argue that Black immigrants believe their position in American society is an improvement in circumstance and, "as a result, they are willing to accommodate and to accept less than equal treatment

in order to improve their chances for economic success" (Ogbu and Simmons 1998:170).

This racial posture is one of many particularities observed of Black immigrants to the

United States (Imoagene 2017; Ifatunji 2016; Rogers 2001; Ho 1995; Waters 1994).

Another is the fact that many see themselves as distinct from native Black

Americans. In addition to cultivating sympathy with those in power and an optimistic

view of their opportunities for success, Black immigrants' majority status in their home

countries somewhat neutralizes the power of race to facilitate a racial community in

America (Ifatunji 2016; Rogers 2006; Rogers 2001). There are accounts of Black

immigrants resisting categorization as Black upon their arrival to the United States

(Feliciano and Rumbaut 2018; Waters 2014; Thornton 2013; Rogers 2006; Ho 1995).

Indeed, Black immigrants leaving precarious economic and social circumstances may see

distancing themselves from their proximal hosts as a strategic decision (Ho 1999). Many

immigrant groups have gained superior footing to Black Americans through this

distancing and they were rewarded with model minority status, which includes better

employment and earning prospects (Ifatunji 2016; Waters 2014; Deaux et al. 2007;

Rogers 2006; Roediger 2001). Black immigrant parents pass this orientation on to the

second generation (Joseph and Hunter 2011; Waters and Kasinitz 2010; Waters and

Sykes 2009; Hughes et al. 2006; Vickerman 2001; Waters 2001). The decision to

distance oneself from native Black Americans may be more challenging for the daughters

of immigrants who learn their parents' patterns and ways of thinking but have also grown

up with Black-American children, consumed Black-American culture and learned Black-

American cultural modes.

4.2.2 The Second Generation

In many ways, second-generation Black immigrants have more options regarding the identities they enact than many other actors in the United States' racial schema (Litchmore et al. 2016; Waters 1996; Waters 1994; Portes and Zhou 1993). Their birth to Black immigrant parents in this country presents them with choice of a Black-American identity, an ethnic identity emphasizing their foreign lineage and their dissimilarities with Black Americans, a more general immigrant identity, or a hybrid identity incorporating elements of the former categories (Imoagene 2017; Waters 1996; Waters 1994; Vickerman 2001). While early frameworks for understanding the identity formation process among second-generation Black immigrants emphasized a dichotomous choice with potentially dire socioeconomic consequences (Portes and Zhou 1993; Gans 1992), recent accounts envisage a less rigid process whereby the children of immigrants base their identities on multiple influences (Imoagene 2017; Lorick-Wilmot 2014; Alba et al. 2011; Balogun 2011; Waters et al. 2010).

The straight-line assimilation model posits that the more time an immigrant and her progeny reside in the United States, the more they resemble a "mainstream American" and the looser their connection to an immigrant identity (Gordon 1964; Park 1914). By the second generation, this theory predicts that first-generation immigrants will have loser cultural ties to their home countries and their second-generation children will overwhelmingly adopt American identities (Waters 1994; Gordon 1964). An "American identity" can take several forms and, immigration scholars argue, the selected identity determines educational and professional success (Vickerman 2001; Portes and Zhou

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1993; Gans 1992). First-generation immigrants are pressured to take on a Black American identity, but they resist (Ifatunji 2016; Thornton 2013; Waters 1996). Several studies find that the second generation is not as resistant to categorization as Black American (Imoagene 2017; Balogun 2011; Vickerman 2001; Woldemikael 1989).

In stark terms, Portes and Zhou (1993) and Gans (1992) complicated the straight-line model by exploring the several paths children of immigrants take on the path to assimilation. In one scenario, the children of immigrants assimilate into mainstream, white American, middle-class culture (Portes and Zhou 1993; Gans 1992). In another, the second generation assimilates into the underclass and is destined for "permanent poverty" (Portes and Zhou 1993:82). In the final scenario, immigrant children maintain close ties in immigrant communities, drawing on the communities' resources to achieve economic advancement (Portes and Zhou 1993). Portes and Zhou (1993) confirmed color, location and the absence of mobility ladders as predictors of second-generation decline. They argued that non-white immigrant children are particularly at risk of downward mobility which entails adopting a "reactive" identity, internalizing the oppositional culture of native-born minorities because of their proximity to low-class minorities in segregated cities (Balogun 2011; Fordham and Ogbu 1986). Portes and Zhou (1993) explained that immigrant parents, concentrated in labor-intensive jobs, must work hard to ensure their children achieve the goals which motivated their immigration. If immigrant parents cannot secure the resources to accomplish those goals, their children face the same end as native-born Black Americans, "confined to the bottom of the new economic hourglass"

(Portes and Zhou 1993:85). The path to success, then, requires immigrant parents to work hard to keep their children from being overtaken by underclass culture.

Segmented assimilation theory is controversial in the extreme nature of its predictions for second-generation immigrant children who embrace a racial identity instead of a narrowly-defined American middle-class identity or an immigrant identity (Imoagene 2017; Alba et al. 2011; Balogun 2011; Waters et al. 2010; Kasinitz 2008). Immigration scholars and researchers concerned with minority identity development countered that "the mainstream (a term that could be put in the plural to acknowledge the heterogeneity in the mainstream society) is defined by where the members of the majority group, including its working class, are 'at home'" (Alba et al. 2011:769). Therefore, successful adjustment to American society could take many forms and did not necessarily "require individuals to become members of the majority group itself – in other words, to become white" (p.769). Others expanded upon this view of assimilation.

Because second-generation Black immigrants have spent their lives in the United States and experienced an adolescence different from their parents, they have broader conceptions of race, ethnicity, gender and other available identities (Imoagene 2017; Lorick-Wilmot 2014). They must resolve conflicting messages about what it means to be Black, an "ethnic Black," a child of immigrants, an American and whichever other identity they inhabit (Lorick-Wilmot 2014). In her study of the Nigerian second-generation in the United States in Britain, Imoagene (2017:214-15) found almost as many responses to this dilemma as respondents in her study.

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> The adult Nigerian second generation in both countries defined blackness in
> multiple ways. They hold a black racial identity that understands the economic
> and social implications of blacks' low position in the racial hierarchy and are
> mobilized in the fight against antiblack discrimination in their societies. However,
> despite this, they also emphasized ethnic distinctions within the black category.

Balogun (2011) further found that many second-generation Black immigrants did not share their parents' total rejection of a Black racial label and did not experience the downward mobility predicted by segmented assimilation models. The college students in her study did not associate a Black-American identity with downward mobility and found their parents' distancing efforts unnecessary in a college setting (Balogun 2011). They maintained strong ethnic *and* racial identities (Balogun 2011).

Balogun (2011) also found that the college context mattered for the salience of both identities. At predominantly white institutions, "participants tended to place greater emphasis on their racial identities as a means of securing solidarity with other minority blacks on campus" and students at "historically black institutions signaled their ethnic identities to showcase the diversity within the black community" (Balogun 2011:459). Balogun's (2011) study demonstrates the multidimensional nature of the second-generation ethno-racial identity and the importance of context in understanding when particular identity dimensions are more or less salient.

4.2.3 The Daughters of Black Immigrants

Although assimilation theories have progressed from a single-path model to a potentially infinite-path model, research has not addressed the role of gender in the second generation's identity formation process. Exposure to different viewpoints and experiences in the United States introduces a disconnect between second-generation

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women's and their parents' understandings of gender roles (Lorick-Wilmot 2014;

Butterfield 2004; Waters 1996). Lorick-Wilmot (2014:95) found,

> Many of the women grappled with managing the social and cultural expectations
> of their parents' generation, especially in regard to their roles as mother, wife, and
> daughter, and what those roles meant in defining their womanhood in a post-
> feminist society. Others sought to reconcile this mismatch by reinterpreting these
> expectations and reorganizing them into new rituals that they feel are a more
> useful fit in today's the social context.

Butterfield (2004) and Waters (1996) also found that ethno-racial identity development

occurred differently for men and women, but they did not interrogate those differences

further to establish how ethno-racial-gendered identity development occurs among the

second generation.

Although existing research does not examine the particularities of second-

generation Black immigrant girls' ethno-racial-gendered identity development,

intersectional identity development scholarship provides several models to guide this

inquiry. Existing research using an intersectional lens to examine gendered racial identity

development considers the ways the presence of a single identity dimension influences

the development of others (Parks et al. 1996). For example, gender identity for women

develops differently depending upon race, ethnicity, social class or religion (Anderson

and Collins 2004; Jones and McEwen 2000). Parks et al. (1996) found that Black

women's racial and gender identities developed in tandem. A white woman's racial

identity is largely invisible and operates to confer power and privilege but her gender

identity places her in a subordinate position (Parks et al. 1996). Parks et al. (1996)

surmised that the contrasting experiences of privilege and subordination resulted in the

primacy of white women's gender identities. Black women, however, face subordination as a result of both identities, making it difficult to disentangle which experiences were attributable to their race or gender independently (Thomas et al. 2011; Parks et al. 1996). Thomas et al. (2011) found that, as a result, adolescent girls answered questions about their respective gender and racial identities with references to Black womanhood. Their earliest reported experiences of racism dealt with their gendered racial identities, i.e., realizing that they did not resemble their dolls and were not beautiful or recognizing that they were the sole Black person, then the only *Black girl* in an honors class (Thomas et al. 2011). Settles (2006:597) similarly found that "Black women placed equal importance on their race and gender, but the Black-woman identity was rated as more important than either the black or woman identities." This suggests that adding ethnic identity to the analysis will yield similar findings. The daughters of immigrants will incorporate each of these three critical identities without prioritizing one over the other. Their feelings about their racial, gender and ethnic identities will be linked.

4.3 Data And Methods

4.3.1 Participants

Fifty Black adolescent girls, ages fourteen to eighteen, attending predominantly white independent schools on the east coast participated in this study. All of the participants self-identified as middle or upper class based on characteristics including parents' home ownership, parents' occupation and parents' education. Seventeen of the fifty respondents (approximately one-third) were second-generation Black immigrants. Eight of them had two foreign-born parents from the same country; two girls had two

foreign-born parents from two different countries; and seven girls had only one immigrant parent. They represented the following countries: Sierra Leone, Uganda, Jamaica, Trinidad, Guyana, Barbados, Tanzania, Mauritius, Egypt, Guinea, Ghana, Liberia, Gambia, Dominica, Haiti, Bahamas and the Virgin Islands. To select participants, I used the snowball sampling approach. I cultivated a relationship with an organization that provided support to Black families enrolled at independent schools. Through this relationship, I secured several initial interviews and those interviewees referred additional participants.

4.3.2 Interviews

Interviews were semi-structured, narrative-style, video and audio recorded. The interviews began with open-ended questions about participants' school and home lives, then moved to targeted identity questions. The responses analyzed here were guided by open-ended questions about participants' initial adjustment to their school environments, how adjusted they felt at the time of their interview and their friend groups. Then, ethno-racial identity was explored more explicitly by asking the girls, "How do you describe your racial identity?" and when they revealed foreign lineage, "How has your ancestry influenced your identity?" (Appendix A).

4.3.3 Data Analysis

Using open-coding techniques, transcribed interviews were reviewed for major themes (Marsh et al. 2012; Strauss and Corbin 1990). After identifying themes, I grouped the responses by theme and reviewed them together. After this second review of responses by theme, I organized responses into more refined categories. I repeated this

process several times, combining and expanding thematic categories until a coding scheme emerged (Marsh et al. 2012; Strauss and Corbin 1990). Next, I reread the interview transcripts and applied codes. After all of the interviews were coded, I identified quotes that best responded to the research questions.

4.4 Results

Coming of age for the daughters of Black immigrants was a complex process. If the daughters of native Black Americans attending predominantly white prep schools are said to straddle two worlds, the second-generation girls straddled three or more. They attempted to reconcile the disparate influences around them, including two parents' cultures and ideals, Black-American culture and the influence of upper-class, white-American culture. The girls' identity formation process gained yet another level of complexity when contemplating what each of these spheres said about gender roles. They learned what it meant to be or be perceived as a Black woman in America when their parents might have discouraged them from such an identification; when society marginalized that identity; and their school worlds subordinated that identity to normative models of womanhood characterized by whiteness and class privilege (Balogun 2011; Horvat and Antonio 1999).

Interviews with these girls revealed that their ethnic identities were equally important to their racial identities and that the two are intertwined. They were the Black-American daughters of Caribbean and African immigrants. While they respected and valued their parents' traditions, they did not accept them wholesale; rather, they internalized the elements of that culture which advanced their most positive senses of

self. This was particularly true of the girls' gender beliefs and their confidence in their own decision-making abilities. Their school context influenced this process as well. Many of the second-generation respondents viewed their Black girl identities in opposition to the white female majority (Cross 1978). In addition to perceiving their differences, the girls in this study were required to account for their differences, explaining their appearance, their cultures and their very presence to white female peers and adults. The girls' gendered ethno-racial identities were constantly salient which worked to further join and entrench those identities (Jones and McEwen 2000).

The first theme explored in this section is second-generation Black girls' outsider status. They were outsiders in their families when their parents did not understand or accept the parts of their 'selves' that resembled Black-American teenaged girls. They were outsiders among Black friends who did not understand or accept the parts of their selves shaped by a foreign culture. They were outsiders in school, where they attempted to resolve these identities and where white peers and adults had not heard of their parents' home countries. The second theme is the role of family in the girls' gendered ethno-racial identity development. They simultaneously struggled against being ruled by what they considered old-fashioned immigrant values and fought to maintain a connection to their family who espoused those values. The girls' families were influential in instilling pride in their ethnic backgrounds. At times, that ethnic background stifled the girls' self-exploration and made cross-generational communication difficult. The third section highlights some of the differences the girls observed between themselves and

natives, namely their perceptions of racism. The final section shows that, despite seeing themselves slightly differently, the girls were proud to be Black-American girls.

4.4.1 The Outsider of the Outsiders: Experiences of Girls with An Immigrant and A Native Parent

The following section details the second-generation participants' feelings of otherness. As a result of their heritage and their present circumstances, they did not fit in neatly with others who shared that heritage nor with the children of native-born Black Americans. Their responses demonstrate the extent to which the girls truly are a little bit of everything, which sometimes resulted in their feeling like nothing at all. They struggled to reconcile the various cultural influences in their lives *and* to share their multifaceted selves in their relationships with others. *Three of the seventeen respondents* described their efforts to select or disregard lessons from each of their worlds to arrive at a positive self-concept.

India, a cocoa-complexioned eighteen-year-old with freshly installed faux locs, gave a vivid account of the in-betweenness she felt. India's foreign ancestry weighed importantly on her. India's maternal grandmother was born in Mauritius to Mauritian and Egyptian parents and her late maternal grandfather was born in Guinea. They immigrated to the United States when India's mother was two years old. India's late father was born in the U.S. India began attending her school in seventh grade and was the only Black girl in her class for much of her time there, so she "flocked a lot to whoever would take [her]" but "at times" felt "like [she] couldn't really connect with" anyone. When more Black-American girls enrolled, India saw an opportunity to learn from them but also found it

difficult to connect. She remembered their criticism that she "talked like a white girl, [she] didn't dress like them or listen to their music." India "didn't know the slang and [she] asked too many questions and instead of explaining they'd be like, Oh, you wouldn't get it." Reflecting on why she had so much difficulty fitting in with other Black girls, India said, "I didn't have a lot of guidance on how to be 'Black cool,' I guess." India struggled to relate to her peers because she was not Black enough in ways that they recognized, so she settled for superficial friendships (Woldemikael 1989). She was also too different from her familial peers to form deep connections.

India had close relationships with her mother and grandmother both of whom considered themselves Black. These relationships had a strong influence on her. Although she had close relationships with her same-aged cousins, her mixed parentage complicated their connection. In her family, India's rich brown complexion, which she inherited from her foreign-born parent, was one feature which separated her from her relatives. Her cousins had an "exotic" look and they were seen as "cool" because of that. In comparison, India said, "I don't really look like anything, I think, so not saying there's nothing special about me, but kind of yeah." She viewed her cousins' physical otherness as something that made them cool and interesting to their American peers. India did not share her cousins' "exotic" appearance which bound them to one another and piqued the interest of others. Different from India they still bore marks of foreignness which gave them a social advantage (Imoagene 2017; Balogun 2011). She was born with a complexion halfway between her foreign mother's dark skin and her American father's

light skin. India's physical appearance made her difficult to categorize and was just one trait which she felt left her without a clear box to check.

She adopted other aspects of her mother's culture which also failed to garner the desirable "exotic" label and placed her further outside of what she described as "American cool." In addition to her physical appearance, India's tastes made her a conundrum. Her cousins and friends neither shared nor understood her penchant for African food. To India, this was another part of her identity that defied simple categorization. Yet another example of the differences separating India from her familial peers *and* her friends were her musical tastes. India's mother liked to listen to reggae music and before India's father passed "he listened to old school Hip-Hop and R&B and jazz and classical music." Her cousins who attended schools with higher proportions of minority students were well-versed in current Hip-Hop, Rap and R&B music. Their light complexions and mastery of other outward signifiers allowed them to stand out in the right ways, but also allowed them to fit in. India's appearance and preferences made it so that she neither stood out nor fit in. This is consistent with Imoagene's (2017) finding that the children of immigrants do not always benefit from their parents' immigrant status in the way that first-generation immigrants have because they may present as native-born. They rarely speak with accents, they typically dress and style themselves in American trends and are more fluent in American cultural norms (Imoagene 2017; Balogun 2011; Waters 1994). This is especially true for children with one American parent.

Ana described a similar feeling of displacement. At the time of our interview, eighteen-year-old Ana had just graduated from her coed high school and was preparing to

embark on a very different experience at an historically-black all women's college. Ana was open about still learning what it meant to be a Black woman and her fear and excitement about what her college experience would contribute to this understanding. She said,

> I've never thought. Well this is kinda what we're about to talk about. Like, I've never been around so many… I mean … I know dealing with… I don't know … being in a Black community like this. That's something I've never done before like, all around all the time. So, I'm nervous cuz like, will I be accepted? Will I get made fun of? You know stuff like that. So, you know, I don't know. I know I'm going to find people like me, but I don't know … I don't know. It's new and I just think I'm kinda scared.

Ana shared that moments before the interview she was in a tearful panic about the upcoming transition. Ana's anxiety stemmed from her mixed ethnic heritage and her difficulties connecting with her peers. Her mother "was raised the Jamaican way" and her father "was raised the American way."

At a previous school, her Black girls picked on her. They called her "blonde" and "an Uncle Tom" because she had white friends. Her white friends were "more accepting," but they did not fully understand Ana. Ana laughed as she explained, "there's always the, like, questions and it's like when you go to sleep, 'Why do you wear a bonnet?' and questions like that." When Ana enrolled at her high school, she found a group of Black girls who were less judgmental, but she still felt like an outsider. When asked the basis of that feeling, she listed several of the things India listed, including "clothing and hairstyles and things my Black-American friends do that I just don't understand. … Things [I] just never dealt with. I think Black-American kids sometimes feel like they don't have a culture. I've never felt like that." Because of Ana's history of

attending white schools, she did not grow up around many other Black girls and, besides her skin color, did not exhibit the typical attributes that signaled a Black girl identity to her peers (Imoagene 2017; Balogun 2011; Waters 1994).

Ana's remarks reveal the complexity that a female gender identity adds to the second-generation experience. She was not only learning what it meant to be Jamaican and Black, she had to learn how to be a Black, Jamaican-American woman. Her desire to embrace her Black-American identity meant that she did not have her mother's help. Ana spoke about the divergence between her and her mother's experiences and outlooks. Her mother did not encourage her to reject her American heritage, Black-American culture or relationships. However, Ana perceived the negative views her mother had. According to Ana,

> My mom still sees things as like…like she sees a lot of Black-American things as like ghetto and stuff like that. Like, like, I used to … When I went natural, I had to learn to do things for myself. I wear like braids and things like that. That's not something that my mom does, like, I don't think that she liked them. Let me back up. She sees the way that Black-American people act as … not her. She calls them her people, but, like, she'll look at, like, Black Americans and say, "Oh, like, Black-American people can be so trifling," but she still sees herself as part of it. But, like, she was raised so differently so that, like, things that Black-American people do, she's like, "What is that?"

Hair is a central part of Black-American girls' identity (Thompson 2009; Banks 2000). There are styles associated with Black-American girls, but it is the knowledge of hair care and the swagger that the right hairstyle provides which signify membership. Without a Black-American mother, Ana learned the significance and methods of Black-American women's hair care on her own.

Ana also discussed ethnic cleavages in the Black student community and how her mixed lineage put her in a unique position among her second-generation friends. She said,

> I have African friends at school. They probably get it the worst because I think Black American kids will make fun of African kids a lot. And so, they'll come me talking trash about Black-American kids and I'm like, "Ok. Like I'm Jamaican but I still see myself like that." They're definitely defensive about it. One of my friends is from Ghana. She said that she didn't like it when Black Americans claimed Africa or Ghana because she's like, "Well you've never been there" and I think that it obviously doesn't make sense but she's just so defensive about it.

She neither fully identified with other native Black Americans nor with other second-generation friends with two immigrant parents. Ana was proud of her Jamaican heritage, but she did not distance herself from other Black Americans. She was equally proud of her Black-American heritage but did not completely understand or relate to the things she saw as part of Black-American culture. Like India and others in this study, Ana's various identities were constantly in flux and, while her decision to attend a historically Black college reflected her desire to find clarity and confidence in her identity, she acknowledged self-discovery would be a continual process without a fixed endpoint in any single identity category. India and Ana's responses reveal the complexity of second-generation girls' identities.

4.4.2 Family Influences: Balancing Ethnic Pride and American Values

Ana and India spoke about their families as influential in their understandings of their racial, ethnic and gender identities. *A total of nine girls* discussed their parents' influence on their identities in greater detail. They spoke about the pride their parents gave them in their ethnic identities as well as the contradictions between what their

parents valued, what their school worlds expected and what the girls had come to value as Black-American girls.

A recurring theme in the interviews with the second-generation respondents was their parents' work ethic. Eighteen-year-old Caitlyn was the first in her family to be born in the United States. When her sister was two years old, her family immigrated to the United States. In Jamaica, Caitlyn's parents attended private, Catholic schools because of flaws in the public-school system so, they chose a similar path for their daughters. Caitlyn said, "I think because they're from Jamaica … their thing was, like, going to the best schools they can give. That's their whole thing: giving us the best opportunities." Caitlyn and her sister attended an all-girls preparatory school from third grade through twelfth grade. According to Caitlyn, her parents were "on the stricter side … compared to American parents" and were "really big on, like, hard work over talent. You have to put your best effort forward and that kind of thing." Caitlyn attributed her parents' high standards to their Jamaican upbringing. Believing that hard work above all else would secure Caitlyn's future, they worked hard to provide opportunities and expected her to maximize those opportunities by performing well in school (Vickerman 2016; 2001).

Caitlyn incorporated her parents' work ethic into her life and her Black woman identity. She said,

> Something I think about all the time is … because I know that people are going to look at me and assume whatever they assume about me. I'm not what… I don't have to be what people assume or presume for me to be, so I think that's a big thing with being a Black woman is carving your own path and sticking to what you believe in.

And I think that I just make sure I identify myself and that I'm not being identified with anything else besides what I want to be and I think also my parents have been a big part of this but I think I do have to work harder than I guess like a white women in America just because people are already going to assume things about me and I have to fight against that. I mean I don't have to fight against that. I just have to do what I need to do to be the best that I can be and yeah.

Different from many of the parents, Caitlyn's parents seemed to recognize that, in her academic and professional endeavors, Caitlyn would be viewed as a Black woman and not a Jamaican woman. She would not receive the boost in esteem afforded first-generation immigrants, but hard work would guarantee her success (Imoagene 2017; Vickerman 2016; Balogun 2011; Vickerman 2001; Waters 1994). Evidenced by her vacillations between "having to fight against" or not having to fight against stereotypes and racism, her parents also discouraged her from adopting a reactive or pessimistic orientation to this reality. Caitlyn searched for a way to say that she understood that racism would impact her, but to also say that it would not determine her success or failure. She concluded her statement by saying, "I mean, I don't have to fight against that. I just have to do what I need to do to be the best that I can be." Her parents' upbringing in a majority Black nation made them less likely than Black Americans to believe that racism could thwart them (Vickerman 2001; Ogbu and Simmons 1998). The truth of this belief is irrelevant; it is the incomplete transmission of this belief to Caitlyn that is relevant to this study. Her labored response begged the question, did she believe it at all? It proved difficult for Caitlyn to reconcile the lessons about the importance of hard work as its own virtue and the importance of hard work as a Black woman in America because her upbringing and her experience told her two different things. Her Jamaican parents

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taught her that hard work and determination led to success, but her American experiences and knowledge of racism taught her that hard work is not always sufficient to guarantee a Black-American woman's success (Hill 1998; Lubiano 1992).

At the time of our conversation, Dana was a confident sixteen-year-old halfway through her junior year. A slender, coffee-colored girl with a stern but kind face, Dana was extremely active in her school community. When we spoke, she was in her third term as class president, participated in the Black Student Union, sang with the school chorus and the more selective performance group, and served as a tour guide for prospective families.

Dana's mother encouraged her to form relationships with many different types of people and Dana prided herself on befriending most of her classmates. Dana credited her mother with her outgoing personality and her openness to friendships with people who were different from her. Her mother's encouragement may have stemmed from a desire to protect Dana from the negative influences she associated with Black Americans (Feliciano and Rumbaut 2018; Ifatunji 2016; Waters 2014; Thornton 2013; Rogers 2006; Ho 1995). In fact, Dana listed white girls as her best friends but not because of a belief that her association with them would improve her economic outcomes as Portes and Zhou (1993) suggest. Dana chose her friends because they were "different from the other [white girls] in the sense that they're not superficial; they don't all live in mansions"; and she felt she could "talk with them about anything in [her] family and they won't pause or be confused or anything like that." Her closest friend had not grown up in the wealthy neighborhood surrounding the school and "went to a largely black preschool and primary

school." Dana bonded with her white friends because they were also outsiders and could relate to her outsider status, which included her Sierra Leonean heritage, her blended family and middle-class background. Nor was the racial composition of her friend group related to negative perceptions of Black-American girls. Dana had close Black friends and actively participated and her school's Black Student Union. These relationships were important to Dana because of the sense of community and solidarity they provided on her white campus (Balogun 2011; Harper and Quaye 2007).

Dana also credited her parents with her ethnic pride. Her parents immigrated from Sierra Leone and achieved great professional success in the United States. Dana was extremely close with her family. It was this through this close bond that Dana developed her strong pride as a Sierra Leonean-American girl. She explained, "Because of my family is why I identify as two religions over one. Why I identify myself as African American over Black. Why I identify as first generation American … Oh yeah. Definitely my family. My dad always encourages me to take pride in who I am." She did not disparage Black Americans, but Dana was clear that her Sierra Leonean-American girl identity was something distinct and special. She said,

> I'm a Sierra Leonean-American girl and it's different to me because it differentiates me from, just, I don't know, it separates me from just even one race even. It's like going deeper. I've had this conversation a lot especially at school a lot in the past few weeks. Like, I consider African American or Black American … like the difference between the two … when I meet someone who identifies as African American, I assume they have a parent or at least a grandparent who is from a country in Africa versus someone who is Black and has a few generations they've been in this continent. It brings up the question of, at what point are you considered African American over Black? 'Cause, like, is there a certain number of generations you have to go back? Like, there's some blurred lines definitely but that's my interpretation.

The pride Dana's family planted in her was enhanced by her attendance at a predominantly white school. She said,

> It's like because of [my school], I identify even more closely. It's the lack of cultural diversity definitely. Not just the students, but the administration too. I find myself explaining things to some of my teachers. … Before we came to [this school], most girls [there] or even the world … their only correlation between Sierra Leone was Ebola and before that they probably never heard of it before because it's such a small country.

While existing research posits that identity development in opposition to whiteness results in a deficit perspective and oppositional identity, Dana's experiences at school reinforced her positive sense of self (Ogbu and Simmons 1998). Her responses demonstrated, in addition to family influence, the importance of context in shaping her identity.

Dana's family instilled Sierra Leonean pride which grew stronger in her dissonant school setting. Interacting with people unfamiliar with her culture emboldened Dana. Her commitment to her ethno-racial identity did not entail distancing herself from Black Americans and her social success did not suffer as a result of her refusal to do so (Portes and Zhou 1993). Although Dana was an active member of her school's Black Student Union, and shared in the outrage about police violence against unarmed Black victims, she was clear that her ethnic identity was more salient than her racial identity. Like the second-generation college students in Imoagene's (2017:215) and Balogun's (2011) studies, Dana "emphasized ethnic distinctions within the black category" but also implicitly acknowledged her place in the American racial order and sought friendships at school that allowed her to experience and explore both freely.

Dana's school also amplified some of the ideological disagreements she had with her family. Lorick-Wilmot (2014) and Butterfield (2004) suggest that many second-generation women bridle against their families' expectations for women. Their exposure to "American notions of women's liberation" creates a "mismatch" between their own definitions of womanhood and their parents' (Lorick-Wilmot 2012: 92). Dana spoke about this mismatch in her life.

> Oh, I'm definitely a feminist and that's largely part of coming from an African household and experiencing that culture and knowing that is definitely *not* what I want the rest of my life to be like. Well, I just I know that, um, like … and I've seen the way, like, how houses work, and the family works and like my aunts' and uncles' houses. Like my family … like our house is kind of progressive in terms of the rest of my family. Like that way we do things here. Like I know I'm probably more outspoken with my parents than some of my cousins are … how my dad would always say to us, "Oh you're lucky I'm not shipping you back to Africa now cuz you'd be in so much trouble if we were there" and he reminds me of that all the time.

In contrast, Dana described school as a place that forced her to be outgoing. Her teachers encouraged her to speak her mind and to engage in debates that were outside of her comfort zone. She became an independent thinker and developed confidence, which made the subservient roles her female relatives played untenable. She defined for herself a Sierra Leonean-American girl identity that left room for her more liberal American gender identity. Dana's ethnic identity was central to her overall identity, but Dana's experiences at school shaped her into more a hybrid that embraced aspects of her Sierra Leonean heritage and her American experience.

Sixteen-year-old all-girls school student Hillary also described asserting independence in her relationship with her Caribbean mother. Hillary's school

relationships allowed her to investigate versions of womanhood that differed from her

mother's. One of the most important parts of a Black girl's identity was her hair, knowing

what kind of hair she had, which styles best suited that hair type and the ability to "rock"

"Black" styles like braids. Hillary took this Black girl rite of passage without her mother,

sometimes hiding it.

> I actually am more open about being Black than I've ever been because now I wear my hair differently. I do so many different things. In middle school, it was straight, in a bun or in twists. Now it's cornrows, braids, straight hair, puff and I feel okay with it now. Before, if I were to wear a puff to school in middle school, they would ask to touch it like, "What is this? What is this in your head?" I did that once where I let my hair out in an Afro and they were like, "What? No." I wear my Afro in school now and they're like, "It's just Hillary and her Afro" or "Oh it's just her and her buns."

> I got tired of straightening my hair and I would watch … That's when I was friends with the Black girls and they were like, "Why is your hair always straight?" or "Why is your hair damaged?" And I was like, "What? I've never heard of damaged hair!" And they were like, "That's when the ends of your hair are straight." And, in middle school, I thought that was cute. I was like, "That's nice. My hair is straight. I want it to be straight. It makes it easier for it to get straight." And then they're like, "Damaged straight ends are not cute." So okay, fine. I cut it off. My mom asks me one day, "why is it shorter?" I told her it just fell off. She found the hair on the floor.

> But then that's when I was like, "The straight ends are not cute, so we have to go on YouTube and figure out what type of hair I have." Don't know what type of hair I have. It turns out I have 4b hair. And then you have to figure out how to take care of 4b hair. Like, we went through this whole YouTube journey and my mom was like, "What are you doing? Why are you watching other people tell you how to take care of your hair? I'm your mom. Let me do your hair." And I'm like, "I'm fifteen years old. I don't need you to be doing my hair anymore." I got into doing my hair myself. And then I was like, "If I see this Black girl wear her hair like this, then I can do it." So, I tried it and I was like, "I like this hairstyle, I'm going to keep it. So, I kept it." And then I went to school. Let's feel how these people like my hair. Do they like it? Do they not like it? I like it but it might not be acceptable at school. And they were like, "Your hair is so cute. It's different. We love it."

> After that I became more accepting of myself and my hair and how I would carry myself. When I figured out how to fix my hair. And then having Black friends for a while taught me some things but it wasn't like you need to go by what they say.

Complete with air drawn thought bubbles and theatrical retellings of her experiences with her hair and her mother, Hillary described the hair journey that has become an integral part of growing up Black and female in the United States (Thompson 2009; Banks 2000). Thompson (2009:80) found that "for young black girls, hair is not just something to play with, it is something that is laden with messages, and it has the power to dictate how others treat you, and, in turn, how you feel about others." Although Hillary grew comfortable experimenting with her hair, her initial comfort level was dependent upon her white peers' responses.

Fear of arousing unwanted attention from white girls at school stalled Hillary's hair exploration. Yet, balancing exploration with acceptability is part of Black-American women's experience (Rosette and Dumas 2007). This is especially true when Black women spend significant time in white spaces (Horvat and Antonio 1999). As they enter white workplaces, their racial presentation, in the form of grooming choices, may have detrimental effects on their work lives (Rosette and Dumas 2007). As a result, some Black women choose to style themselves in ways that downplay their racial identities— wearing chemically or heat-straightened hair (Rosette and Dumas 2007). Others embrace Black styles, which serve as an outward signal of group membership and evince a commitment to a Black woman identity that it not inherent to Eurocentric hairstyles. Black women with straight hair can be equally committed to a Black woman identity;

however, the choice to wear a Black hairstyle is a choice to be externally labeled as a Black woman with strong feelings about that identity (Rosette and Dumas 2007).

For Black immigrant women, fear of stereotypes or undesirable categorization with Black Americans may lead them to discourage their second-generation daughters from such outward expressions (Feliciano and Rumbaut 2018; Waters 2014; Thornton 2013; Rogers 2006; Ho 1995). Hillary's mother did not experience a hair journey that was related to her identity and she did not understand it. First, the concept of achieving healthy, natural hair was new to the pair. Hillary's one-time friends taught her this concept. While Hillary and her mother found straight hair to be beautiful, Hillary's new friends and YouTube research introduced her to the concept of wearing her natural hair.

Second, Hillary and her mother disagreed about the notion that Hillary could make decisions about her hair without her mother's assent and assistance. Research documents the significance of hair exploration for Black girls' independence and individuality (Candelario 2000). However, in many Caribbean households, "the modal parenting style is authoritarian—with a strong notion that children should be obedient and never question authority, and that respect and deference to elders was the way in which children should behave" (Waters and Sykes 2009:92). Hillary shared that her mother was "very much so about image and how you are presented to the world instead of how you feel comfortable." Hillary identified as Black, but she "identified most" as Caribbean-American. Still, she did not accept wholesale the behavior and presentation prescribed by her mother's Caribbean values. Instead, she insisted on presenting the outward image that made her feel good about herself. This is another example of immigrant daughters'

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reconciliation of multiple influences to become their version of a Black-American and Caribbean or African girl.

4.4.3 Ambivalent Views on Racism

Their ambivalent views on racism distinguished *three of the second-generation respondents* from the other girls in this study. DeDe, a talkative sixteen-year-old was raised by her single Haitian mother. When I met DeDe, she proudly wore a Haitian flag-patterned bandana around her soft, wild hair. When I interviewed her, DeDe was recovering from the flu and draped over the sofa in her and her mother's apartment. Her mother popped in and out of frame as we spoke to add her impressions about DeDe's experiences at her predominantly white all-girls school and her own experiences as an immigrant parent. DeDe and her mother spoke freely with each other and with me about challenges they faced. They both acknowledged they were treated differently because of their ethno-racial identities and because of their socioeconomic status but chose not to focus on that. When asked if and how she and her mother talked about race, DeDe shared,

> To be completely honest … we don't want to talk about [racism] that much anymore. … We don't really look at everything as a race thing. We don't like to bring race in too much because then it'll just show … there will be so many more problems if you say that this has to do with race all the time. Whatever the situation is, just deal with the situation at hand and don't bring any other outside factors into it. Kind of just looking at it black and white instead of, like, bringing race into it or religion or anything. Like, that will kind of make it even bigger of a situation than it really needs to be sometimes. … Like there's so many other factors that it could be beside race.

DeDe strongly identified as Black American, but she did not identify with all aspects of the Black-American girl experience. Consistent with the literature about the

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particularities of immigrant identities, DeDe and her mother were slow to characterize

unfair or unfavorable treatment as racial discrimination (Ifatunji 2016; Vickerman 2001;

Rogers 2001).

Caitlyn expressed a similar hesitance to acknowledge racism. Caitlyn discussed

this hesitance as something that distinguished her from Black Americans. She said,

> I think when I was younger, I had more conversations about how people
> perceived me like lower school, middle school. How people perceive me and how
> people would treat me differently … my mom would talk to me about that. But I
> also think being Jamaican I don't … I think it's a different weight that's on the
> shoulders of Black Americans than there is for me. I notice that for my family too.
> It's just like, a different stress, not stress but a different thought process in that
> way that we live life. I've had those conversations a lot with my dad and how it's
> a different mentality and a different weight that I carry compared to Black
> Americans who have grown up in America with American parents. I'm American
> too but you know.
>
> Disclaimer I think, like, a lot of the things I say … just putting this out there. A lot
> of the things I say are just raw words I'm not really putting that much thought into
> it, but I think there's a lot less anger. I think some people have a lot of anger they
> hold, and I don't carry the same anger as much. A lot of things do anger me with
> the way people are treated but I don't think that carries through with my daily life
> and the way that … I … it's … I feel like I'm less … I think it's a stereotype that
> black people have.
>
> I don't know if it's because I'm Jamaican or because I was raised maybe
> differently, but I think the people that I've grown up around … the people that,
> like, I've become friends with has reduced that kind of anger and kind of
> presumption that people have something against me, I guess. But I'm definitely
> aware of it. Like, I can say all my friends are white and whenever I walked into
> the room probably one of the only really one of two people there, and it's
> something I think about, but I don't feel threatened. I think I'm just less stressed
> about being in a white man's world kind of thing.

Caitlyn described what she deemed a uniquely Black-American response to racism. She

revealed that she experienced discriminatory treatment and observed injustices

perpetuated against Black Americans; however, she did not feel emotionally invested or

impacted by it. Nearing apologetic, Caitlyn understood that she was expected to perceive and respond to racism more than she did but instead adopted her parents' immigrant orientation (Waters 1994).

Ana also shared her ambivalence about some of the issues that provoked her Black-American peers to anger. She said,

> We have BSA and, like, I did it for a while but I was getting frustrated because I thought…I didn't want to be the angry black kids and, like, people were definitely looking at us that way and I think not only that we were being the angry black kids, but the white people were…let me back up. The black people have some fault in it too because they can be too sensitive and then the white kids aren't sensitive enough.

Ana felt that the members of the Black Student Alliance were too quick to take on fights with her white classmates. She characterized them as over-sensitive and left the organization to avoid being similarly characterized by white students. Ana identified strongly as Black American but avoided interactions within this identity that elicited negative emotions or negative labeling by whites (Thornton 2013; Rogers 2006; Rogers 2001; Ho 1995). DeDe's, Caitlyn's and Ana's responses show that, despite owning their Black-American identities, the second-generation girls adopted an immigrant perspective on racism (Ifatunji 2016; Vickerman 2016; Vickerman 2001; Ogbu and Simmons 1998). They refused to expend effort or emotion in their reaction to it.

4.4.4 But I'm Still Black…and Proud

Although the second-generation respondents did not relate to certain aspects of the Black-American experience, it still factored into their overall identities and, for most, was a source of pride. Ana, spoke about ending a friendship with another second-

generation friend as a result of her friend's disparaging comments about Black

Americans. She said,

> I had another friend and I'm Jamaican *but again, like, I'm Black American, like, I see myself with everybody else*. So, then she'd talk to me like, "Black-American people do this and Black guys this this that and the other." I couldn't be friends with her because that was all she'd talk about.

Ana felt comfortable dissecting—even criticizing—fellow Black Americans, but she

could not abide an external attack on that part of herself. Crystal also harbored dual

ethnic identities. She and her younger sister lived with their Liberian mother but were

equally influenced by her American-born father. She explained,

> African-American or Black girl. I identify as both. Because I feel that they're both equally parts of me. Whether I like it or not I'm equally influenced by Black-American culture because of my dad and West African culture because of my mom. I can't pick and choose because it's a part of who I am. It's interesting seeing within Black people the differences in identification. We're all Black but you may be Nigerian and another person from America. There are some very obvious differences. My best friend says she's Caribbean. But she'll also say she's Black. I see them as equally part of me and part of my life.

Crystal refused to choose or prioritize one of her identities over the other. In fact, she saw

the Black race that way. The category, Black, in the United States is multifaceted and

cannot claim or be claimed by one subcategory within it (Imoagene 2017; Lorick-Wilmot

2014; Balogun 2011; Vickerman 2001; Woldemikael 1989).

Nadia gave a similar account. Nadia's parents immigrated from Trinidad and

attended high school, college and law school in the United States. Of her dual identities

Nadia said,

> I describe myself as a Black girl, yes. I never really thought about what it means to me. I guess having confidence in who I am. That there isn't a certain way I should behave as a Black girl. That I want … what I really want is to, like, … I

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guess what I admire from the civil rights movement is that people would own the fact they're Black. In history we just read the passing and how some lighter people would pass as white and I guess being Black to me means that you would never pass and that you would own every aspect of yourself and that you should never feel ashamed about it.

It's like what's cool about the Black community is that there's so much diversity in it and so many different cultures. I identify really as a Trinidadian woman who is really in touch with music. Another thing that I connect with is my hair. People would make me feel like my 4c hair is ugly. And to own that and find beauty in it and embrace the versatility is something I'm working on when I think about being a Black girl. Embracing your hair and not letting people tell you it should be a certain way.

Nadia took pride in being part of a group that allowed her to embrace every facet of her identity. She rejected the moniker "African American" because it felt limiting. She defined Blackness as versatile and confident.

Likewise, Rachel felt that being Black in the United States gave her the freedom to embrace other important facets of her identity in a way that might not be possible elsewhere. Rachel's parents immigrated from Dominica but maintained strong ties with the country. Rachel spent summers in Dominica with family and her parents own a home there. They worked hard to facilitate Rachel's personal connection with their home. Rachel said,

I feel like I live in three different worlds at the same time sometimes. I feel like I live in a Dominican world, a Black-American world, and a corporate world. There's my school world versus my family world versus my Black-American friend world. I feel like I can switch it up because the American culture is really different from the Dominican culture. Whenever I go back, they're like, "Oh she's American" with a negative connotation which I don't really like. But when I'm here they're like, "Oh that's so cool." My family members in Dominica think Black Americans are lazy. I'm like, "No." I don't know how to describe it, but I can switch it up.

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Rachel refused to be categorized as one thing. She listed three different identities that she felt equally comfortable with. She saw America as more hospitable to what appeared contradictory to her Dominican relatives. Her Black American identity was fluid and left room for her Dominican identity (Imoagene 2017).

Tatiana, the daughter of Gambian immigrants, explained that she could not help but identify as both Black and African American; that in the United States, there was no difference between the two identities. Tatiana felt that the experiences shared by members of the African diaspora in America bound them together.

> I say that I'm an African American Muslim girl. I mostly use African American over Black American. I tend to see this separator and divider between Black Americans and African Americans. I think it's just a matter of relating to different things. As an African American I try my best to obliterate that divider. I see the same things as Black Americans do, living in this country. All I see is skin color. The fact that we come from two different backgrounds is the only difference. Other than that, I feel like I can relate to the things going on now. I can see that it's happening to a person of the same race. That's all I see. I acknowledge that we come from two different ethnicities, but I see race. That's my primary focus. The way I present myself is never in a way to clearly distinguish myself from Black Americans. People see it as one honestly.

For Tatiana, Black-American identity was a matter of experience. She acknowledged that members of the Black-American community may claim different origins but maintained that that difference did not matter. The experience of living as a Black person was so powerful that it inextricably joined people "of the same race" (Waters 1994).

4.5 Conclusion

Overall, the second-generation Caribbean and African girls in this study embraced their inherited ethnic heritage *and* their lived Black-American experiences. Indeed, growing up in America instilled in them the belief that they could live in multiple

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categories and feel equally committed to each of them. That is what they valued about their unique position: the freedom to choose or not to choose at all. It was also a source of confusion and sometimes resulted in uncomfortable feelings of otherness.

The girls did not always fit neatly into the spaces their families created for them because they had different perspectives on being a Black young woman in America (Balogun 2011; Butterfield 2004; Waters 1996). Some parents were unaware of the milestones their daughters felt pressure to achieve and resisted allowing their daughters to work towards those milestones independently (Waters and Sikes 2009). Parents were also somewhat ignorant of the difficulties their daughters faced in their predominantly white school settings. The girls sought belonging and solidarity with other Black girls, but their foreign-born families did not provide much assistance in that quest. As a result, the girls did not fit neatly into the spaces allowed to Black girls in their predominantly white schools.

The safe school spaces were in Black girl friend groups, but the study participants were latecomers to learning what membership in those groups required. Of particular importance were outward signals of Black girlhood. Most of the girls felt Black and expressed their personal connection to that identity. However, as adolescent identity formation is so dependent on feedback from others, they craved affirmation from their Black peers which meant learning to understand and present recognizable markers of Blackness (Furman and Shaffer 2003; Waters 1994). Further, their presence in predominantly white schools limited the availability of Black peers (from American and immigrant backgrounds) from which they could learn these lessons (Balogun 2011).

This study confirms existing research on the second-generation experience documenting immigrant children's incorporation of their families' influence with other influences in their American lives to arrive at a hybrid identity (Imoagene 2017; Lorick-Wilmot 2014; Balogun 2011). This chapter contributes to the literature on second-generation Black immigrant identity development by exploring gendered ethno-racial identity and the role of context in shaping that identity. Intersectional scholarship has long established that any investigation of racial identity is incomplete without careful examination of its intersection with gender identity, class identity and myriad other identities (Anderson Collins 2004; Jones and McEwen 2000; Parks et al. 1996). Investigations about the second-generation immigrant identity are incomplete without understanding how racial, ethnic, gender and class identity development cooccurs. Study participants' responses reflected the entirety of their identities. They rarely spoke about their experiences of race, gender or ethnic difference in America without reference to the intersectional identity: Black-American daughter of immigrants.

Further complicating this understanding was the context in which the girls had these experiences. Intersectional scholarship also emphasizes the role of context. Although identity is multidimensional, context influences the salience of particular dimensions and how intertwined in one's core self (Jones and McEwen 2000). Even within a single context, salience may shift depending on the interaction partners and social situation (Stewart 2008). Resisting erasure in their predominantly white schools, the young women endeavored to carve out spaces based on their uniqueness. Their school

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settings also spurred them to seek community with other Black girls despite their ethnic

backgrounds.

5. Conclusion

In the first chapter, I find that, in ways that their parents and other Black adults in their home worlds could not, Black girls taught one another how to be and survive as Black girls in their school environments (Furman and Shaffer 2003). They attended school with wealthy white girls but also with wealthy Black girls, middle-class Black girls and working-class Black girls. Their Black classmates had also been exposed to a variety of different influences, which they carried with them (Arrington 2001; Slaughter-Defoe and Johnson 1988). Some of the girls attended predominantly white and wealthy schools for the entirety of their schooling careers. Others attended predominantly Black schools, mixed schools or schools in other countries. At each phase of the girls' lives they encountered and absorbed information that shaped their racial and gender identities (Arrington 2001:4; see also Decuir-Gunby 2012; Hughes et al. 2006; Richardson 1981). When they finally came into contact with one another, the girls brought their past experiences and understandings with them (Arrington 2001). Each of their individual life histories shaped them as individuals, then shaped their friendships and ultimately worked to shape their friends (Downing and Roush 1985).

In the second chapter, the girls' stories reveal that, because of their position in their schools' gendered-racial hierarchy, they had few, if any, positive romantic interactions. These experiences of romantic rejection shaped their beliefs about themselves, their orientation to others and their expectations for their futures. Some girls internalized these negative experiences; they allowed romantic rejection to diminish their self-esteem and questioned whether a` fulfilling partnership was possible for them.

Others refused to engage in romantic relationships, choosing, instead, to focus on activities and endeavors that compensated for the positive relational reinforcement denied them in romantic relationships. In their stories, Black girls attending predominantly white, elite schools framed themselves as romantically undesirable outsiders or as strong and focused young women whose commitment to academic success did not leave room for romantic relationships. Their stories about romantic experiences were ultimately stories about identity; the narratives revealed the girls' as they saw themselves and as they wished to be seen.

In the final chapter, I find that second-generation Caribbean and African girls embraced their inherited ethnic heritage *and* their lived Black-American experiences. Growing up in America instilled in them the belief that they could live in multiple categories and feel equally committed to each of them. That is what they valued about their unique position: the freedom to choose or not to choose at all. This study contributes to a richer understanding of how marginalized identities can emerge and develop in hostile environments. By telling the stories of a previously overlooked population, this study expands the field of research on Black girls beyond girls at risk. This contribution sheds light on the precarious position of middle- and upper-class Black girls.

Future Research.

In the future, I hope to expand this project in several ways. First, I plan to collect additional data in the form of interviews, focus group discussions and participant observations. By gathering additional interview data from girls, ages fifteen and older I hope to enrich my dataset. Among my existing sample, respondents fifteen and older

provided the most information about their experiences. Supplementing my existing data will allow me to strengthen the findings outlined in the preceding chapters. Focus group data will provide additional insight on how the girls think and speak with their cohorts about their experiences and identities. Additionally, adding longitudinal data will illuminate the longer-term social psychological effects of this academic experience.

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

SCHOOL.
1.   Tell me about your school.
        Probes:
        What are your teachers like?
        What are your classmates like?

2.   How did you come to attend this school?
        Probes:
        How did your family find this school?
        Tell me what the application/interview process was like.

3.   How long have you attended?

4.   How did you feel about coming to this school?
        Probes:
        Were you excited about coming here?
        Why or why not?

5.   How do you feel about attending this school now?

6.   Do you feel a part of the school community?

7.   What does attending this school mean to you?
        Probes:
        How do you think this school helps you?
        How is it different (better or worse) than other schools you've attended?

8.   What activities are you involved in?

9.   What is it like socially?

10.   Describe your most positive moment since Holton.

11.   How typical would you say your experience has been?

FAMILY/HOME, FRIENDS.
12.   Tell me about your family.
        Probes:
        Who do you include?
        Do the people you list live with you?

13. Who in your family are you closest to?
    Probes:
    What's special about that relationship?

14. How much time do you get to spend with your family?
    Probes:
    How often do you see extended family?

15. What role does your family play in your life?
    Probes:
    What do you feel like you learned from your family?
    Your parents specifically?
    How has your family influenced how you see yourself?

16. Did your parents attend schools like yours?

17. What did they do after school?

18. What do your parents do now?

19. Do/did your siblings attend this school or similar schools?

20. How would you describe your family's economic status?
    Probe:
    Why would you describe them this way?

21. Where do you live?
    Probes:
    How far is that from school?
    Do any of your neighbors also attend your school?

22. Tell me about your neighborhood.
    Probes:
    What kinds of homes?
    Kinds of people?

23. Did you grow up here?
    Probes:
    How long have you lived there?
    Where before?

24. How did you feel about growing up there?

25.   Do you feel a part of this community?

26.   Do you have friends in your neighborhood?

27.   Tell me about your 3 closest friends.
        Probes:
        Why are they your best friends?
        What do you get from them?
        Race/gender?
        How did you meet them?
        How long have you known them?
        What's dating like?
        Who are you interested in?
        What do you see your family life being like later?

TARGETED ID QUESTIONS.
Adapted from Stewart (2008)

1.   How would you answer the question, "Who am I?" (Other versions of this question were some- times used: How would you complete this sentence, "I am...")
        Probe: How would you describe yourself? Race? Gender? Class?

2.   Where did you learn about black womanhood?

3.   What have your parents told you about being black, what it means?

4.   What does your school tell you about being a woman? A black woman?

5.   How did you come to see yourself this way?
        Probes:
        What role did your family play? Your school? Neighborhood? Friends?

6.   Have you always felt this way?

7.   How has your understanding of yourself changed over time?

8.   When do you feel like this became who you are?

9.   Can you describe the moment or an experience you had where you realized this is how you see yourself?

10.   Have you ever felt conflict in this identity while you have been at this school? In what ways?

11.   Describe other ways school has affected how you understand yourself.

12.   How has your family affected how you understand yourself?

13.   What other people/things/places have influenced how you see yourself?

14.   If at all, how does your identity or the identity you present change throughout the course of a day?

15.   Why do you think that is?

16.   Have you been able to weave these identities together somehow?

17.   What does it mean to you be a Black girl? Has that ever conflicted with how other people think you should be?
       Probe: Do you ever feel pressure to be different? To adopt a different identity? Or to choose certain aspects of your identity?

18.   How has your school affected this meaning for you?

19.   What does it mean to you to be middle class? To be Black and middle class?
       Probes:
       What do you think is different about your life than White, middle class girls? Black girls who aren't as well off?

20.   Do you feel any sense of ownership over your racial/gender identity?
       Probe: Do you feel like who you are is/was your choice? Or that it is something you choose? Are you proud of it?

21.   How is your experience being Black and female different from what you would suppose your experience would be if you were Black and male?

22.   How is your experience being a Black girl different from what you imagine your experience would be as a White girl?

23.   If you could remake yourself in any way, what would you change, if anything?

24.   Are there any other comments you would like to add?

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