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Literacy 4 Brown Girls an Explorative Study Centered on the Identity and Literacy of African-American Girls

Jendayi Mbalia
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

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LITERACY 4 BROWN GIRLS
AN EXPLORATIVE STUDY CENTERED ON THE IDENTITY AND LITERACY OF
AFRICAN-AMERICAN GIRLS

by

Jendayi Mbalia

A Dissertation Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

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ABSTRACT

LITERACY 4 BROWN GIRLS AN EXPLORATIVE STUDY CENTERED ON THE IDENTITY AND LITERACY OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN GIRLS

by

Jendayi Mbalia

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2019
Under the Supervision of Professor Raquel Farmer-Hinton

The academic needs of African-American girls too often are not linked to their intersecting identities. These interlocked identities often go unseen, thus are rarely addressed in K-12 schools. Specifically, their identities are neglected in some of their English Language Arts classrooms through the sole use of hegemonic literary practices. Literacy 4 Brown Girls was implemented at Midwest School for twelve weeks. The overall purpose of this case study was to explore the ways in which a literacy collaborative, designed with the identities of African-American girls in mind, could impact the identity construction and literacy skill growth of twelve, African-American girls at a local school. Through careful analysis of interviews, documents, and observations, findings from this study suggest that African-American girls require school personnel to develop and maintain an intersectional lens, develop and maintain relational trust, and utilize culturally relevant curricular materials. Not doing so posits that the identities of African-American girls are unimportant and perpetuates their academic neglect and disengagement.

Keywords: intersectionality, African-American, girls, literacy, identity

To

my parents, Ahmed and Doreatha Mbalia

my son, Jalil Rogers

and especially African-American girls everywhere

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

Throughout United States' history, African-American females have been seen as *less than* when compared to Whites and males (see Davis, 1981; hooks, 1981; Hill-Collins & Bilge, 2016). K-12 academic institutions are no exception. In addition to African-American girls being singled out as disobedient or defiant and “pushed out” of schools (see Evans-Winters, 2005; Morris, 2016), they are often classified as struggling readers and writers (see Price-Dennis, 2018). This disproportionality of academic failure is in large part due to a cultural and historical disconnect, meaning, teachers fail to understand the direct association between a person's culture, how they are viewed by society, and their academic output (see Sutherland, 2005). Sutherland (2005) connects identity to literacy when she states, “how one thinks about herself is revealed and reshaped as she writes and talks—the stories she tells reveal identity, are shaped by identity, and shape identity in the proves of being told” (p. 370). Failure to acknowledge the unique experiences of African-American girls stifles their identity construction while simultaneously limiting their academic achievement. Thus, K-12 schools that do not honor African-American girls and their identities serve as perpetrators of unfair practices that disproportionately harm African-American girls.

In light of such conversations centered on the stifling of African-American girls, there has been discussion on the importance of making room for the identity construction and academic advancement of African-American girls in K-12 schools. Specifically, the literature highlights the ways in which society has devalued the sets of experiences these girls bring, even though teachers are not always adept at acknowledging, affirming, or making space for their identities (see Price-Dennis et al., 2017; Price-Dennis, 2018; Muhammad and Haddix, 2016).

Making space for the identity construction of African-American girls can begin to help acknowledge their unique qualities, characteristics, and ways of knowing by placing their experiences at the center of pedagogical practices; creating these spaces can also serve to “challenge the deficit perspectives of young Black women” (Price-Dennis et al., 2017, p. 15) and to force educators to take a closer look at the association between the identities of African-American girls and their academic experiences.

Statement of Problem

The intersection of race, gender, and class are prominent in societal structures (see Crenshaw, 1991). The way in which African-American girls are viewed, treated, and expected to behave in schools directly connects to their neglect in the classroom. If teachers are not able to address stereotyping, to understand the perpetuation of hegemonic beauty standards, or to critique marginalization as problematic in the classroom, how can they create a curriculum that rebels against these acts of injustice? The answer is simple, without recognition of these practices that are disproportionately experienced by African-American girls, (due to their raced, gendered, and classed positions in society) African-American, female students are forgotten. Relatedly, ignoring this population sends the message that their experiences, interests, and various learning styles are irrelevant. With such a wide achievement and suspension gap, due to lack of cultural awareness (see Williams, 2017; Morris, 2016, Crenshaw et al., 2015), African-American girls and their learning needs should be put at the forefront of academic discussions. In order to help achieve the inclusion of African-American girls and their needs in their learning experiences, we must acknowledge and support the identities of African-American girls. One way in which we can support their identities while supporting their academic needs is through implementation of a literacy collaborative (see Muhammad, 2012, 2016). Literacy collaboratives, when rooted in restorative practices and combined with culturally relevant texts and pedagogy,

can serve as identity making spaces and help in the academic advancement of African-American girls.

Significance of Study

Literacy collaboratives can serve as a form of emancipatory education for African-American girls by first acknowledging their identities and secondly, addressing their academic needs (see Greene, 2016; Muhammad, 2012; Wissman, 2011). The findings of this study will first, add to the current research on academic experiences of African-American girls, widening it so that it includes their experiences and needs; second, help to inform teachers and school staff on the necessity of an inclusive ELA curriculum by highlighting the current neglect of African-American students, and, third, help to empower African-American girls by acknowledging and valuing their stories, understandings, and ways of making meaning. In sum, this study is significant in that it will provide an “other space” program, grounded in the use of intersectionality and focused on the restorative and cultural practices, experiences, and literary interests of African-American girls.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore a literacy collaborative and how it impacts identity and literacy for African American girls. Thus, the research questions that will inform this single, explorative case study are as follows:

Research Question:

1. What is the impact of the literacy collaborative on the girls' identities and engagement with literacy building techniques?

Additional Questions

1. How, if at all, can Literacy 4 Brown Girls serve as a safe “other space” for the identity development of African-American, adolescent girls?
2. How, if at all, are African-American girls’ literacies shaped by identity infused, interactive activities?
3. How, if at all, can culturally diverse texts play a role in the literacy advancement of African-American girls?

In order to understand the role of a literacy collaborative in the academic emancipation and advancement of African-American girls, I implemented a twelve-week literacy collaborative with 5th grade African-American female students at Midwest School. In order to explore these research questions, I conducted a single explorative case study about the implementation of the literacy collaborative as well as the literacy and identity outcomes.

Personal Statement

I have worked as a literacy tutor, early literacy program coordinator and currently a Title 1 reading teacher. Over the course of my professional career, I have learned the many ways in which students learn to read, what they are interested in reading and the ways in which I can help them further develop their reading and writing skills by acknowledging what they bring to the table. When I first thought about how I can help African-American girls with literacy I began to think about my own experiences in school. There were no texts that talked about girls like me and teachers were not able to culturally connect. This left a gap in my learning. That same gap is experienced by many adolescent African-American girls today (see Williams, 2017).

In my leisure time I tend to gravitate towards articles that focus on African-American girls and how they are perceived by teachers, how they learn, and how the former impacts the

latter. Specifically, I began reading about the Black Girls Literacy Collective (BGLC) whose aim was to advance the identity construction of African-American girls through literacy. I then spoke to several teachers and asked what they have experienced as far as teaching African-American adolescent girls, what texts were used during ELA (English Language Arts) classes, and what pedagogical practices they used. The responses overwhelmingly showed that African-American girls were unintentionally neglected from a lack of cultural texts, African-American female authors, and identity-shaping activities. Those conversations helped to shape this single, explorative case study which focused on a literacy collaborative designed to aid in the identity construction and academic advancement of African-American girls.

Conclusion

This chapter provided necessary historical context to understand the oppression, marginalization, and discrimination disproportionately experienced by African-American women and girls due to their intersecting identities. Secondly, it illuminated the ways in which the K-12 school system perpetuates these issues through the neglect of girls in their classrooms and curricular experiences. Lastly, it highlighted the ways in which literacy collaboratives, rooted in restorative practices and culturally relevant pedagogical practices, can help in the identity construction and literacy skill growth of African-American girls. The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of a twelve-week literacy collaborative on the identities and literacies of African-American girls at Midwest School.

Chapter two furthers the discussion of chapter one on the historical oppression of African-American women yet introduces the concept of intersectionality and its importance to this study, intersectionality illuminates the ways in which scholars have previously used intersectional identities in their work, and, at the end of the chapter, I extend the theory to

interrogate the overall neglect of African-American girls in their school experiences. Chapter two also provides an introduction to the necessity of a safe other space to counter subtractive school experiences (see Valenzuela, 1999) of African-American girls.

Based on the scholarly work reviewed in Chapter two, Chapter three suggests outlines methodological choices best suited to implement a safe other space literacy collaborative and to explore its outcome. Relatedly, this chapter illuminates the ways in which I gained access to Midwest School, recruited participants, collected data, and analyzed the data. It concludes with the ways I ensured that this study was valid, reliable, and ethical.

Based on the methodological choices highlighted in Chapter three, Chapter four includes study findings generated by participant interviews, field notes, and document analysis. These findings fall under two major themes detailed in this chapter: “The School to Collaborative Pipeline: School-wide impact on Literacy 4 Brown Girls” and “From 3-5: Cultivating Friendship, Identity, and Literacy.”

Chapter five includes implications for policy and practice as it relates to the educational experiences of African-American girls, and suggestions for further research. It concludes with a call to all those with a vested interest in the quality of the educational experiences of African-American girls.

Definition of Terms

ELA. English Language Arts

Other Space. A space outside of regular classroom days and times

Literacy Collaborative. A comprehensive literacy program infused with identity-based curricular materials.

CHAPTER 2: LITERAURE REVIEW

Introduction

According to scholars, (see Davis, 1981; hooks, 1981; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016) the misperceptions experienced by African-American females can directly impact African-American girls in their K-12 schools (see Edward Morris, 2015; Morris, 2016, 2019). The perceptions and stereotypes some teachers possess regarding African-American girls identities, is associated with their academic output. Relatedly, there has been some discussion on the lack of care and attention given to African-American girls in K-12 schools. Specifically, the literature highlights the ways in which society has devalued the sets of experiences these girls bring, thus teachers are not adept at acknowledging, affirming, or making space for their multiple forms of literacy (see Butler, 2017; Greene, 2016; Price-Dennis et al., 2017; Price-Dennis, 2018; Muhammad, 2011; Muhammad and Haddix, 2016; Brown, 2013; Sutherland, 2005).

In this chapter, I first discuss the origin of intersectionality, its contemporary use, its use in the field of education, and critiques of the theoretical frame. Secondly, I will review empirical studies authored by scholars who focus on the advancement of African-American females in K-12 schools by centering their discussion on their possession of multiple identities. Thirdly, I extend the use of intersectionality by broadening it to include an in-depth examination of school-wide relational issues that exacerbate African-American girls' neglect. Lastly, I close with suggesting a literacy collaborative, which takes place in an "other space," that embodies three key elements, an intersectional lens, culturally relevant texts and pedagogy, and an "other space," necessary for the literacy advancement and identity making of African-American girls in K-12 schools.

Framing Oppression

In this country, there is a longstanding history of African-American women's struggles (see Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 1986; Combahee Collective, year; Cooper, 1892; Davis, 1981; hooks, 1984, Lorde, 1979; Truth, 1851). African-American women faced, and still face, several forms of discrimination and marginalization. Beginning as early as the 1800s, African-American female scholars have sought to call out this discrimination unique to African-American women. Sojourner Truth (1851) spoke before a room full of Caucasian men when identifying the intersection of her "blackness" and womanhood stating, "That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman" (Truth, 1851). Sojourner Truth (1851) highlighted the intersection of race and gender by calling out those who referenced how women should be treated while simultaneously ignoring her as a woman because she was African-American. Relatedly, Anna Julia Cooper (1892) wrote a text entitled *A Voice from the South by a Black Woman of the South*. In this text Cooper (1892) spoke to the double discrimination faced by African-American women. She detailed the undeniable unequal positioning of African-American women in society when she stated that "she is confronted by both a woman question and a race problem, and is as yet an unknown or unacknowledged factor in both" (p. 141). A few years later, Mary Church Terrell acknowledged the mistreatment of African-American women especially so in the women's suffrage movement. Due to Terrell's beliefs in the double discrimination of African-American women, she and others formed the National Association of Colored Women in 1896. In 1913, Ida B. Wells who was also an activist for African-American and women's rights refused to march along White feminists from the National American Woman Suffrage Association, an organization which advocated for the voting rights of women, demanded African-American women remain in the

back of the march. Arguing that they deserved to march alongside White feminists, Wells pointed to the continual silencing of African-American women in White women's suffrage movements. Speaking to women's rights, particularly the rights of African-American women, The Combahee River Collective (1978) discussed the importance of struggling against dominant forms of interlocking oppressions in order to produce a different narrative for African-American women, one that is inclusive of the unique identities they possess. Continuing the conversation of the neglect of African-American women by White feminists, Audre Lorde (1979) argued that "It is a particular academic arrogance to assume any discussion of feminist theory without examining our many differences, and without a significant input from poor women, Black and Third World women, and lesbians" (Lorde, 1979). She went on to state that the intersection of identities is inseparable. Similarly, in Angela Davis's (1981) seminal text, *Women, Race & Class*, she discusses African-American women being ignored during the women's suffrage movement. She provides an example of a letter written by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a notable figure in the women's suffrage movement, in which Stanton maintained that the Black cause and the women's cause need not be combined. Davis (1981) states that the letter contained "indisputably racist ideas" (p. 71). The seminal text, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, by Moraga & Anzaldua (1981) edited works by women of color and noted the importance of turning away from a White feminist thought and towards recognition of the intersection of identities among women of color. In a particularly moving excerpt in which there is a dialogue between two African-American feminists, one writer furthers Davis's (1981) discussion by illuminating the way in which White feminists desired to claim their experiences to be those of all women. She states, "how can a white middle class movement deal with all women's oppressions, as it purports to do, particularly if most women are not present to

represent their own interests” (p. 114). bell hooks (1984) criticized those very women discussed in Moraga and Anzaldua’s (1981) excerpt who regarded their oppression as White, middle class women as applicable to all women. bell hooks (1984) stated that assuming that all women are oppressed posits that all women experience oppression in the same fashion. hooks (1984) affirms that when she stated that “this assertion implies that women share a common lot, that factors like class, race, religion, sexual preferences, etc. do not create a diversity of experience that determines the extent to which sexism will be an oppressive factor in the lives of individual women” (p. 5). Patricia Hill Collins (1986) expounds on this notion that African-American women experience oppression in a unique way when she introduced Black Feminist Thought and referred to the “interlocking nature of oppression” when discussing the important works of Black feminists (p. 519) and the necessity of a lens particularly focused on the unique positioning of African-American women in society. This lens, one not seen by White feminists and others who neglected to speak out for the unique positioning of African-American women, was crucial if the problems of African-American women were to be respected, understood, and remedied. Cynthia Dillard (2000) extends Patricia Hill Collin’s (1986) work by maintaining that theories centered on the experiences of African-American women should be situated in a cultural context. Cynthia Dillard (2000) suggests that scholars move beyond the “biological” intersecting identities and focus “constructions to more culturally engaged explanations of being human...” (p. 661). Cynthia Dillard (2000) calls for a shift in the way research, specifically research centering on the experiences of oppressed folk, is executed by suggesting an endarkened feminist epistemology. Along the lines of a research paradigm shift, Crunk Feminist Scholars such as Boylorn (2013) also address the intersection of identities but incorporate hip hop feminism. Much like other scholars have discussed, Boylorn (2013) identifies her experiences in life that revealed the way

in which her intersecting identities worked together to cause increased hardship. She uses Crunk Feminism as a means of bringing “visibility and voice to marginalized populations, and to raise awareness around social injustices” (p. 7). Crunk Feminism, thus, served as another lens by which the experiences of African-American women and girls could be revealed. This section was just an overarching landscape that unfortunately leaves out many worthy scholars.

The above discussion maps the way in which African-American women, scholars and activists have discussed the importance of addressing the multiple intersections of identities possessed by African-American women. African-American women’s issues were ignored because they were either seen through the lens of woman or African-American. There was no lens by which to view their unique standing as African-American AND woman. African-American women needed and deserved a way of framing their issues. Though various explanations and theory iterations have been produced, the focus of this paper is one that, by definition, highlights the intersection of multiple identities and seeks to frame unique problems and experiences of African-American women.

Intersectionality: Creating the Theory

While the women, scholars, and activists discussed above have all struggled to name the experiences faced by African-American women, the term intersectionality was coined by Kimberle Crenshaw. In an article written to explain the need for a new theoretical lens to view the issues faced by African-American women she stated:

Black women's experiences are much broader than the general categories that discrimination discourse provides. Yet the continued insistence that Black women's demands and needs be filtered through categorical analyses that completely obscure their experiences guarantees that their needs will seldom be addressed” (p. 150).

Crenshaw (1989) posited that the issues faced by African-American women could not be limited to an anti-racist or feminist lens. Finding that there were multiple ways in which African-American women could be discriminated against, Crenshaw asserted that the intersection of multiple identities warranted its own theory. Crenshaw (1991) states “because of their intersectional identity as both women and people of color within discourses that are shaped to respond to one or the other, the interests and experiences of women of color are frequently marginalized within both” (p. 1). Crenshaw (1989) explains that the basic tenet of intersectionality is that the unique experiences of African-American women cannot and should not be limited to a “single axis theory” since their discrimination is situated in both racist and sexist practices. She states that “because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism or sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated” (p. 140). In addition, Crenshaw (1989) adds that:

Black women are regarded either as too much like women or Blacks and the compounded nature of their experience is absorbed into the collective experiences of either group or as too different, in which case Black women's Blackness or femaleness sometimes has placed their needs and perspectives at the margin of the feminist and Black liberationist agenda (Crenshaw, 1989, p, 150).

African-American women had no frame by which others could view and understand their oppression and marginalization. It seemed fitting, then, that a theory based on these intersecting identities be formed. Principles of intersectionality, according to Crenshaw (1989), thus are, a) identities are inextricably linked and cannot be viewed separately, b) minorities and marginalized populations, namely African-American women, are and should be the focal point of

intersectionality, and c) identities at the micro level (race, gender, and class) intersect with macro level structural forces such as racism, classism, and sexism to create additional forms of discrimination.

Crenshaw (1991) later takes her discussion of intersectionality further by addressing structural, political, and representational forms of intersectionality. Crenshaw (1991) states that structural and political forces compounded with intersecting identities cause greater hardship for African-American women (especially so as it relates to rape and violence as discussed in her text). Structural intersectionality shows us that there are already systems of oppression in place that disproportionately affect women and this oppression worsens because they are African-American. Crenshaw (1991) states that for example women of color “are burdened by poverty, child-care responsibilities, and the lack of job skills. These burdens, largely the consequence of gender and class oppression, are then compounded by the racially discriminatory employment and housing practices women of color often face” (pp. 1245-1246). Political intersectionality “highlights the fact that women are situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas” (pp. 1251-1252). Political agendas rarely consider the African-American woman since she is not male or White. Again, the intersection of identities causes for additional discrimination and marginalization. Representational intersectionality refers to the way in which African-American women are represented in society. Specifically, Crenshaw (1991) states that “representational intersectionality would include both the ways in which these images are produced through a confluence of prevalent narratives of race and gender, as well as recognition of how contemporary critiques of racist and sexist representation marginalize women of color” (p. 1283). Crenshaw (1991) goes on to discuss rap lyrics produced by the 2 Live Crew, which referred to African-American women as “cunts,

bitches, and all-purpose hos” (p. 1285) as a means of illuminating how African-American women were viewed by mainstream media and how they were neglected in the critique, which shifted the focus from the abusive terms used to describe African-American women to a call for help for White women, that followed the production of the song. This not only perpetuates the misrepresentation of the African-American woman as a hypersexualized being but simultaneously erases her from her own oppression. In sum, Crenshaw (1991) illuminates for readers the multiple ways in which the multiple identities of African-American women work together to increase their experiences of discrimination and marginalization.

Discrimination and marginalization are constant factors for African-American women which is why a lens that can illuminate their issues by considering those interlocking identities is imperative. Crenshaw recognized that need and named a theory that was/still is revelatory in bringing the unique positioning and problems of African-American women to the forefront of the anti-racist and feminist discussions of the scholars before her. Intersectionality has since spread beyond the margins.

Intersectionality: Contemporary Use

Intersectionality has blossomed since its genesis in 1989. Several scholars have since adopted intersectionality in their own work (see Bowleg, 2008; Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Brown, 2013; Collins, 2000; Evans-Winters, 2005; Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Fordham, 1993; Haddix, 2017; McArthur, 2016; Moraga & Anzaldúa; 2015; Morris, 2007; Morris, 2016; Muhammad, 2012, 2016; Price-Dennis, year; Sealey-Ruiz, 2007; 2012; Sutherland, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006). While strides have been made to be more cognizant of issues faced by African-American women, the importance of a theoretical lens that directly addresses the forms of discrimination they experience is still very necessary today. Contemporary scholars are using

intersectionality in similar ways as Crenshaw (1989; 1991) maps out—to unearth the unfair practices used on and against African-American women and girls and the necessity of an intersectional lens to call them out.

In our contemporary scholarship on African American women/girls in educational settings, contemporary scholars center students' identities in the successes they face and the structures that limit them. Fordham (1993), for example, discusses gender passing in “the academy” and outlines how “White womanhood” is the standard by which women of color are judged. This of course becomes problematic when African-American women seek to achieve a level of “womanhood” that is never really attainable due to their intersecting identities. Fordham (1993) addresses this when stating “they are people ‘passing’ for someone they are not: the white American female and, ultimately, the white American male (p. 23). Evans-Winters & Esposito (2010) modernizes Fordham’s (1993) discussion of the intentional silencing of African-American women demonstrated by their forced “passing” to African-American girls being forcibly overlooked, underappreciated, and devalued in schools because of their unique intersecting identities as African-American and female. They state that “because of racism, sexism, and class oppression in the U.S., African-American girls are in multiple jeopardy or race, class, and gender exclusion in mainstream educational institutions (p. 13). Evans-Winters & Esposito (2010) call for a critical race feminist lens by which African-American girls’ academic experiences can be reflective and inclusive of their unique lived experiences. Morris (2016) extends this discussion by highlighting how this multiple jeopardy, as addressed by Evans-Winters & Esposito (2010), works to push African-American girls out of schools. In Morris' work, she looks at the intersection of identities amongst African-American girls in schools in relation to their “push out.” Morris (2016) chronicles events in K-12 schools that speak directly

to injustices faced by African-American girls that are rooted in a distorted view of who they are. Morris (2016) addresses the policing of African-American girls (to be discussed in latter sections) and how that policing interrupts and taints their academic experiences. The narratives obtained by Morris (2016) point to unfair systems in K-12 schools that contribute to “poor academic and behavioral performances” (p. 195). Scholars recognize the importance of acknowledging the intersecting/interlocking identities that continue to oppress, marginalize, and devalue African-American women and girls. The Black Girls Literacy Collective, consisting of English scholars Muhammad, Price-Dennis, Haddix, Womack, and McArthur, address the neglect of African-American girls in English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms and curriculum. They aim to highlight the importance of creating curriculum centered on the unique experiences of African-American girls if the academic system hopes to effectively educate them. Edward Morris (2007) addresses the intersecting identities of African-American girls in relation to femininity and how they are viewed in the classroom. He also calls out schools for perpetuating the cycle of injustice by “reproducing inequality in these areas” (p. 3). Aligning with Edward Morris’s (2007) work highlighting schools inability to address the needs of African-American girls and their unique identities, Sutherland (2005) speaks to the need for an intersectional lens in her work with African-American, female high school students. Sutherland (2005) “explored the identity representation and construction” (p. 365) of the girls she worked with as they read *The Bluest Eye*. In this study, Sutherland’s (2005) participants explored the text and found representations of themselves and their lives. The text and the conversations that followed helped participants to identify intersecting identities and the oppression that that is associated with them. Similarly, Sealey-Ruiz (2007) talks about how important it is to recognize the importance of including the lived experiences of African-American women in school curriculum in her work

focusing on the academic engagement of adult, African-American, female students. She posits that creating a curriculum that is centered on the lived experiences of African-American women increases their engagement in classrooms and with the curriculum. While her work is with adult, African-American, female students, her findings, which acknowledged that the use of a culturally relevant curriculum “gives them opportunity to deconstruct negative stereotypes about them and uncover praiseworthy aspects of their history and culture (p. 58),” are applicable to African-American female students of all ages. Brown (2013) also makes space for a culturally relevant curriculum though not through text. She created a performance group for African-American girls, SOLHOT, and recognizes the importance of making space for “Black” girls whose voices are often left unheard. Aligning with Crenshaw’s structural and political intersectionality discussion, Brown (2013) states that SOLHOT “is about a way of thinking about the world that foregrounds the full humanity of Black girlhood, rather than colluding with institutions, interpersonal interactions, and larger social and political systems that thrive on neglecting Black girls and depend on their disposability” (p. 6).

These are but a few examples of how contemporary scholars recognize the importance of acknowledging the intersecting/interlocking identities that continue to oppress, marginalize, and devalue African-American women and girls. What is threaded throughout their works is the need for the continual use of intersectionality since the perpetuation of multiple forms of oppression are omnipresent for African-American women and girls. This is especially so in the academic institution where the maltreatment of African-American girls is perpetuated.

Intersectionality: Scholars in Education

The structural inequalities in the school system, which disproportionately impact minorities and poor students, are intensified by the intersection of gender for African-American, female students. Scholars use intersectionality or recognize the intersection of identities in relation to marginalization and oppression in their theoretical work with people of color and/or females in education (see Edwards et al., 2016; Evans-Winters, 2005; Morris, 2016).. As mentioned earlier when defining intersectionality, it is important to use this lens to understand the ways in which multiple identities work to create additional discrimination, especially so in the field of education. Throughout this review of theoretical arguments and empirical studies, what is apparent is the implementation of empowering techniques that stem from intersectionality. Though scholars do not necessarily claim themselves to be intersectionalists, their work directly analyzes the intersection of multiple identities. Relatedly, in hopes of advancing the identity and academic needs of African-American girls, scholars use advocacy, affirmation, counter narratives, exposition of erasure and oppression to situate their works in the liberation and support of African-American, female students.

As an example, Harrison (2017) calls for the explicit use of intersectionality as a means of advocating for marginalized youth. In her study, she recruited four African-American girls from various schools in hopes of understanding how they constructed their identities (further details will be discussed below). She states that “an intersectionality lens embraces, acknowledges, and interrogates that intersection of marginalized social constructs such as race and gender that often consciously and unconsciously influence the ways adolescents make meanings of themselves and the world and often influence the way the world makes meaning of youth” (p. 1036). It is apparent, then, that Harrison (2017) believes that through analysis of the

way in which micro level identities intersect with macro social structures (which is named in intersectionality) advocacy for African-American girls and their experiences can and should emerge.

As discussed earlier, Morris' (2016) work also calls for the advocacy of and fair treatment of African-American girls in K-12 schools. Morris (2016) uses an intersectional lens to critique the way in which schools disproportionately punish and push out African-American girls by examining the lives of girls who have experienced school related arrests. She posits that Black women are often impacted by their multiple identities. In response to African-American girls associating themselves with one identity over another, Morris (2016) states that “a failure to acknowledge one’s *whole* self silences a more sophisticated analysis about how race, gender, class, sexual identity, ability, and other identities interact” (p. 23). Morris (2016) calls out the erasure of African-American girls and the need for identity making practices in K-12 schools by highlighting how intersectionality allows for these students to be seen and heard.

Relatedly, Evans-Winters (2005) discusses the trouble young, African-American girls have navigating through their multiple identities in her ethnographic work with three African-American girls who attended schools in low-income, predominately African-American areas. These multiple identities, according to Evans-Winters (2005), “affect their development and student statuses” (p. 162). In alignment with Morris (2016), Harrison (2017), and Tapper (2013), Evans-Winters maintains the importance of the use of intersectionality in education to spur discussions of identity making, counter narratives, and empowerment for African-American female students—discussions that often go unsaid and unheard.

Other scholars (see Petersen, 2006; Garcia & Ortiz, 2013) speak to the ability to transform fields of scholarship with the use of intersectionality by focusing on the intersection of identities in relation to disabilities or special education. While Garcia & Ortiz (2013) speak to using intersectionality as a lens to transform research on special education, Petersen (2006) focuses on the use of intersectionality in understanding African-American females that had been diagnosed with a disability. She calls for educators to practice a holistic understanding of students' identities and the influence those identities can have on classroom experiences. Using intersectionality as a lens to understand these multiple identities lead to positive classroom experiences for students of color by allowing for a greater understanding of their academic experiences, needs, and desires.

The use of intersectionality with African-American females is important. However, some scholars do not name their use of intersectionality, rather they use other theories to highlight the intersection of identities. Culturally relevant care, Black Feminist Thought, and Hip Hop Feminist Theory are all lenses scholars use to view these identities. Based on how intersectionality is used in the literature, these scholars have adopted practices associated with the theory such as affirmation of lived experiences, recognition of the unique experiences of African-American women, and combatting the erasure of those experiences. These practices, rooted in intersectionality, allow for emancipatory experiences in the classroom.

For example, The BGLC (Black Girls Literacy Collective) maintains that educators must ask themselves “what more can be learned from the lives and literacies of Black Girls? What other theories, methodologies, and pedagogies can be used to affirm the lives and literacies of Black girls?” (Price-Dennis et al., 2017, p. 14). Scholars are asking educators to put African-American girls' experiences at the forefront if they wish to effectively engage and instruct them.

Although not naming intersectionality as her lens of choice, Butler (2017) calls for curriculum #SayHerName to be used by English teachers to recognize the unique experiences of African-American women and girls. Similar to Crenshaw's (2016) plea to identify the wrongdoings experienced by African-American women and girls by saying their names, Butler (2017) calls for educators to recognize the importance of naming the struggles faced by African-American women and girls. Through this new curriculum she maintains that teachers will combat the erasure of the lives and narratives of "Brown and Black" women while simultaneously accounting for the lived experiences of African-American girls in schools (p. 156). Relatedly, while Evans-Winters & Esposito (2010) use critical race feminism as a lens in their study calling for research on how to improve the academic outcomes of African-American girls, they name the recognition of the intersection of identities as crucial when stating:

In the postmodern, Black girls and women continue to be beset by racism, poverty, and gender discrimination in our families, communities, and schools. Yet, white feminists have been complacent about addressing the educational and social affairs of girls of color, and to some extent beguiled by the promise of science and reason to solve girls' educational problems. Meanwhile, many Black male scholars have been preoccupied with the demoralization of Black boys in our nation's schools. Meanwhile, the educational concerns of Black girls have fallen to the wayside (p. 22).

Hill (2007) also addresses the role education has on African-American women in a poetic reflection of her lived experiences as African-American and female. By "drawing on the works of feminists of color, I offer poetry and dance as a queered performance to name and resist my embodiment of racism, sexism, and heteropatriarchy" (p. 102). Hill (2007) identifies her interlocking identities as a form of resistance. Relatedly, Edwards et al. (2016), recognize the

importance of acknowledging their multiple intersecting identities. Again, though not naming intersectionality as their theoretical lens, they acknowledge their experiences as women of color as reflecting the intersecting identities they embody. “We experienced as girls, and continue to experience as women, the multiple oppressions rendered by race, class, gender, and sexuality in contemporary U.S. society” (p. 429). Scholars, then, recognize that an instrumental component of instructing African-American, female students is recognition of their multiple identities and how that shapes their academic experiences.

Centering students’ identities in the work with Black girls tends to include culturally relevant texts. Greene (2018), for example, uses a triage of methodologies, hip hop feminist theory, reader response theory, and new literacy studies, in her work with African-American girls who study the text *PUSH* and its relation to their lived experiences. Though Greene (2018) does not name the theoretical lens, she acknowledges that “Black girls face academic barriers that are connected to their gendered, racialized, and classed identities” (p. 274). This exact realization had by Greene (2018) is shared when Sealey-Ruiz (2007) uses Black Feminist Thought as a frame for her study. Seeking to encourage the use of culturally relevant pedagogy in the instruction of African-American women, she situates her study in the historical marginalization of and discrimination against African-American women. Acknowledging that they face unique barriers and come with their own set of experiences, both scholars recognize that the identification and discussion of the intersection of identities for African-American, female students is key in creating emancipatory academic experiences.

The scholars previously discussed all address the intersection of identities as it relates to African-American females. However, as discussed by Carbado et al’s (2013) article entitled “Intersectionality: Mapping the Movements of a Theory,” the theory has ventured beyond

particular fields, national boundaries, and African-American women. This is depicted in an article by Watson, Sealey-Ruiz & Jackson (2014) in which they address the intersection of identities for African-American and Latino males. Though they focus on Culturally Relevant Care and culturally relevant pedagogy, they call educators to shift their deficit thought to one of care and inclusion. Doing so requires the acknowledgement of their position in society, often viewed negatively, as minority and male. Nunez (2014) and Covarrubias (2011) also situate their works in the experiences of Latino and Chicano students, however, they name intersectionality as the lens that reveals how these students are continually marginalized.

The common theme that is threaded throughout the studies is the importance of recognizing the intersecting identities that work together to create additional marginalization, discrimination, and oppression particularly so in the school system. Doing so allows educators, researchers, administrators, and students a holistic view of their experiences and can allow for more effective instruction centered on those lived experiences. Though these scholars either use intersectionality or the intersection of identities in a way that contributes to their participants, studies, and findings, not all scholars use intersectionality in the manner in which it was created. While it was developed to highlight the multiple forms of oppression experienced by African-American women, scholars have been found to either refute the claim that forms of oppression should be viewed simultaneously or they seek to expand intersectionality by claiming a sole focus on African-American women is unjust, which inherently posits that race is not a factor. Ironically, these claims are the very basis on which intersectionality was formed.

Intersectionality: Critiquing the Theory

Beginning with the erasure of race from the theory of intersectionality, Carastathis (2014) discusses the appropriation of intersectionality by women's studies and feminist theorists (p.

305). She maintains that these fields remain dominated by White women and the use (or misuse) of intersectionality by scholars in these fields serves to “obscure its origins in Black Feminist Thought” (p. 305). Similarly, Bilge (2014) speaks to the “whitening” of intersectionality and states that it occurs through feminists claiming that intersectionality is the brainchild of feminism, claiming feminism is responsible for its inception (p. 413) and the push to “broaden” the genealogy of intersectionality. Both strategies run the risk of denying race as critical component of the theory. Bilge (2014) explicates how the misuse of intersectionality by feminists, particularly European feminists, undermines its origin. She states that:

Reframing intersectionality as a creation of “feminism,” an outcome of feminism’s internal debates, effectively erases a landmark oppositionality from which intersectionality emerged: feminists of color confronting racism within feminism. In this disarticulated and rearticulated intersectionality, race also becomes optional, paving the way to similar oppressions and marginalizations, taking place this time not within feminism, but within feminist intersectionality studies (p. 420).

In addition to the discussion of the appropriation of intersectionality, there are some feminist scholars that believe its focus on multiple identities, rather than a focus on causal identities, renders it ineffective. According to Carastathis (2014) Marxist feminists were among the first to critique the theory due to their focus on class as a causal factor. Giminez (2001) openly critiques the theory for not situating class a priori. Not only does she take qualms with the placement of class, often coming at the end when discussing the intersection of race, gender, and class, but she states that changing its place or ranking does not matter because the “perspective erases the qualitative differences between class and other source of inequality and oppression...” (p. 26). While Giminez (2001) argues that class must be viewed on its own and not inextricably

linked to race and gender, she does posit that the combined use of intersectionality and a theory such as Marxism is better suited if people are to fully understand systems of oppression (p. 32). Thus, she does not refute the importance of intersectionality as an enlightening lens by which certain experiences are understood, rather she proposes the addition of other theories to help further its recognition of those most exploited.

These qualms with intersectionality are situated in the failure to recognize its definitional use, to name the ways in which intersecting identities are inextricably linked thus causing multiple forms of oppression. Crenshaw (1989; 1991) does not state that one identity is more important than the other in terms of identifying oppression, rather that they work together to compound experiences of discrimination. In addition, if, as White feminists claim, intersectionality is to overlook the impact of race, African-American women are again erased from both race and feminist theories which perpetuates the nulling of their experiences.

Intersectionality: Summarizing Theoretical Importance

To ensure that the voices, experiences, needs, and desires of African-American women are not nulled, it is imperative that when working with participants who possess intersecting identities, scholars carefully consider the use of intersectionality as it is rooted in highlighting the ways in which multiple identities intersect and create additional forms of discrimination. Most importantly, when working with African-American girls, scholars must first consider their unique positioning as African-American and female (in addition to other identities that intersect such as class, religion and sexuality). Sutherland (2005) states that whether you are considered a girl or a woman, if you are African-American you are placed “in a larger social structure as members of groups” (p. 367). The intersection of race, class and gender is present for adolescent girls as much as it is for women. To use a theoretical lens that does not account for such

intersections is inadvertently claiming that they do not exist. In addition, failure to use a theory such as intersectionality would further claim that “such constructs do not have meaning in the ways in which curriculum is written or classroom pedagogy is enacted” (Sutherland, 2005, p. 367). Theorists, thus, must use intersectionality in action to advocate for African-American girls by helping them to affirm their lives, to help to produce counter narratives, and to expose the erasure and oppression of African-American girls. Only then are they situating their works in the liberation and support of students

Intersectionality in Action

While it is helpful to note how scholars theorize intersectionality, it is just as imperative to *see* intersectionality in the empirical literature. As mentioned, true intersectionalists work to affirm the lives of participants, to help to produce counter narratives, to combat erasure and oppression and to advocate for African-American girls. What follows is a themed review, critique, and analysis of scholars that use intersectionality in their work with African-American girls. The themes that arose from the literature are the perpetuation of stereotypes as they relate to African-American girls and neglect of African-American girls in the classroom; the two, much like multiple identities, are inextricably linked.

Stereotyping of African-American Girls. An intersectional lens seeks to understand how race, gender, class, and other identities work together to create additional discrimination. Stereotypes are ill informed understandings of those who possess multiple identities and can be corrected if the time is taken to highlight how those misperceptions are in fact racialized, gendered, and classed. As Crenshaw (1991) outlined in her discussion of representational intersectionality, the way society treats African-American women stems from the ways they choose to represent them. The literature reviewed in this section take the time to identify those

stereotypical representations and work to correct them through many forms, such as ethnographic work and narrative inquiry, and particularly through the implementation of literacy collaboratives.

Morris (2016), discussed earlier, closely examines and critiques the K-12 school systems' role in disproportionately disciplining African-American girls. Over the course of four years, Morris (2016) collects narratives from girls, over half of which identified as African-American, across Illinois, California, New York, and Louisiana. Morris' (2016) research focuses on the high suspension and expulsion rate of African-American girls in schools across the United States and the unfair punitive measures schools use with these girls that cause this "push out." She uses critical narrative inquiry as the method to reveal her analysis of countless interviews and focus groups. Throughout her work you find references to the ways in which African-American girls are stereotyped. Morris (2016) references the good Black girl versus the bad Black girl (p. 20) and how that is inextricably linked to their being pushed out of schools and into "group homes, training schools, detention centers, and other institutions that attempt to transform bad girls into good girls" (p. 20). Morris (2016) provides readers with examples that range from girls being sent home for wearing their hair in an afro to wearing distracting shoes. These examples display the disproportionate way in which K-12 schools police, critique, and use extreme punitive measures with African-American girls.

Crenshaw et al. (2015) also address the policies that unjustly and disproportionately impact African-American girls in their report on how African-American girls are pushed out, overpoliced, and underprotected in New York and Boston schools. After conducting focus groups with girls and interviews with adults, Crenshaw et al. (2015) found that African-American girls experience high disciplinary, suspension, and expulsion rates. They state that

“while Black girls and Black boys share a common racialized risk of punishment in school, Black girls face a statistically greater chance of suspension and expulsion compared to other students of the same gender” (p. 23). Crenshaw et al. (2015) reported that some girls saw discipline in their schools as outweighing the importance of receiving an education. These racialized and gendered experiences are unique to African-American girls across the nation.

Harrison (2017), whose use of intersectionality was discussed earlier as a theoretical example, adds to the discussion of racialized and gendered experiences of African-American girls in schools in her ethnographic study focused on four African-American girls and their perceptions and conceptions of race and identity. Harrison (2017) conducted interviews, observations and group meetings with four sixth grade African-American girls. Using grounded theory as her analysis, Harrison (2017) found that the girls were often encouraged to reduce their “Blackness.” Though this was not always overtly done, etiquette classes encouraging certain eating techniques and ridicule for style of dress tended to explicate the desire for a particular type of student. Harrison (2017) found that the participants often wanted to disassociate themselves with markers of “Blackness” (p. 1034). Harrison (2017) concludes that intersectionality is imperative when working with young, African-American, female students as it helps to highlight the multiple ways in which these students experience schooling and discrimination within schools.

Sutherland (2005) continues the discussion of stereotyping and hegemonic expectations in her work with six, sixteen year old, African-American female students in an English classroom. Over the course of four months, students met three times per week, studied *The Bluest Eye*, and discussed text to life connections. Through review and analysis of interview transcripts, Sutherland (2005) found that rather than just reading the text, participants analyzed

topics covered and made connections to their life experiences regarding colorism and beauty. Sutherland (2005) found Eurocentric views of beauty and expectations of behavior to be reoccurring themes in her analysis of discussions with the students. Participants spoke to experiences of discrimination based on darker skin color and being viewed as tough or “smart mouthed” because of their being African-American and female (p. 386).

E. Morris (2007) delves deeper into the hegemonic expectations of African-American girls in a two year ethnographic study at a middle school. E. Morris (2007) chose to examine perceptions of African-American female students and how that directly impacts their academic experiences by conducting observations of students and fourteen interviews with administrators and teachers. In relation to “ladies versus loudies,” E. Morris (2007) found that African-American girls are often compared to their White female counterparts, especially so when discussing their behavior. E. Morris (2007) references Fordham (1993) and notes that White women were often viewed as the standard of womanhood, thus, they were deemed ladies. African-American women were held to those standards and if they deviated in the slightest, were never seen as ladies. Finding that African-American girls were constantly under scrutiny, Morris (2007) concluded that the girls’ race, gender, and class effected how staff perceived them. For example, Morris (2007) found that harsher disciplinary measures were taken with African-American girls when compared to their White and Latina counterparts based off of how teachers and administrators perceived them or their femininity. Morris (2007) states that “such perceptions resulted in intended to re-form the femininity of African American girls into something more ‘acceptable.’ However, this more acceptable form of femininity often included traditional aspects of female deference such as passivity and silence” (p. 511). In essence, their femininity was constantly compared to those outlined by hegemonic standards of beauty. Similar

to studies reviewed above, Morris's (2007) findings suggest that African-American, female students are continually punished and corrected based off of comparisons to their White counterparts.

Speaking of such comparisons, Edwards et al. (2016) conducted a study with African-American girls in hopes of understanding how they navigate life in predominately White neighborhoods and schools. Scholars conducted individual case studies with five African-American, female students who attended predominately White schools over the course of four months. Through interviews used to center the narratives and voices of the girls, the goal of this study was to understand how participants identified as "Black" girls and how they conceptualized "Blackness" in their schools and their suburban neighborhoods (p. 434). Scholars also sought to understand how the participants perceived themselves and how they made decisions based off of those perceptions. An example of how some were perceived is depicted in a conversation a scholar had with a participant who spoke to being seen as "ghetto" if they embraced their "Blackness" or "spoke loudly" (p. 435). These differentiations were considered important in a school in which there was limited representation of African-Americans, thus encouraging those that were there to behave in "normative" ways. There were other instances in which participants experienced ridicule due to the styles they chose to wear their hair in and received no reprieve even after discussing these instances with teachers. Similar to Morris (2007), African-American, female students were under constant scrutiny due to their race and gender. Authors also found that their work, which puts the intersection of African-American girls' identities at the forefront, allows for a humanizing experience—one that provides a counter narrative to the often dehumanizing treatment that's been addressed in studies discussed earlier.

The way in which African-American females are viewed, treated, and expected to behave in schools directly connects to their neglect in the classroom. If teachers are not able to view stereotyping, perpetuation of hegemonic beauty standards, or marginalization as problematic in the classroom, how can they create a curriculum that rebels against these acts of injustice? The answer is simple, without recognition of these practices that are disproportionately experienced by African-American females, due to their raced, gendered, and classed positions in society, African-American, female students are forgotten. The following scholars recognize the neglect of African-American girls in the classroom and seek to remedy this issue by prescribing various ways in which educators can create and implement emancipatory curriculum, particularly through the use of culturally relevant texts and literacy practices, designed with the intersection of identities possessed by African-American girls in mind.

Neglect in the Classroom. Stereotypes and misrepresentations of African-American, female students are often associated with their neglect in the classroom. If teachers and school staff do not know how multiple identities work together to shape academic experiences, they cannot understand how to effectively address those experiences through culturally relevant instruction. The scholars discussed in this section demonstrate ways in which the identification of identities can help in designing a curriculum rooted in intersectionality. Some scholars call for the use of an “other space,” one that is outside of the structural walls that house and perpetuate stereotypes in their work with African-American girls. These spaces help to affirm the lives of girls, combat their erasure from daily classroom rhetoric and curriculum, and advocate for their particular academic needs.

An example of a scholar conducting such work in an “other space” is Butler (2017). She conducted a study in which she proposed #Say[ing]HerName as a curriculum to be implemented

in English Language Arts classrooms. Over the course of one week during the summer, ninth and tenth grade students engaged in a multimodal project in which “students (1) researched their own life stories, (2) explored our collective understanding of activism, and (3) used the names of Black women activists as inquiry artifact” (p. 164). Butler (2017) found that creating a curriculum centered on the experiences of African-American women served as a way to both name and fight against oppression; this is especially so for African-American women who are increasingly marginalized. She states that “in our commitments within and beyond the English classroom, #Say[ing]HerName becomes a way of knowing, constructing knowledge, naming oppression, and countering oppression” (p. 175). This sort of curriculum not only makes space for students to learn more about the contributions and importance of historical African-American women, changing the present narrative that reflects stereotypical ideologies about African-American women, but it also makes space for them to identify the ways in which multiple identities intersect and have historically created additional discrimination

Price-Dennis (2016) used media as a means of emancipatory teaching. Price-Dennis (2016) conducted a qualitative case study in which she worked collaboratively with a group of nine fifth grade students over the course of two years. Using tools such as children’s literature, song lyrics, TEDx talks and music videos to explore issues surrounding race and equity, she found that the students were supported by the implementation of a culturally relevant curriculum. These findings were substantiated by the participants’ frustration with images they came across that portrayed them in a negative light and their determination to find images that challenged those perceptions. In other words, the students were engaged with the curriculum because they could combat stereotypical images with ones they felt better reflected themselves. Due to these

findings, Price-Dennis (2016) also called for teachers pay attention to the particular experiences of Black girls and provide the necessary space and opportunity for them to develop.

Relatedly, Greene (2016), discussed earlier, also used technology in her study with six African-American girls between the ages of twelve and seventeen. Through the use of Facebook, students discussed the text *PUSH*. Though Greene (2016) also conducted focus groups and semi-structured interviews at a local library to support the online discussions, the bulk of the data came from the asynchronous online discussions that occurred over the course of two weeks. Greene (2016) posits that African-American girls have been neglected in schools, particularly in ELA classrooms, and there is a need for both out of school spaces for them and culturally relevant pedagogy and texts. Greene (2016) found that the combination of the out of school digital space, Facebook, crafted for the girls, interviews and focus groups, and a culturally relevant text served as “safe spaces for Black girls to represent self and construct their identities” (p. 281). These findings were reflected through girls’ responses to the text that revealed text to life connections. Greene (2016) maintains that the use of “canonical texts” and age old literacy techniques in the classroom will continue to ostracize African-American, adolescent, female students as their lived experiences are not relative, thus, these students are disengaged in ELA classrooms.

While Greene (2016) chose to focus on culturally relevant readings as an aspect of literacy retention for African-American girls, other scholars tackle the importance of writing as forms of identity making and expression. Muhammad and Womack (2015) conducted a four-week long summer collaborative study with fourteen African-American girls. Through the use of technology and media, participants were encouraged to view images and videos and then write about what they saw and how they felt. Participants met three days a week for three hours a day

and were encouraged to read and write for social change, meaning, participants spoke out and against images they saw that negatively depicted them. For example, Muhammad and Womack (2015) found that the participants often wrote “against” representations of Black girls or women that they saw (p. 17). They found that physical beauty, education or being viewed as uneducated, and sexualizing and objectification were what participants “penned or pinned” against (p. 20). The authors, similar to the calls of other scholars reviewed, ask that other educators create spaces for African-American girls to be able to examine and redefine who they are in relation to who society claims them to be (p. 39). Educators must place the experiences of African-American, female students at the forefront of their teachings if they expect to actively engage and effectively educate them.

In another study that encouraged African-American girls to write against their oppressors, McArthur and Muhammad (2017) conducted a four week study with twelve African-American, Muslim girls, adding to the discussion of the intersection of race, gender and class by illuminating the struggles of religion in schools. Using thematic analysis of the letters written by the girls, McArthur and Muhammad found the following themes: sisterhood and unity, education, the journey of life, fighting for their rights, shattering misperceptions, and empowerment. McArthur and Muhammad (2017) discuss the prevalence of discrimination faced by participants and call for educative spaces that “enable youth to make sense of who they are” (p. 75) rather than add to the neglect they experience in their classrooms. The authors used letter writing as a way of advocacy for participants as they encouraged them to use their pens to fight back/against the hegemonic narrative ascribed to their beings.

Muhammad (2012), using advocacy through combatting the erasure of voice, conducted a five week long summer writing institute for African-American girls between the ages of eleven

and seventeen. She worked with sixteen participants and encouraged them to tell stories that would “ensure their voices are heard” (p. 204). Participants were given the freedom to write about what they wanted and were allowed the creative space to take control of their thoughts. Focusing on “mentor texts” by influential authors such as Toni Morrison and Alice Walker, the girls grounded their writings in identity, resiliency, advocacy, and solidarity (p 204). Through review of student writings, Muhammad (2012) concluded that if teachers allow students to use writing to explore their identity, “they may counter hegemonic or misaligned classroom practices” (p. 210). As stated in her work with Womack (see Muhammad & Womack, 2015), Muhammad (2012) insists that African-American, female students require spaces to explore their identities through reading culturally relevant texts and producing expressive writings.

Like Muhammad (2012), Muhammad & Womack (2015), and McArthur & Muhammad (2017), Wissman (2011) also made space for emancipatory writing. In her study conducted over the course of the 2002-2003 school year, Wissman (2011) taught a poetry elective in which she worked with sixteen female participants to create emancipatory poems and photographs that sought to redefine their identities. After composing vignettes based off of student contribution, Wissman (2011) found that hegemonic standards and expectations can be refuted by allowing African-American girls the space to work with culturally relevant texts and by implementing culturally relevant pedagogical practices in and outside of the classroom. For example, in this elective, girls discussed the intersection of race and gender in relation to their desire to write as “Black women” which was not fulfilled in their regular classrooms. This “other space” provided by Wissman (2011) allowed them to do so. Much like the other scholars reviewed in this paper, Wissman (2011) found that these “other spaces” are crucial for girls if educators intend to create a curriculum in which they can express themselves freely. She contends that “these kinds of other

spaces and curricula can be viewed as necessary responses to broader institutional practices and discourses that are themselves exclusionary of the literacies and lives of young women of color” (p. 433). Thus, to ensure that African-American, female students receive the education they deserve, their lived experiences and intersecting identities must be considered.

In sum, the scholars discussed in this empirical review collectively illuminate the ways in which African-American girls experience neglect in their ELA classrooms and counter with ways in which to combat this neglect. *Other* spaces can serve as a means of identity construction and literacy skill building (see Butler, 2017; Crenshaw, 2015; E. Morris, 2007; Greene, 2016; Harrison, 2017; McArthur & Muhammad, 2017; Morris 2016, 2019; Muhammad & Womack, 2015; Muhammad, 2012; Price-Dennis, 2016; Sutherland, 2005; Wissman, 2011). However, these scholars fail to address the overarching school issues that also render African-American girls and their multiple identities invisible. A sole focus on neglect in the ELA classroom posits that African-American girls only experience erasure, push-out, and disengagement in that space. On the contrary, the neglect and erasure of African-American girls and their learning experiences exist school-wide and begin with the ways in which they are treated. Healthy relationships in schools are crucial to school functionality, reform, and academic outcomes (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). In an environment where African-American girls’ identities and experiences are already rendered invisible, strained relationships can further add to their neglect. To add to the discussion on the neglect of African-American girls in their ELA learning experiences, it is important to extend the use of intersectionality beyond the classroom to understand the ways in which dysfunctional schools create additional barriers to their success.

Intersectionality: Extending the Theory

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Crenshaw (1991) extends the theory of intersectionality and applies it to violence experienced by African-American women. Her discussion of structural intersectionality, however, is also relevant in extending the theory beyond the classroom by examining the ways in which African-American females disproportionately experience discrimination at the school level. Crenshaw (1991) also notes how reform, if not rooted in intersectionality, further negates the needs of African-American females. Relatedly, when schools are not informed on the unique needs of African-American girls, their neglect is perpetuated. As such, this section extends the discussion of the experiences of African-American girls in K-12 schools by examining how school dysfunction, which is rooted in a breakdown of relational trust amongst school members, disproportionately impacts the girls' academic experiences. Specifically, I will a) examine the importance of relational trust in school functionality and student success, b) explore the ways in which a lack of relational trust exacerbates the neglect of African-American girls in K-12 schools, and c) reveal ways in which these issues of trust can be remedied through the use of transformative educational practices informed by intersectionality.

Trust has been discussed by scholars as playing a crucial role in the development and maintenance of relationships in schools and other social networks (Coleman, 1988; Goddard, 2003). Coleman (1998) discusses trust as an important component of social networks, or relationships. Goddard (2003) extends his discussion by broadening it to examine the impact trust has in schools and on student success. In his study, Goddard (2003) found that the absence of social capital, which is maintained by a level of relational trust, negatively contributed to the academic success of students. Bryk & Schneider (2003) further the results presented by Goddard

(2003) by illuminating the ways in which relational trust is not only imperative to student success, but necessary for the overall functioning of schools.

Expanding on the importance of relational trust in schools, Bryk & Schneider (2002) explore its impact on overall school functionality. Bryk & Schneider (2002) define relational trust as “a distinct set of role relationships: teachers with students, teachers with other teachers, teachers with parents, and with their school principal (p. 20). Bryk & Schneider (2002) conducted case-studies of three schools to explore their theory that relational trust is key in school functionality, improvement, and reform. Authors found that relational trust contributes to improved students learning and serves as a key resource for school improvement. That is to say that when there is a lack of relational trust, there is not only a breakdown in school functionality, but it hinders the academic success of its students. Thus, they conclude that relational trust is a key element in effective schools, rendering it necessary for school functionality. In other words, how members of the school body perceive their relationships with others correlates to the functionality of the school. These perceptions are rooted in trust. In understanding the importance of relational trust in relation to the success of school functionality and student success, it is important to take the results of the Bryk & Schneider (2002) study a step further and extend our discussion to include the unique impact relational trust has on students of color and low socioeconomic status.

Goddard & Salloum (2009) further the discussion on the importance of relational trust in schools by examining its impact as a mediator between poverty, race, and academic success. They surveyed eighty schools using a fourteen item scale that measured trust between teachers and students. The authors found that, in elementary schools, there is “a positive relationship between trust and academic achievement” (p. 306). Additionally, they found that “poverty and

racial composition themselves are not the only causes of low levels of achievement; rather, achievement may be lower in schools characterized by high levels of disadvantage because trust relations tend to be strained in such schools” (p. 308). According then to Goddard & Salloum (2009), where there is a high population of poverty and students of color in schools, there is a corresponding low level of relational trust. They posit that this may be due to teachers’ beliefs that they cannot build effective relationships with students and families that do not share the same cultural background, values, or ethics.

The aforementioned scholars provide insight into the necessity of relational trust, especially so in schools that serve impoverished students and students of color, in relation to school functionality and student success. However, as stated by Crenshaw (1991), “women of color are differently situated in the economic, social and political worlds” (p. 1250). That is to say, the school experiences of African-American girls are unique due to their societal positioning. Therefore, a lack of relational trust between teachers and African-American girls is also experienced differently from either the experiences of African-American males, or those students who solely experience poverty. This is in large part due to the ways in which African-American females are depicted by society (see Crenshaw, 1991). Morris (2007), discussed earlier in this chapter, adds to this conversation in his work examining the perceptions of African-American girls in schools. His work demonstrates how the misperceptions of African-American girls directly impacts their relationships with their teachers. He states that, “these girls did not experience the same forms of classroom discipline and teacher-student interaction as White girls, Latina girls, Latino boys, or Black boys” (p. 510). Thus, the perceptions of African-American girls as loud, aggressive, or mature, often directly impact the ways they are treated by their teachers and, as a result, their relationships with them.

Relatedly, Scott-Jones & Clark (1986) found that African-American girls were less likely to approach White teachers unless it was absolutely necessary and that teacher-student relationships in relation to African-American girls were not as strong as their White counterparts. Thus, one could conclude, based off the findings of Morris (2007), that relational trust between African-American girls and their teachers are strained based on societal perceptions of their identities. Thus, African-American girls' learning experiences are negatively impacted by strained teacher-student relationships that are rooted in a misperception of their identities.

How then are educators to remedy the issue of exacerbated neglect experienced by African-American girls, in part due to a breakdown in teacher-student relationships and consequential lack of relational trust? This study argues that intersectionality must inform the practices of schools. Schools must consider the unique needs of their most vulnerable students and respond accordingly. Renihan & Renihan (2014) agree. They explore the ways in which schools should acquire a level of responsiveness to meet the needs of their diverse student bodies. In analyzing how to respond to the needs of students at-risk, they state that

We have learned from research and from successful practice that responsiveness is at the heart of providing meaningful and relevant experiences for students who are at risk.

Responsiveness in this sense characterizes schools in which conscious attention is devoted to bringing together, and keeping together, cultures of empowerment, renewal, reciprocity, interdependence, collaboration, choice, and, pre-eminently, pastoral care (p. 12).

African-American girls are placed "at risk" of experiencing strained relationships (see E. Morris, 2007; Morris, 2019, Scott-Jones & Clark, 1986), harsher disciplinary measures (see Crenshaw, 2015; E. Morris, 2007; Morris, 2016, 2019), and, relatedly, higher levels of neglect in their

classrooms when compared to their counterparts (see Butler, 2017; Crenshaw, 2015; E. Morris, 2007; Greene, 2016; Harrison, 2017; McArthur & Muhammad, 2017; Morris, 2016, 2019; Muhammad & Womack, 2015; Muhammad, 2012; Price-Dennis, 2016; Sutherland, 2005; and Wissman, 2011). This placement is due to schools' ill-informed understandings of their multiple identities. If schools are to combat the aforementioned issues that collectively impact the academic success of African-American girls in K-12 schools, they must make use of intersectional practices that illuminate the ways in which their most vulnerable students experience learning; this begins with school personnel caring enough about their lives to establish trust, build significant relationships, and fight for their academic success.

This section extended the use of intersectionality to address the impact that relational trust within schools has on the learning experiences of African-American girls in K-12 schools. While the scholars discussed earlier are correct in illuminating the necessity of other spaces for identity construction and literacy skill support, school dysfunction, rooted in a breakdown of relational trust, can negatively impact those other spaces through the residuals of a subtractive school community. It is imperative, then, to understand how trust plays a role in the neglect of African-American girls' learning experiences. After all, if girls are faced with strained relationships, whether among administrators, between administrators and teachers, teachers and students, or student-student, during their school day, *other* spaces might have to be available, first, in order to help the girls ground themselves in restorative practices aimed at re-establishing trust, building relationships (see Boyes-Watson, 2008), and centering their needs prior to exploring the identity and literacy based curriculum necessary for their academic achievement. When schools demonstrate characteristics such as lack of trust, organizational chaos, inadequate curricula, student boredom, and disciplinary issues, they can negatively impact the learning

experience of African-American girls. These experiences then seep into other spaces that seek to support their identity construction and literacy skills. As such, our safe *other* space often took on the issues of the school day prior to working on our curriculum centered on their identities and literacies.

Conclusion

This chapter presented a review of literature that underlines the historical marginalization and oppression of African-American women, the creation and current use of intersectionality, and an expansion of intersectionality to highlight the many ways in which schools perpetuate the oppression of African-American girls through their curricular neglect. The intersectional practices discussed by scholars in this chapter can lead to new practices and policies to remedy the neglect experienced by African-American girls. Thus, based on the scholarly literature discussed in this chapter, it is my claim that a safe *other* space program that is, first, grounded in the use of intersectionality; secondly, undergirded with restorative practices necessary to mend relational ties neglected during the school day; and thirdly, focused on the cultural practices, experiences, and literary interests of African-American girls is the best attempt at honoring their unique identities, lived experiences, and furthering their academic success. *Literacy 4 Brown Girls* meets the aforementioned criteria by the following: a) using intersectionality as a lens to view the unique experiences of African-American girls, b) creating a safe *other* space for girls to re-build relationships and reestablish trust and c) implementing culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally relevant texts, and emancipatory writings. Using these transformative educational practices will ensure that African-American girls receive the care, attention, and holistic academic experiences they deserve. The following chapter will explore the methodological procedures associated with these practices.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

As discussed in chapter two, acknowledging the cultural practices, experiences, and literary interests of African-American girls is an emerging attempt at honoring their unique identities and lived experiences, as well as furthering their academic success. Moreover, by using intersectionality as a lens, one is able to see the linkages between pedagogy, text, and safe spaces for African-American girls. In this chapter, my aim is both to present the design of a literacy collaborative, based in students' unique level and grounded in intersectionality, as well as the case study methods that were used to explore the literacy collaborative and the students' experiences. The research questions that inform this study are as follows:

Overarching RQ:

1. What is the impact of the literacy collaborative on the girls' identities and engagement with literacy building techniques?

Additional Questions

2. How can Literacy 4 Brown Girls serve as a safe “other space” for the identity development of African-American, adolescent girls?
3. How are African-American girls' literacies shaped by identity infused, interactive activities?
4. How can culturally diverse texts play a role in the literacy advancement of African-American girls?

First, in order to understand the role of a literacy collaborative on the academic emancipation and advancement of African-American girls, I implemented a literacy collaborative with 5th grade African-American female students at a local Milwaukee charter school. Secondly, in order to

explore my research questions, I conducted a single explorative case study about the implementation of the literacy collaborative as well as the literacy and identity outcomes.

Research Design

Case Studies

This study was a single explorative case study of a literacy collaborative that was conducted over the course of twelve weeks. Case studies are the most frequently used forms of qualitative methodologies (see Stake, 2003; Yazan, 2015). While there are different theories as to how to define and design a case study, Merriam (1998) simply states that a case is a bounded system. In other words, a single person, program or group can be viewed as a case to be examined. When a program is the “case” to be studied, case studies can serve as the best methodological choice. In fact, case study methodologist Yin (2002) stresses the fact that case studies are very useful in evaluating programs. However, various case study methodologists (see Yin, 2003; Baxter & Jack, 2008; Merriam, 1998) outline three important criteria, discussed below, that must be met to ensure the case study is the best approach.

The research questions that helped to shape this study are 1) how can Literacy 4 Brown Girls serve as a safe *other* space for the identity development of African-American, adolescent girls, 2) how are African-American girls’ literacies shaped by identity infused interactive activities, and 3) how can culturally diverse texts play a role in the literacy advancement of African-American girls? According to Yin (2003), one way of determining if a case study is an appropriate design is if one seeks to answer “how” or “why” questions. Secondly, Baxter and Jack (2008) contend that case studies should be used when the researcher wants to discuss contextual conditions because they are believed to be relevant to the phenomenon under study. For the purposes of this study, the case was the literacy collaborative. The literacy collaborative,

which was designed to serve as a safe *other* space, was important as it provided a nontoxic place in which African-American girls could express themselves while allowing room for the exploration of identity making and academic advancement. This *other* space was designed to provide the opportunity for participants to discuss contextual conditions particular to their identities and their relevance to their academic achievement.

Merriam (1998) notes that case studies take a particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic approach in understanding a phenomenon. This study focused on one particular program, Literacy 4 Brown Girls. Conducting a case study allowed for a rich description of the literacy collaborative and its participants by deepening the understanding of the overall program. Additionally, the collaborative incorporated components such as free journaling, exploration of culturally relevant texts and poems, and literacy activities: It also was designed to aid in identity and literacy development. For all of these reasons, a case study was the best methodological choice.

In regard to the type of case study that was used, it is my claim that a single case study served as the best design. While critiques of single case studies, namely highlighting the lack of generalizability (see Yin, 2009), are worth noting, there are instances in which a single case study serves as the best method. Yin (2009) describes five scenarios in which a single case study is most advantageous. The two most fitting reasons applicable to Literacy 4 Brown Girls are that the study represents a unique case and that it has the potential to be revelatory. This study is unique in that there are no other collaboratives like Literacy 4 Brown Girls in Milwaukee schools. It is revelatory because it shed light on the potential impact such a collaborative has on participants' identity construction and literacy skills. Indeed, Yin (2009) states that in a revelatory case, researchers have the opportunity to observe and analyze work not previously

made accessible to social science (p. 48). While there have been previous *other* space programs dedicated to African-American, adolescent, female students, Milwaukee has no scholarly literature on such programming. Thus, this study is unique, revelatory and potentially impactful for schools, students, parents and other stakeholders.

As discussed in chapter two, intersectionality is a theoretical frame that highlights the ways in which the multiple identities of African-American women and girls intersect and cause additional layers of discrimination. Therefore, using a case study as a methodology informed by intersectionality can also be revelatory. In a discussion on the movement of intersectionality as a theory, Carbado et al. (2003) state that “intersectionality is a method and a disposition, a heuristic and analytic tool” (p. 1). In other words, intersectionality should serve as an illuminating lens by which the intersection of identities is understood. In addition, intersectionality can serve to highlight findings in cases that may have otherwise been overlooked by the use of “single-axis theories” (see Crenshaw, 1989). MacKinnon (2013) states that “on the simpler level of what it thinks about, focuses awareness on people and experiences—that, in monocular vision, are overlooked” (p. 1020). Relatedly, Cooper (2016) states that the benefit of using intersectionality as a lens is its ability to bring new understandings by illuminating the intersecting identities or “social dynamics” (p. 20). In sum, a case study provides researchers with a deeper understanding of a phenomenon. However, the additional use of an intersectional lens provides insight beyond the reach of a traditional case study by including the ways in which multiple identities impact the phenomenon under study. Thus, this study was best conducted using an intersectional lens.

Literacy Collaborative: Time, Space, and Context

The literacy collaborative met for a total of twenty-two sessions over the course of three months. The duration of each session was two hours and occurred outside of school hours, in the school library, from three p.m. until five p.m. The activities conducted in the literacy collaborative are as follows:

3:15: Introductions, attendance, and sister's pledge

3:20: Sister circle/Sister share

3:25: "Free" journaling/refreshments

3:30: Share out-sharing of journaling

3:40: Recap of text discussion, revisit inferences and predictions for upcoming chapter

3:50: Reading of assigned chapter

4:15: Think, pair, share (discussion of text-main idea, details, text to life connections)

4:30: Predictions for next chapter (based on schema and textual evidence)

4:40: Main idea activity

4:50: Closing journaling

5:00: Sister's pledge, dismissal

These activities (see Appendices I-K for a detailed overview of activities), not always implemented with rigidity, were carefully planned to allow time for free writing; reading relevant texts; intimate peer to peer, group, and facilitator discussions; close review of the ELA standard main idea and details. These activities were chosen to reflect the important objectives of this

literacy collaborative: to increase ELA understanding by continual review of one Wisconsin Core Standard, main idea and details and to allow for identity making and shaping through use of culturally relevant texts, discussions and instruction. As outlined in the study by Muhammad (2012), the use of texts by prominent African-American, female writers, making space for free writing, and allowing time for discussion and sharing of those writings all prove to be characteristics of emancipatory practices for African-American girls. Thus, a safe *other* space literacy collaborative that a) was rooted in restorative practices, b) used culturally relevant texts, and c) focused on core literacy skills was implemented to explore the impact on girls' identities and literacies. These transformative educational practices will be explored in greater detail in the next section.

Efficacy of “Other Spaces”

To implement the literacy collaborative, I worked to maintain the efficacy of the collaborative as an "other space." The scholar practitioners who have implemented literacy collaboratives (see Price-Dennis et al. 2017; Wissman, 2011; Greene, 2016; Muhammad, 2012) have argued that these other spaces should provide opportunities for students to a) read works by authors who are a reflection of their foremothers, b) write about what inspires them and c) express themselves however they see fit. For this reason, I was careful to ensure that our safe other space included the following culturally relevant pedagogical practices: a) texts that were written by an African-American, female author and that featured an African-American, female protagonist, b) writings that were centered on experiences revealed in the text and on the experiences and desires of the girls in the literacy collaborative, and c) discussions that were pertinent to the needs of the girls and relevant to their immediate concerns.

Scholars discussed in chapter two also highlighted the use of other spaces to serve as healing places (see Boyes-Watson, 2008) to counter act the subtractive school characteristics (see Valenzuela, 1999) that some schools exhibit. In addition, it became important that our safe other space employ practices rooted in the restoration of relationships that were broken during the school day. To build relational trust among the girls, we established restorative practices that ultimately aided in their trust of one another and made space for us to further explore their identities and literacies.

Restorative Practices. According to scholars whose work focuses on the disproportionate punishment of African-American girls in schools (see Crenshaw et al., 2015; E. Morris, 2007; Morris, 2016, 2019; Payne & Welch, 2013), restorative practices are often limited for them but serve as helpful ways to restore relationships, restore trust, and build healthy communication skills. Thus, in addition to maintaining the efficacy of our safe other space, I implemented restorative practices that ultimately aided in the relational trust, relationship building, and healthy communication skills of the girls in the literacy collaborative. After the successful implementation of restorative practices, we were then free to explore the culturally relevant pedagogical practices associated with the literacy collaborative.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogical Practices

Culturally Relevant Texts. In addition to our safe other space being rooted in restorative practices, I utilized culturally relevant pedagogical practices that scholars have deemed necessary for the academic success of African-American girls (see Clark, 2017; Muhammad, 2012; Greene, 2016; Sutherland, 2005). Among these practices were the use of two culturally relevant texts. *Make Way for Dyamonde Daniel* and *Rich* were both written by African-American, female poet and writer, Nikki Grimes. These texts creatively discussed the struggles of a young, curly haired,

slim African-American girl who had to cope with the recent divorce of her parents, the relocation of her family and the challenge of financial burdens. These two texts, centered on the identities of African-American girls, also made space for creative, expressive, and informative writings to occur.

Emancipatory Writings. A part of culturally relevant pedagogical practices is the inclusion of emancipatory writings (see Muhammad, 2012). Emancipatory writings make space for African-American girls to write about issues of importance to *them*. In our literacy collaborative, the twelve girls journaled as a means of emancipatory writing (see Appendix K for a list of journal prompts). In addition to journaling prompts connected to our culturally relevant texts, girls were also able to free-write. Through these writings, girls in the literacy collaborative expressed themselves and were allowed to share those works with the collective

Sister Share. The last component of the culturally relevant pedagogical practices implemented in the literacy collaborative was sister share: a time built for the discussion of current issues or events relevant to girls in the literacy collaborative. Sister share afforded girls the opportunity to discuss what was of importance to them, be that text related, read-alouds of their journals, or issues connected to the subtractive experiences of their school day. During this time, I desired that girls experience a freedom unlike their school day. Topics such as homelessness, domestic violence, standards of beauty, and friendships spurred our discussions. Through sister share, I wanted the girls in the literary collaborative to share important aspects of their day, their learning experiences, and, most importantly, their identities.

The combined use of culturally relevant texts, emancipatory writings, and sister share were imperative to the implementation of our safe other space. These culturally relevant pedagogical practices were designed to counter the subtractive experiences of their school day.

Subsequently, I intended that girls could feel free to express feelings of trust, safety, and freedom in our space. Through these transformative educational practices, I also intended that girls would enhance their literacy skills associated with their grade level.

Wisconsin Core Standards

Scholars reviewed in chapter two relay the importance of the inclusion of literacy skill practice in other spaces (see Sutherland, 2005). As such, in addition to creating a safe, other space for the girls, I was careful to include the regular practice of skills associated with their grade level. While I planned to allow the girls to practice text analysis, inferencing, and formation of text to life connections, it was also important to include and have the girls practice and master one Wisconsin core standard: the identification of key ideas and details. This standard was chosen from the Wisconsin Department of Public instruction's manual. In mastering this standard, girls were expected to "quote accurately from the text, compare and contrast characters, and determine the theme of the text" (Department of Public Instruction, 2011, p. 38)¹.

This section detailed the design of the collaborative experiences of twelve girls over the course of a twelve-week long literacy collaborative. As discussed in the next chapter, culturally relevant pedagogical practices and literacy skill instruction were designed to aid in the relationship building, identity construction, and literacy skill growth of these twelve girls in Literacy 4 Brown Girls.

¹ According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's website, current ELA standards are under review (see, <https://dpi.wi.gov/standards>).

Research Site & Participants

Midwest School

Midwest School is located in a bustling part of Milwaukee's Northside and serves over seven hundred students; over ninety percent of this population is African-American. Schools located on this side of town must contend with issues such as high poverty. This was evident through the school's participation in the Community Eligibility Provision program. This program is offered to schools in low-income areas and provides free breakfast and lunch to all students (USDA, 2019). Though bussing is available, many of the students who attend Midwest School reside in the area. The surrounding area is filled with homes and businesses; however, the school itself is situated on a hill, separated from the commotion of its environment. While the school is surrounded by beautiful vegetation, and what seems like endless acres of land, the physical appearance of the building is drab and uninviting. The neutral colored exterior does not lend itself to what one imagines as a school. On the contrary, it models many of the city's correctional facilities. Each morning, students are dropped off in a "parent drop-off/pick-up" line. Cars pull up to the front of the school, one by one, and students are hurriedly ushered into the building. The monotony of Midwest School's morning routine, paired with its physical appearance, was in stark contrast to my previous experiences with other K-8 schools.

Although the outward appearance of Midwest School was not what I expected, it served as an optimal site for this study due to its high population of African-American students. This study was granted approval from the Office on January 18th, 2019. Midwest School granted my request to conduct this study on January 29th, 2019. The IRB approved this study on February 27th, 2019. After permission was granted, I proceeded with the selection and recruitment of the participants.

Selection of Participants

Purposeful sampling was used in the selection of the twelve participants. Purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research that seeks to find individuals most knowledgeable about the phenomenon or case of interest (see Merriam, 2009; Patton 2002). Since this study focused on the identity construction and literacy skill building of fifth grade, African-American girls, participation in the literacy collaborative was limited to those girls who met the following criteria:

1. Students must be female.
2. Students must identify as African-American.
3. Students must be English speaking.
4. Students must be in the fifth grade.

Recruitment of Participants

Prior to beginning recruitment, I met with two members of the administrative team to explain the purpose of this study. Over the course of an hour, we discussed the scholarly literature reviewed in chapter two, the significance of this study, as addressed in chapter one, and the potential outcomes. Both members of the administrative team displayed excitement and engagement throughout our meeting. After deciding on the best days and times to host the literacy collaborative, we agreed to send out flyers to parents of all of the fifth-grade, African-American girls at Midwest school to begin the recruitment process.

LABG Flyer. To begin the recruitment process, I emailed a flyer to the administrative team to be distributed to parents (See Appendix A). This flyer explained the purpose of the study and the events that would take place. The administrative team paired the flyer with an email and phone blast that invited parents to attend an upcoming informational session to learn more about the literacy collaborative.

Parent Meeting. Prior to hosting the parent meeting, I composed a script that detailed pertinent information to be presented and discussed with parents and families (See Appendix B). I used this script as a guide throughout the meeting. During the meeting, I reviewed the intent and importance of this study with the five families that attended. The parents, girls and I discussed the current standings of their ELA classrooms and what they hoped to gain from participation in the literacy collaborative. Four of the five parents and girls who attended agreed to participate in the literacy collaborative. I was not made aware why the fifth family declined participation. I collected those four consent and assent forms prior to the close of our informational session.

Classroom Recruitment. Since this study was designed to include 10-12 participants, I needed to conduct additional recruitment at Midwest School. As such, I was invited to come in to speak with girls from two fifth-grade classrooms and present them with information on the literacy collaborative. I began with speaking to the girls in Mrs. Norm's classroom (as discussed in the following chapter, she left Midwest School for maternity leave soon after this meeting). Interestingly, once the girls learned of the intent of the study, they began asking questions about my personal life and hair. At the time I wore Senegalese twists—a style rooted in African culture and often worn by African-American girls and women. In an attempt to respect and honor their identities by acknowledging the importance of their questions, I engaged in these discussions

revealing my age, aspects of my family life such as motherhood, and my educational experiences. We then proceeded to discuss the importance of hair in the African-American community in connection with the cover of Dyanne Daniel (which displays an African-American girl with naturally textured hair). At the close of this meeting, I distributed consent and assent forms to the girls and requested that, if the girls were interested, they must return the forms before the end of the week.

I then went next door to Mrs. Ashwood's classroom. I explained to her my intent, but she refused to allow me to speak to the girls at that time. I followed-up with her via email asking when might be a better time to come in and discuss the study with the girls. She agreed to allow me to come in the following day.

When I entered her classroom the following day, all of the students' seats were empty. Every student was out of their seat yelling across the room. I quickly caught her attention and requested to speak with the girls in her room. We went into a corner and I hurriedly discussed the study. Rather than asking questions about the study itself, the girls admired my hair and, much like the other class, asked about my personal life. Again, I obliged by sharing with them bits and pieces of my personal history. Hearing Mrs. Ashwood's screams in the background, I decided it best to wrap-up our discussion by providing the girls with consent and assent forms and asking them to return the forms by the end of the week if they were interested. I quickly expressed my gratitude to Mrs. Ashwood with a wave and exited the room.

I remained in daily communication with one of the members from the administrative team via email to ensure timely updates on participant sign-up. Slowly but surely, additional consent forms trickled in. To my surprise, the administrator collected over twelve consent and assent forms from girls. Since the flyer highlighted that participation was on a first come, first

serve basis, I accepted consent and assent forms from the first twelve girls. However, at the start of the collaborative, only eleven of the girls showed up. One of the girls who confirmed participation had conflicting engagements. Therefore, after the start of our literacy collaborative, I granted additional permission to one participant. The table below depicts pseudonyms for the twelve girls and three staff members that participated in the literacy collaborative.

Table 1

Participant Identification Table

Participant	Identity
Angel	African-American
Lauren	African-American
Autumn	African-American
Mariah	African-American
Kyla	African-American
Lynn	African-American/Caucasian
Sasha	African-American
Hannah	African-American
Jasmine	African-American
Ashley	African-American
Krystal	African-American
Tammy	African-American
Mrs. Ashwood	White
Administrator Marian	White
Administrator Kelly	White

The adults listed at the end of Table 1 were selected based on their direct involvement with the participants and/or their direct involvement with school-wide policies and procedures. Additional information on their recruitment process will be discussed in the section below.

Data Collection

Per the advice of qualitative methodologists (see Bowen, 2009; Yin, 2003) I utilized a triage of methodologies: interviews, document analysis, and field notes were the methodological practices associated with this study. Details of these methods, including timeframe and associated steps, are depicted in the table below.

Table 2.

Timeframe for Data Collection, Methods Used, and Completed Steps

Timeframe	Data Collection Method (s)	Completed Steps
March 2019	Interviews	-conducted pre-collaborative teacher interviews. -conducted pre-collaborative participant interviews.
March-June 2019	Field Notes	-observed and recorded events in the literacy collaborative.
March-June 2019	Document Analysis	-collected, read, and reflected on journal entries shared by participants in the literacy collaborative.
May 2019	Mid-Point Interviews	-conducted mid-point interviews with twelve participants.
June 2019	Interviews	-conducted post-collaborative interviews with Mrs. Ashwood

-conducted post-collaborative interviews with Administrators Kelly and Marian.

-conducted post-collaborative interviews with participants.

Interviews

Interviews are a commonly used qualitative tool that provide additional insight to researcher observations. According to Cresswell (2018), interviews can also provide room for specific questions and historical information/context. Interviews can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured depending on the needs of the study. For the purpose of this study, I used semi structured interviews with one teacher, two members of the administrative team, and participants. Teachers were interviewed twice, once at the beginning of the study and once at the end. Administrative members were interviewed only once at the close of the study. Participants were interviewed three times. These interviews occurred pre-literacy collaborative, midway through the literacy collaborative, and post-literacy collaborative.

Teacher Interviews. Following the class presentation, I emailed Mrs. Ashwood to ask when would be the best time to brief her on the purpose of my study and to conduct interviews. She agreed to an afterschool phone interview. Prior to our call, I sent Mrs. Ashwood a consent form via email which she completed and returned. During our call, I explained to her the purpose of this study. She seemed excited and was eager to proceed with the interview. Our first interview was semi-structured (see Appendix F) and included questions related to the curriculum she uses and current ELA standings of the participants from her classroom (nine of the twelve girls). Our first interview lasted approximately one hour.

Our second interview occurred in June 2019 also via phone. The interview questions remained semi structured (see Appendix G) and consisted of follow-up questions and probes that attempted to help me understand the current state of Mrs. Ashwood's classroom and curricular choices. Additionally, the interview questions helped me to glean insight into the current ELA standing and progress, if at all, of nine of the twelve literacy collaborative participants that were students in her classroom.

Administrative Interviews. Interviews with the administrative team occurred only once, at the close of the literacy collaborative. It was my opinion that additional insight on school-wide issues and participants needed to be gleaned from other staff members. Thus, I submitted additional interview protocols to UWM's IRB in June. These protocols were approved and I proceeded to reach out via email to two members of Midwest School's administrative team.

I interviewed Administrator Kelly via phone in June. Her interview questions were also semi structured (see Appendix H). Our post-collaborative interview, which lasted for ninety minutes, consisted of questions pertaining to school-wide issues such as student and teacher attrition, behavioral issues of students, and curricular choices. Administrator Marian's interview lasted for only twenty minutes.² Since she stepped in as a substitute teacher for a brief period, her semi structured interview (see Appendix G) was directed more toward gleaning insight into the three additional literacy collaborative participants that were not in Mrs. Ashwood's classroom. Though limited in scope due to her short stay in their classroom, her interview provided helpful insight into the ELA standings of the three participants and their social and emotional growth.

² This administrator served as a substitute teacher for a fifth-grade classroom for approximately two weeks. Due to her short stay in the classroom, our interview was not as lengthy as others.

Participant Interviews. I conducted interviews with participants at the start, middle, and end of the literacy collaborative. These interviews were semi structured (see Appendices C-E) and lasted between fifteen and twenty minutes per participant. The pre-collaborative interviews were used as a means of understanding pertinent information about the girls' interests (e.g. identity, hobbies, taste in music, and favorite celebrity) as well as information on their current ELA experiences. Mid-point interviews were used as a form of check-ins with the girls. These interviews, which lasted approximately ten minutes per participant, gathered information on girls' current thoughts on practices in the literacy collaborative (e.g. insight on textual choices, writings, and discussions). Finally, our post-collaborative interviews lasted approximately fifteen to twenty minutes per participant. These interview questions (see Appendix E) asked follow-up questions from our initial interview (e.g. Do you still identify as an African-American girl?) and also asked for insight on their overall experiences in the twelve-week literacy collaborative.

Field Notes

In addition to interviews, I recorded field notes throughout the twelve-week literacy collaborative. Field notes are a key component of qualitative research and help support interview data by providing additional insight that might not have been captured through participant responses. Using a rubric (see Appendix L), I recorded field notes throughout the literacy collaborative. According to Phillippi & Lauderdale (2017), "taking small notes during the interaction can assist your memory but should not interrupt the flow of the moment or distract you or the participant" (p. 385). Thus, I recorded short phrases or words that would prompt greater thought after the end of each session. This method allowed me to stay present during literacy collaborative sessions while aiding in subsequent recall processes.

Document Analysis

The last methodological practice used for this study was document analysis. Scholars have discussed the effectiveness of using document analysis in case studies (see Bowen, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994) and as a complement to other qualitative methods. Using a triage of methodologies is necessary “to seek convergence and corroboration through the use of different data sources and methods” (Bowen, 2009, p. 28). Participants wrote in their journals at the start and close of each literacy collaborative session. After each literacy collaborative session, I collected the journals, read them, and recorded my thoughts in a memo book. I reported back to participants each week with my initial analyses of their writings. This helped to ensure that my understandings of participant writings aligned with their intent. Additionally, as discussed by Bowen (2009) and addressed in greater detail in chapter four, the journals helped to provide contextual data, helped me to formulate questions that needed to be asked, aided in participant development (e.g. literacy skill growth or identity construction), and offered me supplementary research data that helped to substantiate the findings from my field notes and interviews.

Data Analysis

According to Richards (2005), “qualitative research works up from the data” (p. 67). Therefore, data analysis begins by carefully reading through the multiple data sources, annotating, and recording my thoughts in memo books. The following figure provides visual representation of the cyclical process used for each data source.

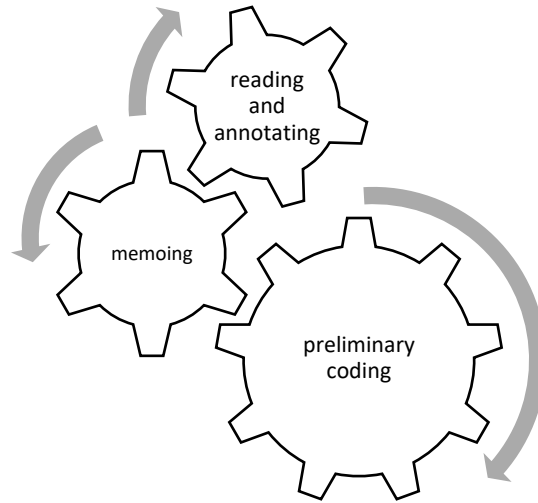


Figure 1. Data Analysis Flow Chart

As depicted in figure 1, the data analysis process was continual. For each data source: transcripts, field notes, and documents, I was careful to first read the data, line by line, and then record my initial thoughts in the margins of the transcripts, journals, and field notes. Next, I recorded my thoughts and interpretations of the data in memo books; this process will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. Finally, I created preliminary topical, descriptive, and analytical codes (see Richards, 2005), driven both by the literature and data, which reflected my initial findings. This cycle, as illustrated in the above figure, occurred continually within and across data sources until I reached data saturation.

Following this process, themes and sub-themes emerged in correlation to the codes. My data analysis resulted in two overarching themes: 1) The School to Collaborative Pipeline: School-wide Impact on Literacy 4 Brown Girls and 2) From 3-5: Cultivating Friendship, Identity, & Literacy. The former addresses school-wide issues that directly affected the girls, and, subsequently, the work conducted in our safe other space. The latter theme addresses the

ways in which Literacy 4 Brown Girls served as a safe other space and allowed for relationship building, identity construction, and literacy skill growth. The following table provides an exemplar of some of the codes and subthemes associated with the aforementioned themes.

Table 3. *Data Analysis Exemplar.*

Theme	Sub-Theme	Codes	Data Source (s)
The School to Collaborative Pipeline: School-wide Impact on Literacy 4 Brown Girls	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Whack-a-Mole” 2. “I Cry A lot” 3. “I just want this school to be a better school so I can learn more things” 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School chaos/disorganization (SC/SD) 2. Classroom Management (CM) 3. Strained teacher-student relationships (STR) 	Interviews, Journals, & Field notes
From 3-5: Cultivating Friendship, Identity, & Literacy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sister from Another Mister” 2. “Period’TTTT SUS” 3. “Dyamonde Reminds Me of Me 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Peer Relationships (PR) 2. Identity & Representation (IR) 3. Identity & Representation (IR) 	Interviews, Journals, & Field notes Field notes & Journals Interviews, Journals, & Field notes

Researcher Positionality & Reflexivity

As mentioned in chapter one, I am an African-American female who has had years of experience in the field of literacy. I have served as an early literacy tutor, program coordinator, and Title I reading teacher and, therefore I have firsthand knowledge of the lack of cultural relevance displayed in texts and classroom conversations. Relatedly, I have personally

experienced neglect in the classroom. I correlate this neglect to the intersection of my race and gender--being an African-American woman. As such, I am in agreement with scholars reviewed in chapter two in that I understand that intersectionality directly impacts the experiences of African-American girls in K-12 schools (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Morris, 2016, 2019; E. Morris; 2007, Muhammad, 2012). I acknowledge that these experiences could reveal themselves as biases. Consequently, I kept these biases at the forefront of my analyses throughout the study so that I always was aware of their existence.

As previously discussed, I was careful to memo throughout the analysis process. These writings included my thoughts and interpretations of the data. I was careful to read and re-read these writings throughout the data analysis process, oftentimes questioning my initial assumptions and challenging what I considered to be factual representation of the data. Additionally, I challenged myself to look for data that contradicted my initial findings as recommended by qualitative methodologists (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018). These processes helped to ensure that the researcher bias I possessed did not taint the data obtained throughout the duration of the literacy collaborative.

Validity & Reliability

In addition to the aforementioned reflexive practices, I extracted validity and reliability measures from Creswell & Creswell (2018). First, I employed triangulation of data (journals, field notes, and interview transcripts). This meant that I used the aforementioned data collection methods to ensure validity. During the data analysis process, I was careful to identify codes, themes, and sub-themes within and across data sources. That is to say, I verified that the findings of this study were consistent across all data points.

Secondly, I used member checking, both with students and teachers, as a means of ensuring validity and reliability. With the participants, I closed each week with sharing my observations, thoughts, and interpretations of our time together. This occurred each Wednesday for twelve weeks. During this time, participants were afforded the opportunity to correct any misunderstandings or ill-informed assumptions that I may have made. In regards to teachers and members of the administrative team, I was careful to repeat responses during our interviews to make certain that my transcriptions were accurate. Additionally, Mrs. Ashwood's post-collaborative interview protocol included questions that afforded her the opportunity to review her pre-collaborative interview responses and make any necessary adjustments (e.g. I would like to recap our last interview and ask if there is anything new you would like to share with me?)

Thirdly, validity and reliability were assured by spending adequate time in the field. For two days a week, for twelve weeks, I spent two hours a day with collaborative participants. I made it a point to arrive at the school at least fifteen minutes prior to the start of each session. This time was often spent observing and communicating with other members of the student body. This extensive time spent at Midwest School produced rich, thick data associated with credible qualitative findings (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

A key component of my role as researcher was ensuring that I remained ethical throughout the study. Ethical soundness was especially important since I worked with minors. Edelsohn (2012) discusses ethics in relation to minors in great detail. She speaks to the necessity of both consent and assent, the latter occurring when a child has both reached age seven and a certain level of maturity. It was important to consider the vulnerability of the girls when conducting research. This was particularly so for this study when the *other* space was still within

the academic walls. Therefore, it was of key importance to reiterate the elements of informed consent: information sharing, voluntarism, and the capacity to make sound decisions (Edelsohn, 2012) when working with the girls in the literacy collaborative. Throughout the duration of the literacy collaborative, it was imperative that I abide by all of the aforementioned ethical considerations. Placing the needs of the girls before the study was not only ethically sound, but also key to honoring their identities.

Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to outline the research methods used for this single, qualitative case study. In doing so, it is my hope that readers glean insight as to why the particular methods were chosen and how they were best suited for this particular study. The following chapter will provide findings from the study and demonstrate how the methodologies discussed in this chapter were executed.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

This qualitative case study focused on the literacy skills and identity construction of twelve, fifth grade, African-American girls at Midwest School. This study sought to explore if a literacy collaborative centered on the needs of African-American girls could serve as a safe *other* space, a means of literacy skill practice and identity construction, and provide culturally relevant pedagogy. The research questions that informed this study are:

Research Question:

1. What is the impact of a literacy collaborative on the girls' identities and engagement with literacy building techniques?

Additional Research Questions:

1. How, if at all, can Literacy 4 Brown Girls serve as a safe "other space" for the identity development of African-American girls?
2. How, if at all, are African-American girls' literacies shaped by identity-infused, interactive activities?
3. How, if at all, can culturally diverse texts play a role in the literacy advancement of African-American girls?

Literacy 4 Brown Girls used culturally relevant texts, emancipatory writings, and discussions to explore the ways in which a literacy collaborative might impact the identities and literacies of African-American girls. As discussed in chapter two, Sutherland (2005) outlines the importance of a balance of culturally relevant curriculum and standard literary practices. Relatedly, in addition to creating a safe, *other* space for participants through the use of culturally relevant pedagogical practices, this collaborative supported literacy skill building by practicing close

reading techniques, analysis of text, making predictions, and text to life connections; these literacy skill practices were often extensions of their school day learning. Additionally, participants focused on the identification of main ideas and supporting details which, according to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, includes the ability to quote accurately from a text, compare and contrast characters, and determine the theme of a text.

As discussed in chapter three, Literacy 4 Brown Girls was limited to twelve, fifth-grade, African-American girls at Midwest School. The following table reveals participant pseudonyms, identities as described by participants, ELA ability as described by their respective teachers, and attendance throughout the duration of the literacy collaborative.

Table 4

Participant Identification Table

Participant	Identity	ELA Ability	Attendance
Angel	African-American	On grade level	21/22 sessions
Lauren	African-American	On grade level	14/22 sessions
Autumn	African-American	Above grade level	10/22 sessions
Mariah	African-American	On grade level	19/22 sessions
Kyla	African-American	Below grade level	9/22 sessions
Lynn	African-American/Caucasian	Above grade level	18/22 sessions
Sasha	African-American	Below grade level	21/22 sessions

Hannah	African-American	On grade level	15/22 sessions
Jasmine	African-American	Below grade level	19/22 sessions
Ashley	African-American	On grade level	16/22 sessions
Krystal	African-American	Below grade level	6/22 sessions
Tammy	African-American	Significantly below grade level	16/22 sessions
<p>*Notes:</p> <p>Identity refers to participant’s response to do you identify as an African-American girl?</p> <p>ELA ability refers to teacher’s response to looking at the list of participants for the literacy collaborative: Can you identify and share literacy strengths and weaknesses for each?</p> <p>Attendance refers to the amount of sessions each participant attended.</p>			

In Literacy 4 Brown Girls, the girls read two texts written by Nikki Grimes, *Make Way for Dyanonde Daniel* and *Rich*. Both texts featured an African-American, female protagonist (see Appendices F, G for chapter summaries). Girls also participated in text to life discussions, literacy activities, and used emancipatory writing practices as a form of expression (see appendix H for journal prompts).

The literacy collaborative met for a total of twenty-two sessions over the course of three months. The duration of each session was approximately two hours and occurred outside of

school hours from three until five. The activities conducted in the literacy collaborative were as follows:

3:15: Introductions, attendance, and sister's pledge

3:20: Sister circle/free share

3:25: "Free" journaling/refreshments

3:30: Share out-sharing of journaling

3:40: Recap of text discussion, revisit inferences and predictions for upcoming chapter

3:50: Reading of assigned chapter

4:15: Think, pair, share (discussion of text-main idea, details, text to life connections)

4:30: Predictions for next chapter (based on schema and textual evidence)

4:40: Main idea activity

4:50: Closing journaling

5:00: Sister's pledge, dismissal

This chapter reveals the experiences of participants in this twelve-week long literacy collaborative designed with the literacies and identities of African-American girls in mind.

The activities of this literacy collaborative stem from a line of research addressing the need for an ELA curriculum that is inclusive of the intersecting identities of African-American girls to combat the neglect and stereotyping that occurs in their classrooms (see Butler, 2017; Greene, 2016; McArthur & Muhammad, 2017; Morris, 2007; Muhammad and Haddix, 2016; Muhammad & Womack, 2015; Muhammad, 2012; Price-Dennis, 2018; Price-Dennis et al.,

2017; Wissman, 2011). Literacy 4 Brown Girls is similar to these scholar's work in that the literacy collaborative included culturally relevant texts, emancipatory writings, and relevant discussions as a means of identity construction and literacy skills support for African-American girls.

Literacy 4 Brown Girls differs from the aforementioned study as it was not decontextualized from the participant's school day. Thus, this study adds to the scholarship on the experiences of African-American girls in K-12 schools by first, revealing the unexpected findings of the school characteristics that further exacerbate issues faced by African-American girls in K-12 schools and secondly, examining the impact Literacy 4 Brown Girls had on the subtractive qualities of the girls' learning experiences (see Valenzuela, 1999) as experienced by African-American girls, their identities, and their literacies. What follows is a discussion of the two overarching themes. First, *The School to Collaborative Pipeline: School-wide Impact on Literacy 4 Brown Girls* reflects how Midwest school's characteristics, caused by school disorganization, both limited girls' learning experiences during the school day and impacted their experiences in the literacy collaborative. Secondly, *From 3-5: Cultivating Friendship, Identity, & Literacy* reflects the ways in which a twelve-week literacy collaborative added to the educational experiences of twelve, African-American, fifth-grade girls through culturally relevant pedagogy designed to affirm their identities.

The School to Collaborative Pipeline: School-wide Impact on Literacy 4 Brown Girls

Midwest School exhibited characteristics such as lack of trust, organizational chaos, inadequate curricula, student boredom, and disciplinary issues that collectively contributed to the girls' learning experiences. These innumerable issues formed an invisible "pipeline" of subtractive school qualities (see Valenzuela, 1999). Girls had to walk through this school

“pipeline” in order to participate in a literacy collaborative that was centered on their identities and literacy skills. The resulting impact was that our safe *other* space often took on the issues of the school day prior to working on our curriculum. This section explains Midwest School’s characteristics that both limited girls’ learning experiences during the school day and impacted their experiences in the literacy collaborative.

“Whack-A-Mole”

Scholars have discussed how breakdowns in administrative efficacy, support, and lack of understanding led to school disorganization, teacher burnout and attrition, and poor student outcomes (Cancio et al., 2013; Gersten & Douglass, 1981; Hughes et al., 2014; Marvin et al., 2003). The staff interviews suggest that Midwest School suffers from these characteristics. They perceive that these characteristics account for administrative ineffectiveness, limited teacher support, classroom management and resources, and poor teacher-student and peer to peer relationships. Unfortunately, these breakdowns were addressed by the use of ineffective solutions; these solutions were more geared towards “putting out fires” rather than school-wide reform. Administrator Kelly was one of the five administrators who attempted to address these school issues. In our interview, she shared how her role differed from ones at previous schools. She stated:

[My role] as primary school leader here is a big difference in my previous [interviewee describes role] due to just [the] structure. But, I see my basic primary position in this school to basically to manage [interviewee lists who she supervises] as well as all operational instructional programming going through the school. It’s more about oversight. It’s very hard for me because I like to be very hands on. So, one of the things I get caught up into here is I wanna do a lot of things like model in the classroom. You

know work with groups. Whereas I really need to be developing [interviewee lists who she supervises] to do these things more.

Administrator Kelly then shared a more detailed description of others' roles at Midwest School. She stated that "here they have that dual role which is very difficult for people because it's hard to build relationships when you're evaluating someone. Right? It's hard for you not to become worried when I walk in your room when you're the one responsible for deciding how I'm doing rather than coming in just to coach me." She goes on to detail how she believes trust is difficult to develop and maintain in such a role. She states that:

... we're constantly revisiting how to make sure teachers can trust us and how we can build that trust by being consistent and not giving feedback only at certain times like during evaluation periods. We're constantly revisiting how teachers can trust us and how we can build that trust by being consistent and not giving feedback you know only at certain times like during evaluation periods but we're giving feedback constantly so that when it is time to be evaluated, when it is a formal observation, it's not brand-new information that you're hearing for the first time.

In addition to the perceived lack of trust, Kelly shared that in her opinion, the coaching and evaluating teachers is not always carried out due to the behavioral demands of the school. According to Kelly, this issue began the first year she started and has not fully improved. She stated:

They're supposed to do a ten-minute observation every week of every direct report and then have a one on one coaching meeting every week with every direct report. Well they often times get um, get into the game of whack-a-mole where their day is more spent

putting out fires...and some of that has to do with me not knowing when I first got here what it was we needed to make sure they could do that and then me needing to hold them more accountable to it.

She went on to share that while the efficacy of the administrative team has improved some, “it’s still a big work in progress so we are changing our structure a little bit this year to always have each day [interviewee lists staff roles to be in place] on the floor and they’re going to put out all fires around the school.” This new system of managing conflict among students could then afford space for the staff to improve their coaching and evaluation. This, according to Administrator Kelly, is crucial in developing and maintaining trust with teachers. She stated that “you lose trust when you schedule a meeting and you don’t show up. You lose trust when you give an evaluation and they’ve only ever seen you in their room a couple times. Right? And so, we’re really trying to build the trust so that we’re all working together with a growth mindset not um you know just compliance-based work.”

According to Administrator Kelly’s feedback, then, the issue for teachers is the lack of adequate coaching and effective evaluation. Additionally, not only are teachers not receiving the guidance, support and resources needed to effectively instruct students and manage their classrooms, there is a perceived lack of administrative trust in place to help them. Accounts from one of Midwest School’s teachers, Mrs. Ashwood, support Administrator Kelly’s critique by highlighting how a lack of support from the school leaders aided in the classroom chaos that caused a myriad of issues for herself and her students, twelve of which came to Literacy 4 Brown Girls after school. These issues, as discussed in a later section, directly impacted the learning experiences of girls in the literacy collaborative.

“I Cry a Lot”

It is important to note that while the twelve participants were from two different classrooms, only one teacher, Mrs. Ashwood, participated in the pre and post collaborative interviews due to the other teacher being on maternity leave. Nine of the twelve participants were students in Mrs. Ashwood’s classroom. Through the interviews with Mrs. Ashwood, Literacy 4 Brown Girls participant feedback, and field notes from literacy collaborative sessions, lack of teacher support and resources and poor classroom management were apparent.

During the pre-collaborative interview, Mrs. Ashwood shared how lack of support in the classroom would often lead to chaos: “There are many times when a student needs to talk to me and I have to call for an assistant because I can’t. If a student asks me a question, I’ll have seventeen students out their seat...I have so many problems with them now because it’s like if I can’t beat them I’ll join them. So, I’ll try to come up with incentives like I’ll take seven of you somewhere else to have lunch while the rest of you have silent lunch.” According to Mrs. Ashwood, the lack of support in the classroom meant that she was left to address the issues and needs of twenty-nine students by herself. Relatedly, she shared how classroom support in the form of an assistant would be helpful not only in terms of relieving some classroom issues, but also, she stated:

I just think in general, given the personalities and having a class of twenty-nine is...well, having a class of twenty-three or twenty-four was hard and five more. I just think there are some classes that maybe having four sections would’ve been great instead of three. I’m serious. Or dividing it up a little different so smaller class sizes but assign paraprofessionals in the room...I think a helper would be a huge benefit. Definitely twenty-nine in a class with these personalities, it’s definitely not fair to the kids too.

Mrs. Ashwood pointed to a few interesting issues that occur in her classroom. Namely, she spoke of the overcrowding, varying personalities, and the lack of help from other adults in the building. While she did address lack of adult support as a means of relief, her focus throughout most of the pre-collaborative interview seemed to be on the resulting classroom climate. Mrs. Ashwood then shared how one of her students, Jasmine, who was a participant in the literacy collaborative, voiced similar classroom climate concerns. She stated that

She doesn't like this class and doesn't want to be in the class...She addressed the entire class in regards to their behavior and disrespect and how she doesn't want to be in the class because it's toxic and I sat there shaking my head because it is toxic. In my thirteen years of teaching, I've never had a class like this. They are a huge challenge. I've probably had three good days out of the entire school year. Yeah. I cry a lot. Yeah. It's toxic."

Jasmine went on to share that her speech addressed "the girls and the boys how they need to grow up and they need to stop being disrespectful a lot. Watch their attitudes and stuff. Take deep breaths about stuff. And yeah." When I discussed the classroom discipline issue with Jasmine during our interview, she shared that "I wrote a speech about them and I read it. I was shaking a lot and one girl she was about to start crying and Mrs. Ashwood was crying already. And so, I read the speech. Everybody was clapping for me. Some of them were about to start crying again. So, I sat down. They were still doing what they weren't supposed to. They didn't listen."

Jasmine's response speaks to the classroom chaos described by Mrs. Ashwood and supports the school-wide chaos addressed previously by Administrator Kelly. According to Jasmine, her classmates were out of control. Two other participants in the literacy collaborative

shared similar feelings about the classroom environment. Often times, during our literacy collaborative sessions, girls were afforded the opportunity to choose a journaling prompt to write about or they could “free-write.” The following journal entries from participants Kyla and Autumn were free-writings that spoke to their classroom environment and its impact.

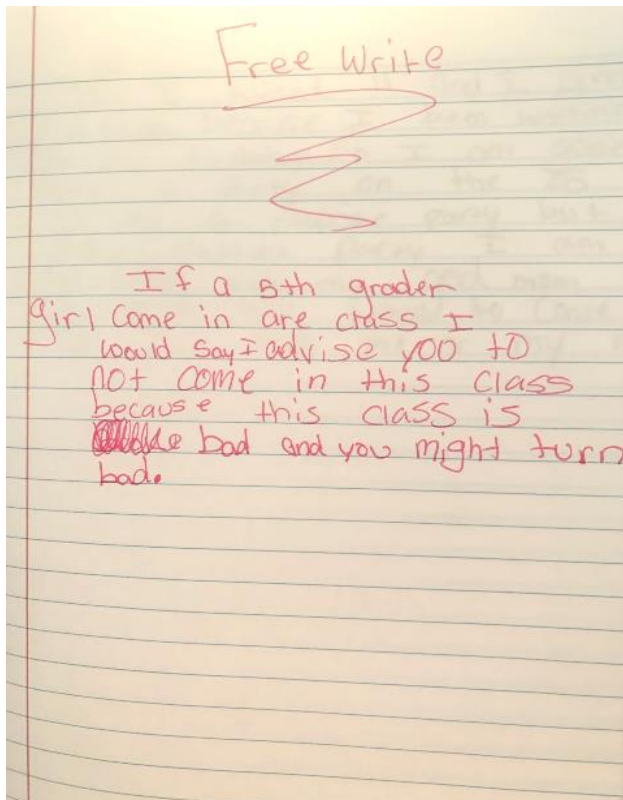


Figure 2. L4BG Journal Topic: “Free-Write”. Participant: Kyla

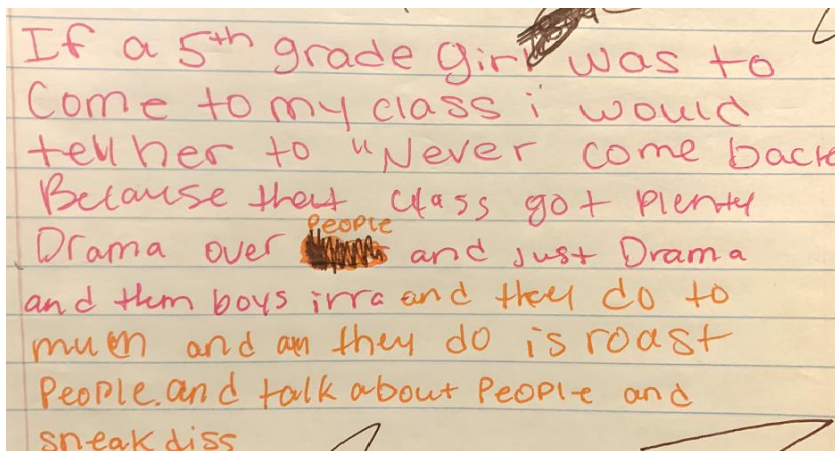


Figure 3. L4BG Journal Topic: “Advice to a New Girl.” Participant: Autumn.

Kyla’s notion that the class will “turn you bad” was supported by her pre-collaborative interview where she shared her thoughts on negative images of African-American girls responding with “students in our classroom... They get in trouble every day and phone calls home and a lot of teachers tell us not to hang out with them.” Relatedly, Autumn’s entry advises a new girl to never return to their class to the amount of “drama.”

Poor classroom management not only impacts Mrs. Ashwood’s ability to effectively teach and support her students, but also it affects classroom conditions for students. Jasmine, Kyla, and Autumn were three of twelve literacy collaborative participants that spoke directly to the classroom climate that often consumed their school day. Mrs. Ashwood later shared how these classroom climate issues were compounded by the fact that students had no real opportunities to escape that environment.

“Work, Work, Work”

When discussing classroom issues, Mrs. Ashwood shared that the students were often in the classroom for the entire school day with no opportunity to socialize or escape the toxicity. She stated:

And my prep time is 8:30 in the morning and so they’re in here from 9:05 until some then 4:00...And then you’re talking you know seven hours for some of them in the same room. And they even have to eat breakfast and lunch in there. And then most of the fall and all of the winter I had a monitor in here that wouldn’t take them outside and basically played a movie every day. They didn’t have time to socialize, get out of their seats, play a game, or anything. So, it’s been really rough because they have no outlet.

Though there was adequate gym and outdoor space, students were not granted recess. Mrs. Ashwood approached the administrative team and advocated for recess for her students. She shared that, “I said you expect them to come back at 9:05, eat lunch in the classroom, not have a recess at lunchtime and not have an afternoon recess and stay in the room for seven and a half hours! Are you kidding? They didn’t have recess in the schedule...So I fought for that and said I think my kids can go out at 1:35 and come back at 1:55 and we can definitely fit in the curriculum.” Mrs. Ashwood’s concerns regarding lack of socialization and free time for her students were supported by four of the twelve literacy collaborative participants.

This lack of free time often meant that girls in the literacy collaborative were desperate for time to socialize when they arrived at our literacy collaborative sessions. This negatively impacted our sessions as girls often spent the first ten minutes of our sessions talking, screaming, and running around our space. Lack of school day socialization for the girls took crucial time away from our lessons. This became overwhelming and frustrating for myself as researcher-facilitator, often leading to feelings of anger and resentment (field notes, May 7th, 2019). It was not until four of the twelve girls wrote about their frustrations with their school day that I began to understand that those ten minutes were just as imperative to their identities and literacies as the other one hundred and ten.

As mentioned earlier, girls in the literacy collaborative were afforded the opportunity to free-write when they did not want to use the journal prompt I provided. Relatedly, On April 9th and 10th, Lauren, Autumn, and Hannah chose to use another journaling session as a free-writing opportunity to discuss their school day experiences. The following journal entries depict their frustrations with their lack of freedom/social outlets during the school day.

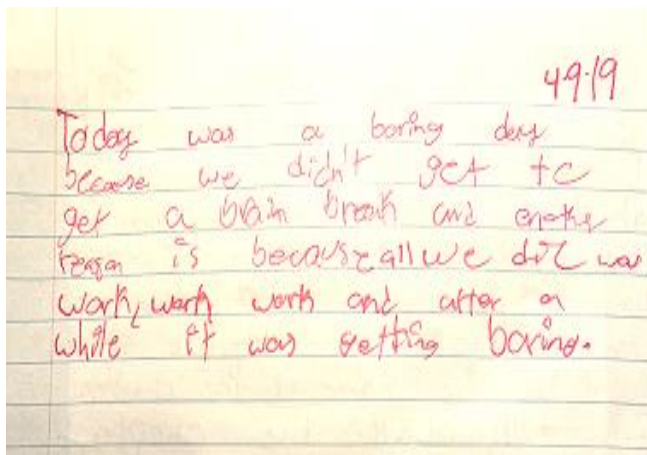


Figure 4. L4BG Journal Topic: "Free Write." Participant: Lauren.

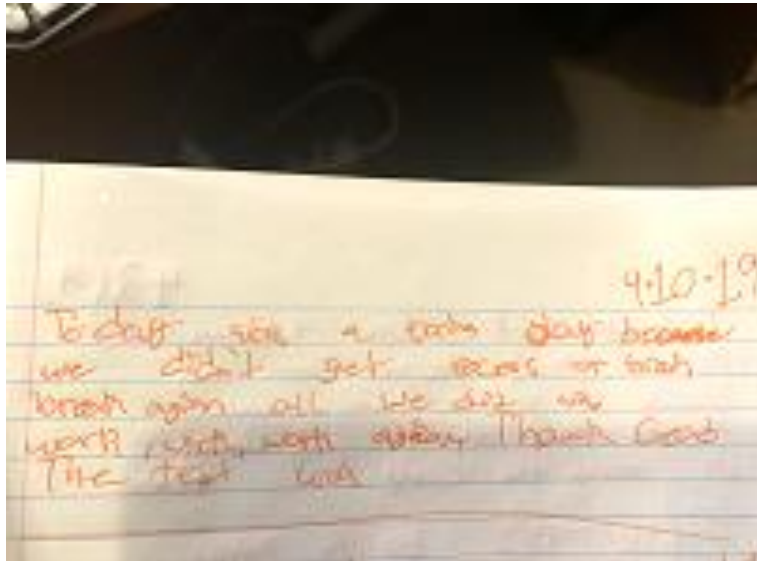


Figure 5. L4BG Journal Topic: "Free Write." Participant: Lauren.

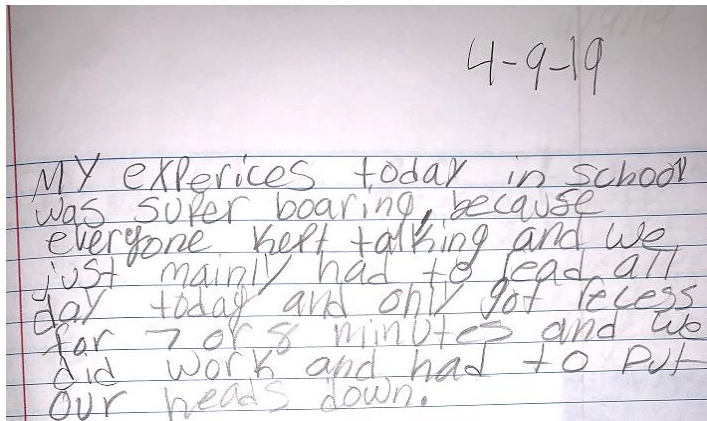


Figure 6. L4BG Journal Topic: “Free Write.” Participant: Hannah.

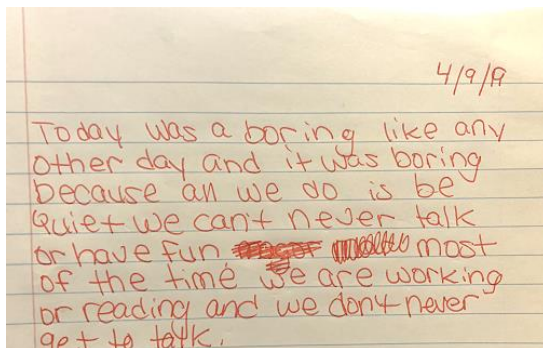


Figure 7. L4BG Journal Topic: “Free Write.” Participant: Autumn.

All of the four girls used “boring” as a descriptor of their school day. Three of the four journal entries highlight the fact that the girls had no recess both days. Autumn’s description, “today was a boring day like any other day and Lauren’s description, “all we did was work, work, work” revealed that their days were filled with work with no time “to have fun.” Additionally, as shared in an upcoming discussion of the findings, some of the collaborative participants express that the rigidity of the classroom environment challenged their ability to resolve conflict and build healthy relationships. It became evident that both the students and Mrs. Ashwood were negatively impacted by the lack of social outlet for students.

“Work, work, work” was not only applicable to a lack of recess or brain breaks as described by Lauren, but also to the lack of engaging, culturally relevant classroom experiences provided by Mrs. Ashwood. Students, especially African-American students who are often neglected in their learning experiences, “enjoy and resonate with texts that reflect themselves, their families, and their communities” (Clark, p. 3, 2017). Not only were students confined to the classroom for the majority of their school day, but, Mrs. Ashwood was unable to provide culturally relevant curricular materials for the students thereby causing learning experiences to feel more like “work, work, work” rather than exciting and engaging. Perhaps, as she shares below, due to her lack of cultural relatability.

...we had an amazingly strong, passionate teacher...Um, she is...she was going for her elementary education license and she decided there’s no way I want to be a teacher. She was African American and she was just cute and petite and had a fun personality. She just had such a connection with not only the girls, but the boys. When I saw her the previous year, the relationship she was able to build with those kids in such a short period of time just amazed me. And I think it’s because she was somebody that was a little bit more relatable. She was young, African-American, [and] she was in school herself. She was very tiny so I think she wasn’t as intimidating as myself. You know, bigger, white lady, older. So, I think she was just a little bit more relatable to the kids. Unfortunately, she got some really strong personalities in her class that should not have been together and unfortunately she ended up leaving.”

Mrs. Ashwood’s description of a former teacher as relatable to students due to the other teacher’s cultural connection, points to the disconnect between herself and the students. However, while she attributes this disconnect to her being “White and older,” she also suggested that her general

lack of cultural sensitivity and awareness proved to be a greater hindrance to relationship building. She stated that:

One of my studies that I want to do this summer is what is it about me you can't teach. I just feel like I grew up in a small farm town and went to an even smaller farm town and I think that my, um so in awe at some of the things they say, and do, and witnessed and I think I need to like open conversations and figure out like ways that I can show them that yeah I may be white and I may be fifty and I may not be from Milwaukee but you can talk to me. And I think that's what I'm gonna do this summer. I wanna be able to study and figure out what I can do to reach out to more kids and not necessarily African-American but just like urban cuz you know they definitely, like, they just laughed when I asked about are there really that many different Jordan's...so I really need to just go downtown I guess...I just need to figure out how can I make myself more approachable. There were some kids that really needed me but didn't know how to reach out to me. I think some of the girls, some of the boys, I don't know. I could tell that they needed someone to talk to but they wouldn't. So, I need to figure out what to do to make sure I'm there for them and how to handle some of the things that they say too.

“Work, work, work,” points to a lack of school-wide recreational socialization for students and cultural inclusion/engagement in the classroom. While her response speaks to her desire to understand her students' lived experiences, it also reflects a lack of cultural knowledge, her biases, and stereotypes. “So, I really just need to go downtown” suggests that by visiting a certain part of Milwaukee, one that is not populated by a lot of African-Americans, she will be able to gain insight on how to better relate to her students. This misperception of cultural sensitivity and awareness seemingly adds to her disconnect with students pedagogically and

relationally. If Mrs. Ashwood is unable to connect culturally to the students in her classroom, her ability to select culturally relevant, engaging curricular materials (e.g. texts, writings, and classroom discussions) is most likely limited (see Boutte, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995). This limitation can result in non-engaging, non-culturally relevant learning experiences that not only render students' identities invisible, but also contribute to their school day boredom.

“I Just Want This School to be a Better School so I can Learn More Things.”

Mrs. Ashwood's lack of cultural knowledge, biases, and stereotypes continued to be revealed during a conversation between the girls and me at the start of one of our literacy collaborative sessions. Students in the literacy collaborative reported that she used a racial expletive during her classroom instruction. Autumn brought the letter that was to be taken home to parents to the literacy collaborative. Below is an excerpt from the letter.

[the teacher] attempted to turn an incident where students were using inappropriate language into a teachable moment for the entire class, but made a poor choice in her approach. We have discussed this with her and appropriate action has been taken... We pride ourselves on being a community that respects, embraces, and celebrates diversity. Although students may be unaware of how the words they use can hurt others, this is an opportunity to talk to your child about inappropriate language use.

While Administrator Kelly briefly addressed the wrongdoings of Mrs. Ashwood, this statement seemed to suggest punitive measures for students versus cultural sensitivity trainings or professional development for teachers. When discussing this incident in the literacy collaborative, Autumn, dismissing the apology, balled up the letter stating that her mother would not want it anyway. Other girls were so upset that we needed to take additional time to address the issue before beginning our lessons for the day (observations, June 12th, 2019). Cultural

disconnect between Mrs. Ashwood and her students continued to reveal itself during our post-collaborative interview. During our interview, Mrs. Ashwood shared that “these girls, they always act so tough. And I’d just like to see them being kids for a little bit longer.” Though this seems like a harmless statement aimed at a desire for her students to enjoy freedom as children, it also seemed to echo her prior statements in which she admitted that she was not culturally informed on the lives of her students. “Acting tough” reflects stereotypes held by Caucasian teachers of African-American girls when compared (consciously or subconsciously) to their Caucasian counterparts (see Fordham, 1993; E. Morris, 2016).

While cultural disconnect was revealed through teacher and student data, students also journaled about the ways in which they felt uncared for at their school by teachers. In one journal entry, when girls had the opportunity to free-write about their day, Sasha shared her frustrations with Mrs. Ashwood stating that “the worst part of my day was all day because [teacher] keep on yelling at us when don’t do nothing at all.”

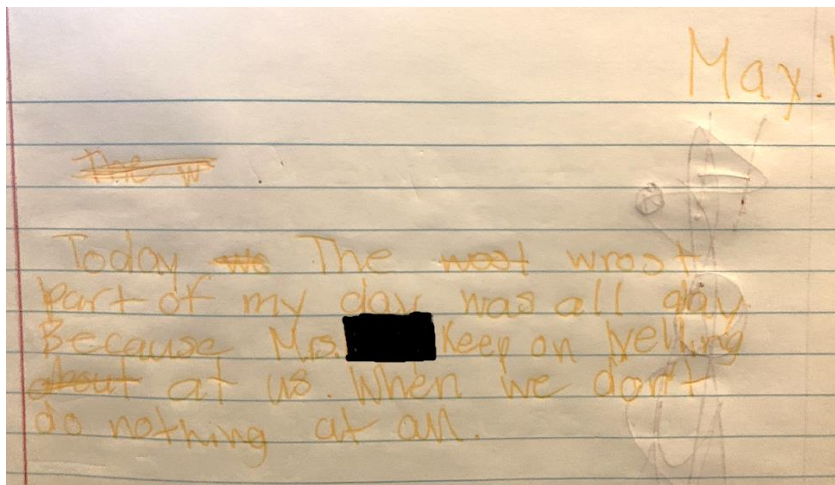


Figure 8. L4BG Journal Topic: “Free Write.” Participant: Sasha.

Sasha's entry serves as a prelude to discussions we had on how teachers disrespect students. During our literacy collaborative session in which two of the girls shared their journal entries on classroom chaos, nine of the twelve girls who were in Mrs. Ashwood's class shared that while the kids in the classroom are out of control, Mrs. Ashwood is to blame because of how she disrespects them (field notes, April 9th, 2019). The discussions centered on the girls' perceived lack of care from teachers did not end there. Two of the twelve girls later shared how they felt teachers did not want to be there. "They're just here for a check" was brought up by one of the participants during a group discussion on girls' experiences at Midwest School. (field notes, May 14th, 2019). Relatedly, during a free-write journaling session, Mariah shared her discontentment with the way teachers operate revealing that another teacher at her school does not pay adequate attention to them. During her lunch period, she stated that another teacher "made her class starve [because] all he does is get on his phone."

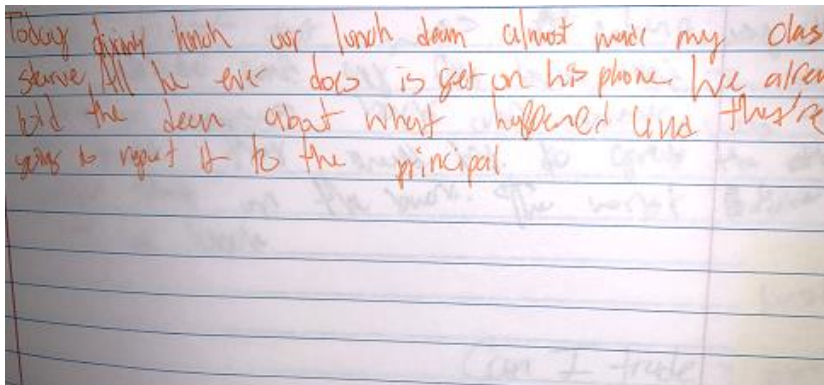


Figure 9. L4BG Journal Topic: "Free Write." Participant: Mariah.

During another journaling session in which girls requested to write about changes they would make to their school if they were in charge, Mariah shared that she would change many things including "the teachers."

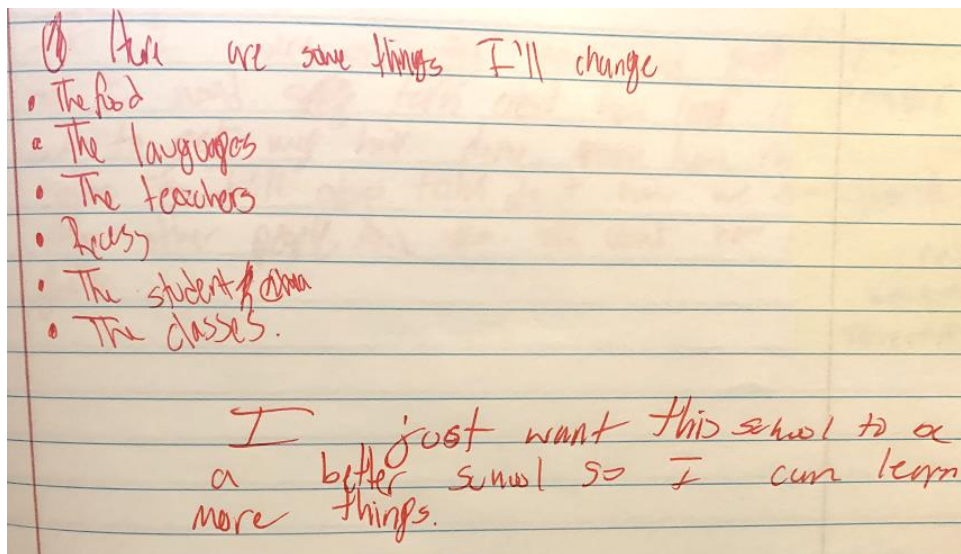


Figure 10. L4BG Journal Topic: “What changes would you make if you were in charge?”

Participant: Mariah.

Mariah’s desire to change the teachers, in addition to Autumn’s frustrations with the letter of apology to parents and Sasha’s dislike for the way in which Mrs. Ashwood treated them, points to a serious relational breakdown between teachers and students at Midwest School. These girls felt as though some of the teachers at Midwest School did not care about them. The perceived lack of teacher care shared by the girls in the literacy collaborative were different than that of Administrator Kelly’s. During our post-collaborative interview she shared that “...it hasn’t been a widespread issue but I’m sure more feel it than say it.” While it might not have been clear to administration that some of the students at Midwest School felt uncared for by teachers, it was apparent to me that girls desperately needed care, support, and respect. It was imperative then that I not only take time away from the curriculum to afford girls the space to socialize, but the literacy collaborative needed to be a space where the girls did feel cared for, respected, and supported. As discussed next, affording girls the space to share their frustrations with their teachers led to them revealing relational issues they had with others.

“I Got a Slick Attitude When Somebody Got an Attitude with Me”

In addition to the conversations around strained teacher and student relationships, and their impact on the girls’ experiences in the literacy collaborative, peer to peer relationships were also revealed as problematic at Midwest School. Much like other school-wide issues, these too directly impacted the time spent in our space. During my time at the school, I would often witness disputes amongst students. Hallways were often grounds for fights or arguments. When discussing student behavior with Mrs. Ashwood she stated that:

It just seemed like as much as I tried to talk to them, just because somebody said something to you doesn't mean you have to retaliate. And I gave the example of if someone walks past you and pushes you in the hallway what would you do. Well I'd push them back. And I'd say well what if that student just found out something happened to his mom and he really wasn't paying attention and he was trying to get from point a to point b without anyone seeing him cry. Would you still push him and they said no.

When discussing these issues with a member of the administrative team, Administrator Marian, she shared with me her confusion stating that, “yeah, that definitely. I don’t know why. I don’t remember if it was this way when I was a kid, maybe it’s social media but they are, it’s just constant.” In addition to Mrs. Ashwood and Marian discussing peer relationship issues, girls in the literacy collaborative would often speak to them as well. During our pre-collaborative interview, Hannah described herself by stating that “if someone is nice to me I’m nice to them but if someone is mean to me I’ll be mean back to them”. Similarly, Kyla described herself and shared that, “Ummm I’m nice when people be nice to me. I got a slick attitude when somebody got an attitude with me. I love to color and I love this group.” Interested in learning more about

what she considered a slick attitude, I asked her to elaborate. She added, “Like when someone says something slick to me or say it with a slick attitude then I say it back and that’s when drama comes.” *Drama*. This word was often brought up in our space in relation to arguments, fights, or mostly, “fake friends.” While the staff I spoke with might not have understood the root of the peer relationship problems at the school, it seemed as though the girls in the literacy collaborative might be able to provide insight.

Girls became more willing to discuss “fake friends” and their experiences with them once we began reading our first text, *Make Way for Dyamonde Daniel*, on the second day of our literacy collaborative. Dyamonde, an African-American, third-grade, girl was rather new to her school and found issues with making friends. While she forms a relationship with three girls, they appear to be “fake friends.” “Tanya, Tylisha, and Tameeka—known as the Three T’s—are nice enough to Dyamonde at school, but she’s not really part of their group” (Grimes, 2009, p. xi). Field notes from this session addressed the ways girls could relate to Dyamonde’s problem of making friends. Girls brought up the issue of “fake friends.” “Right away, fake friends came up on the second day. Friends versus associates. Come back to this” (field notes, March 27th, 2019). During a free-write journaling session, Angel shared her definition of fake friends.

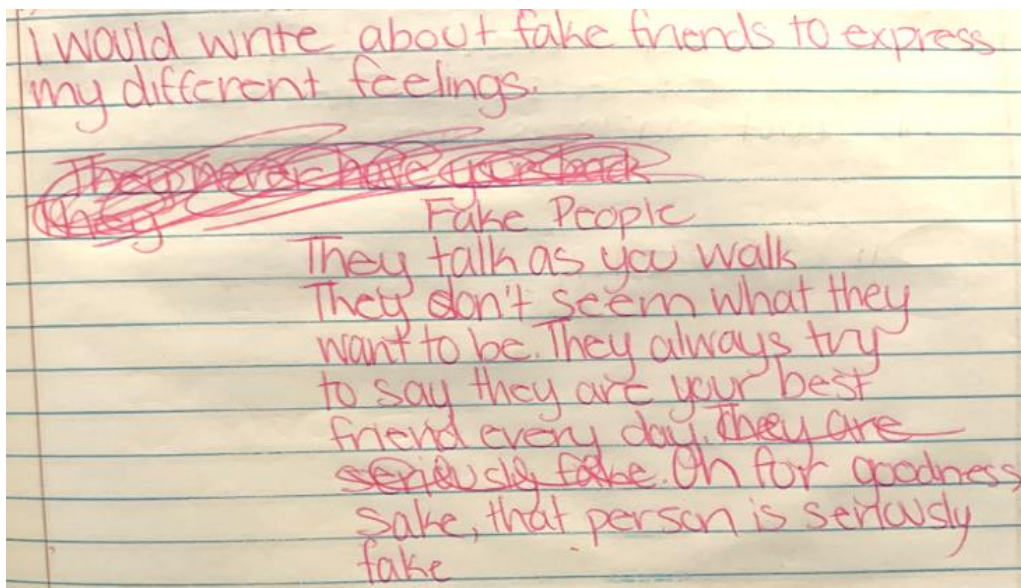


Figure 11. L4BG Journal Topic: “Free Write.” Participant: Angel.

“They talk as you walk, they don’t seem what they want to be. They always try to say they are your best friend every day. Oh for goodness sake, that person is seriously fake.” This entry illuminates the way in which Angel perceived “fake friends” as disrespectful and disguised. After reading about Dyamonde’s experience with “fake friends,” five of the twelve girls in the literacy collaborative shared their experiences with “fake friends” in the following journal entries.

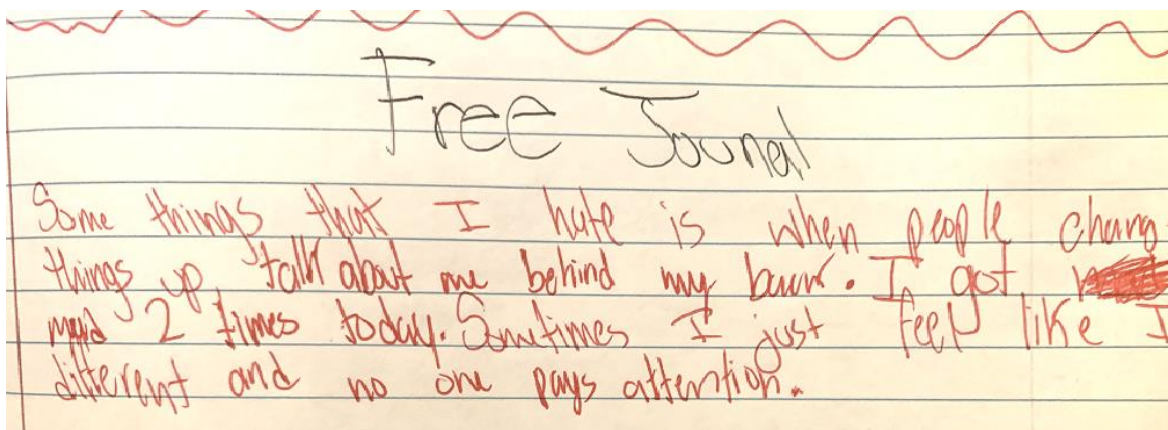


Figure 12. L4BG Journal Topic: “Free Write.” Participant: Mariah.

Fake Friends

I had 2 Fake friends in fourth grade they were very mean once I noticed and told them I did so I told a teacher and she handled it for me. The End Period

Figure 13. L4BG Journal Topic: "Free Write." Participant: Ashley.

and i experienced a fake friend and i know i have fake friends but i just go along to see what happens and i know theres alot of people who dont like me over a boy.

Figure 14. L4BG Journal Topic: "Free Write." Participant: Autumn.

Fake Friends
I don't like fake friends
because all they go do is
talk about you behind your
back in a mean way and
they go make you upset
and I don't need friends
I got family ok can't
nobody talk about me.

Figure 15. L4BG Journal Topic: "Free Write." Participant: Hannah.

I HATE FAKE FRIENDS
I hate fake friends, because
it turns out that they really not
your friend and they talk about
you behind your back and then
come back to you like nothing
even happened like get out of
my face you are be to

Figure 16. L4BG Journal Topic: "Free Write." Participant: Hannah.

I'm not giving names, but a time in my life I had
a friend and we were friends from 1st - 4th grade
then it was this girl I didn't like. I found out that my
"friend" was talking about me with the girl I didn't
like.

Figure 17. L4BG Journal Topic: "Free Write." Participant: Angel.

Mariah, Ashely, Autumn, Hannah, and Angel all wrote about their experiences with “fake friends.” Mariah and Hannah both addressed how “fake friends” talk about you behind your back. Ashley and Angel both wrote about their past experiences with “fake friends.” Autumn addressed her current experiences with “fake friends” when she stated that “I know I have fake friends but I just go along to see what happens...” Their entries, especially Hannah’s titled “I HATE FAKE FRIENDS,” are filled with emotional responses to feeling uncared for by peers. It was apparent that in addition to other school-wide issues, peer relationships at Midwest School were problematic for girls in the literacy collaborative and girls needed space to discuss their frustrations; our other space differed from their subtractive school day experiences by affording them the opportunities to do so.

However, in addition to spending time during our sessions to address the peer to peer issues that occurred during the school day, girls’ relationships in our space weakened due to perceived “fake friendships.” On April 24th, I received a private note from Hannah and Kyla.

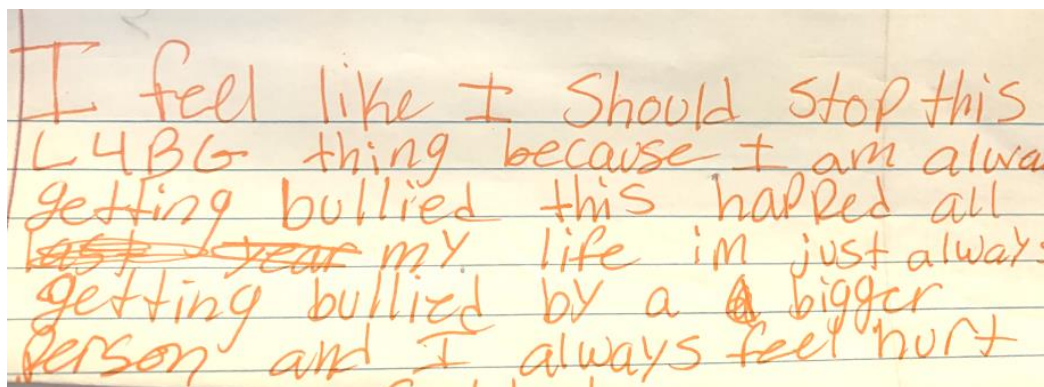


Figure 18. L4BG Note. Participant: Hannah.

The note read, “I feel like I should stop this L4BG thing because I am always getting bullied. This [happened] all my life. I’m just always getting bullied by a bigger person and I always feel hurt.” After receiving this note, I took Hannah and Kyla into the hall to discuss the issue. The

girls reported that Lauren, Hannah's former best friend was being "fake" by not communicating with her during our sessions. While I offered to sit down with the girls and talk things through, they insisted on handling things on their own. During mid-point interviews, in response to me asking her how the group was going, Kyla stated, "good...no cuz remember that one we day we had to talk to those girls? We talked it out with each other...so it's good."

Although this instance of "fake friends" was settled, mid-point interviews revealed that the girls saw these instances as problematic and as an interference to the work we were doing in our space. Mid-point interviews were conducted at the six-week mark. These interviews were a means of checking in with the girls in order to get their feedback on the literacy collaborative and its components. During these interviews, four of the twelve girls complained of the "drama" that continued in our space. When asked about her experiences so far in the collaborative, Angel said that "one thing I noticed is they have a lot of drama they bring in from the class and that makes us stop some times. But other than that, its fine." Olivia echoed Angel's thoughts on tension or drama in the group, adding how intense it is. She stated, "Um it's pretty fun. I get to be with my friends for like two hours to talk but I think some people really don't like each other. You can feel it." Mariah noticed how the topic of fake friends further spurred controversy in the group. She stated that she did not like our discussion of fake friends because "like they might be talking about people inside the program and also it seems like that they get like a little too out of hand and might end up saying the wrong things." For Mariah, the discussion on "fake friends" perpetuated drama between girls in the collaborative. Kyla shared that "we need to be all friends and we don't need to bring drama into afterschool program and leave it in school. Because then you're going to have to talk to somebody and they're going to have to get out the group so we

should all be cool.” It was apparent, then, that again, school-wide disruptions needed to be continually addressed in our space.

School chaos, lack of adequate teacher support, poor classroom management, strained teacher-student and peer-to-peer relationships all directly impacted the literacy collaborative by taking time away from our planned curriculum. However, to ignore the impact these issues had on some of the girls in the literacy collaborative would mean that I too would not be supporting, caring for, or respecting the girls and their needs. It was imperative, then, that our space became one that counterbalanced their school day experiences that both intentionally and unintentionally exacerbated their neglect.

From 3-5: Cultivating Friendship, Identity, & Literacy

As previously discussed, school-wide issues directly impacted the work we did in Literacy 4 Brown Girls. Girls in the literacy collaborative walked through a school “pipeline” that exacerbated their neglect. In order to address the needs of girls and incorporate their identities, from three until five pm., our space became one that provided additive school practices to counter the subtractive ones they experienced during the school day. This section discusses the ways in which Literacy 4 Brown Girls added to the educational experiences of twelve, African-American, fifth-grade girls through culturally relevant pedagogy designed to affirm their identities

“Sister from another Mister”

In addition to making space for girls to socialize, vent about their classroom chaos and strained teacher-student relationships, our sessions began to focus on restorative practices (RP) that helped to address the peer to peer conflict girls experienced. Schumacher (2014) discusses RP as a means of healthy relationship building, conflict resolution, and identity construction. In

our literacy collaborative, the girls and I decided to implement *sister circles* focused on rebuilding and restoring relationships between girls as a means of RP in hopes of making space for conflict resolution and healthy relationship building. According to Schumacher (2014):

[trust circles] support peers helping peers through sharing collective wisdom and caring. They provide opportunities for students to directly experience positive social values, such as respect, by being treated with respect. They address some of the psychosocial and emotional needs that do not appear to be met in other school venues. The Talking Circle provides a microcosm where the students can be themselves and where, unobstructed by judgement and fear, they can tap into the very essence of what it means to be human—to care, to listen, to be heard, but most of all, to be authentic (p. 11).

Sister circles were focused on the uplifting and support of one another. Relatedly, our readings during this time were centered on relationship building (see table 2 for an overview of L4BG activities in order to understand the findings).

Table 5

L4BG Week 8 Chapter Summary, Connections, & Journal Prompt(s).

L4BG Chapter Summary	L4BG Text to Life Connection	Journal Prompts
Dyamonde invites Damaris to her house for a sleepover. They have tons of fun until it is almost time to go and Damaris reveals her desire to stay.	Friendships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Think about the theme “friendship” and write a short story about it. 2. What are qualities of a best friend

Thus, girls in the literacy collaborative not only read about building relationships, they worked on doing so with one another. For example, after an argument occurred between Jasmine Mariah, Lynn, and Angel, we took time as a group to discuss it and Jasmine wrote an apology to them during her free-writing session. Her response is pictured below.

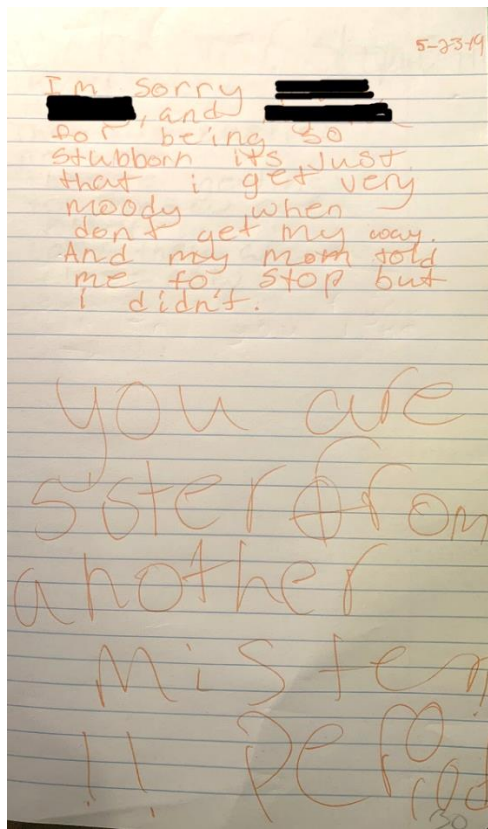


Figure 19. L4BG Journal Topic: “Free Write.” Participant: Jasmine.

In her letter she wrote, “I’m sorry for being stubborn. It’s just that I get very moody when [I] don’t get my way. And my mom told me to stop but I didn’t. You are sister from another mister. Period!” Jasmine’s statement that the other girls were her “sister from another mister” implies that she feels closely connected to them, and that she views them as more than just friends.

As depicted in table 2, girls were also asked to think about the theme “friendship” and write about it. Girls also requested to journal about the qualities of a best friend. Pictured below are journal entries from Angel and Sasha that describe these qualities.

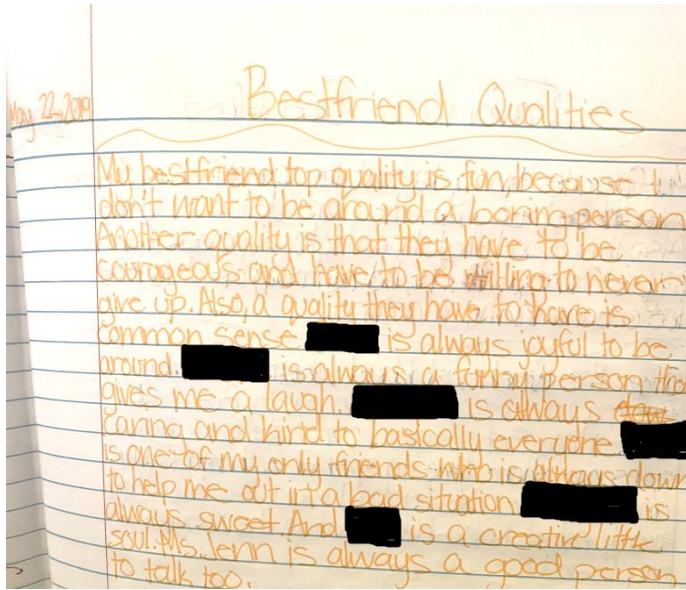


Figure 20. L4BG Journal Topic: “Best Friend Qualities/Friendship Theme.” Participant: Angel.

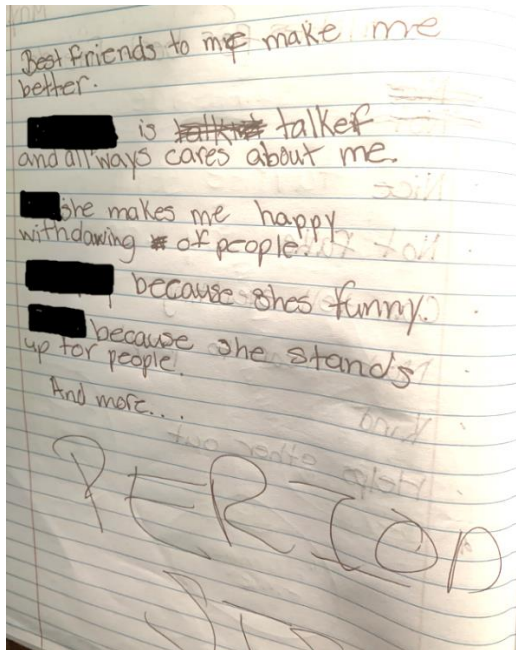


Figure 21. L4BG Journal Topic: “Best Friend Qualities/Friendship Theme.” Participant: Sasha.

Angel took this opportunity to write about other girls in the literacy collaborative whom she felt possessed qualities of a best friend. Using “common sense, joyful, and fun to be around” as descriptors, Angel displayed her care for the girls in the literacy collaborative through assigning qualities to each of them that were in attendance that day. Relatedly, Sasha stated that “best friends make me better” while describing how four of the twelve girls in the literacy collaborative support and uplift her.

During post interviews, four of the eight girls who were interviewed³ spoke to friendship amongst the girls as enjoyable topics or what they enjoyed most about the program. Jasmine shared that “I enjoy the fact that we get to talk about what our friends go through and fake friends and how we can brush off the hate.” Relatedly, Angel addressed how discussions and writings with the girls in the literacy collaborative were most enjoyable and how trust was formed. She stated that “I enjoyed the girls and like you because when I would read our journals we got to like read them to each other and if was something personal I never found them to go tell someone else.” Lauren shared how the topic of friendship was one of her favorites as it addressed the issues of “fake friendships’ that once took over our space. She stated that it helped “because some people, like they friends but then the next minute they not.”

Interestingly, Tammy discussed how our sessions were pertinent to mediating school-wide issues. She stated that, “other program[s] that you just come and just do stuff and that’s not right and this one helps with school and girls and friends.” I asked her to explain more and she shared that other programs, such as a STEM program they had, were helpful, but “that one they just make stuff and learn stuff for high school and that’s good too but this school is mostly about

³ Four of the twelve participants did not participate in post-literacy collaborative interviews. Kyla transferred schools two weeks prior to the end of classes. Mariah, Krystal and Lynn did not report to school during the last week of classes.

beef.” “Beef,” as described by Tammy, describes peer to peer issues or “drama” amongst the girls. Her notion that our space was one for both learning and conflict resolution solidified the fact that our space aided in the restoration of relationships that were broken during the school day. While the group was not completely free of “drama” and issues surrounding fake friendships, the literacy collaborative afforded them the space to discuss friendships, resolve conflict, and build healthy relationships with one another. Jasmine’s post-collaborative interview response, much like Tammy’s, illuminated how the group aided in peer to peer conflict resolution that occurred during the school day. She stated that “because every day we sit in the class and people say things to them and me and this like the place, Literacy 4 Brown Girls is like the place for me to just relax and chill and don’t have an attitude.” According to Jasmine’s response, the literacy collaborative encouraged a relaxing environment, one that might not have been experienced throughout the school day.

While girls began to display and report positive relationships with one another, staff at the school also took notice of them. During our post interview, one of the administrative staff shared her input on the program stating that, “I can’t speak necessarily to the academic, but I can speak more to the social part. Just because I stepped out of the classroom the last month and a half of school. But I could definitely see they had a stronger bond and couldn’t wait to go to the program.” Relatedly, when discussing the restorative practices we implemented in our literacy collaborative with Administrator Kelly, she shared how similar school-wide restorative practices were necessary but had not yet been implemented. She stated that:

Unfortunately, in the last two years we’ve had more of a reactive approach because we just weren’t proactive enough or we were still trying to identify. You know we get a lot of new kids every year as well and that always creates um some of that whack-a-mole

game because you don't know them and you're seeing things that you can't anticipate. So, um, we're really trying to be proactive. First of all we have a moral curriculum that should be implemented across the board and it really helps with building the team mentality and the peer relationships, but also have been trying to implement restorative justice practices where we're actually you know getting together and working through in a sort of trust circle the issues that come up between kids. We've always wanted to do this since I've been here. It's always been a part of our plan but no one ever has time to facilitate it because they're running around like crazy people.

Administrator's Kelly feedback pointed to the need for restorative practices, such as our sister circles, to be implemented school-wide. However, the "whack-a-mole" influence, according to Administrator Kelly, prevented staff from implementing such practices. Due to the disorganization of the school, students were not able to restore peer to peer relationships. This lack of attention to immediate student needs only perpetuates the chaos by ignoring issues of conflict when they arise.

Restorative practices, at least in our *other* space, became a proactive way of working through the "drama" with the all of the girls. *Sister circles* in the literacy collaborative became imperative in healing wounds. As discussed next, deliberate relationship/trust building during the literacy collaborative was useful to take part in the identity construction and literacy skill building processes that were core to the literacy collaborative.

"Period'TTTT SUS!"

As relayed in the above section, understanding the intersecting identities of African-American girls as well as their lived experiences, is crucial in addressing their needs inside (and outside) of schools. Identity-infused activities were the basis of Literacy 4 Brown Girls. From the

beginning, girls were asked to create a pledge that represented themselves and the group. According to scholars who also conducted literacy collaboratives centered on the identities of African-American girls (see Muhammad, 2012), it is important to include “preambles” or pledges that girls recite at the start of each session. According to Muhammad (2012), these practices are historically rooted in literary circles implemented by African-American women (p. 204). It was then fitting that the girls in the literacy collaborative also create a pledge that was relevant to their learning experiences as African-American girls. I instructed girls to work together to create this pledge.

The Pledge

*For us, **Literacy 4 Brown Girls**, we are African-American girls that respect our culture.*

We want YOU to respect our culture!

We are young, beautiful African-American girls who want to make a difference.

***Literacy 4 Brown Girls**, all around the world, we want to make a change.*

*We, **Literacy 4 Brown Girls**, want to be reading stars and leaders and want to do our best.*

*We, **Literacy 4 Brown Girls**, want to learn about African-American girls all around the world.*

*We in **Literacy 4 Brown Girls** want to spice up reading with our black girl magic.
Period’TTTTT SUS!*

The pledge highlights the girls’ pride in their cultures, their desires to learn about others, and their yearning to be represented and included in their learning experiences. *Black Girl Magic* was defined by the group as the following:

1. slay your edges
2. how beautiful and smart you are

3. something special about black girls nobody else has
4. only black girls have it
5. them being themselves
6. something all black girls have if they respect it
7. we can do what boys think we can't

The girls' breakdown of *Black Girl Magic* points to characteristics specific to African-American girls. It combats the misrepresentation and stereotypical views of African-American girls as loud-mouthed and aggressive (Fordham, 1993; Morris, 2016; E. Morris, 2007) and posits that they are special, fierce, intelligent, and unique. Positive representation of African-American girls was crucial in our space. Not only was it important that we said it, it was equally as important that we *read* it.

“Mainly Books I Read Have a White Person as the Main Character”

Core to our literacy collaborative was the deliberate inclusion of literary works that reflected the identities and experiences of girls in the collaborative. Scholars point to the neglect of African-American girls in their ELA classrooms through the use of traditional texts that are non-inclusive of the experiences and identities of African-American girls (Butler, 2017; Greene, 2016; Muhammad, 2012; Sutherland, 2005). When asked if they read books with African-American girls as the main character in their ELA classrooms, five of the twelve girls responded that they do not. Jasmine shared that “Not kinda because my teacher doesn't have a lot of books with African-American girls as the main character.” Kyla shared that “I don't really be seeing books about black African girls in the classroom.” Sasha echoed Jasmine and Kyla's sentiments by explaining who the books in her classroom do highlight. She states that, “most of them in the reading street are mostly boy characters and I don't really like that because I think there should

be more books with girls in them because most of the things people think boys should always do sports and girls shouldn't do them." Lauren shared that "mainly books I read have a white person as the main character." When two of the twelve girls did report reading stories about African-American girls, they were usually non-fiction books. For example, Hannah shared that Mrs. Ashwood has some books with African-American women such as "Wilma Rudolph and she got a lot of president books." When discussing the curriculum with Administrator Kelly, she acknowledged the lack of inclusion when stating that, "well, it's changing this year but I will speak to [the network] is behind the times by about twenty years...the books don't represent our kids. The protagonists are not typically kids, you know families or kids that our kids can relate to. Um. And so really to me that was a big area of focus."

When discussing Midwest School's ELA curriculum, Administrator Kelly solidified the responses from girls that pointed to the lack of cultural inclusivity in texts stating that the addition of culturally relevant texts is "...really starting this year. The books that we are receiving are much more culturally relative. Um and uh, in general the classroom libraries are being updated to be more culturally relative." It again became apparent that Midwest School had neglected the identities of African-American girls limiting their learning experiences and stifling their academic engagement. As discussed next, our *other* space countered their school day learning experiences by affording girls the opportunity to read about main characters that were not White.

"Dyamonde Reminds Me of Me."

As discussed in chapter two, hegemonic classroom practices serve to exclude other social and cultural literary practices (see Wissman, 2011) possessed by African-American girls while the use of canonical texts in classrooms often leads to the disengagement of African-American

girls (Greene, 2016). Seeking to understand if culturally relevant texts play a role in the literacy advancement of African-American girls, two texts from the *Dyamonde Daniel* series were selected for girls in the literacy collaborative. *Dyamonde Daniel* is a series of chapter books written by African-American, female author, Nikki Grimes. Nikki Grimes is well known for her fictional stories centered on the experiences and struggles of African-American adolescents and families. As discussed earlier, the two anchor texts used in the literacy collaborative were *Make Way for Dyamonde Daniel* and *Rich*. Both texts featured an African-American girl, *Dyamonde Daniel*, as the protagonist. The texts teach valuable lessons centered on the trials and tribulations associated with being an African-American girl, making friends, and struggling with financial hardships.

I discussed the texts chosen for the girls with Mrs. Ashwood. Similarly to scholars' sentiments mentioned above, she shared that "I think that they become disengaged because they're not connecting to the text and by you choosing this book, being that it's an African-American author and African-American protagonist I think that they're finding at least a strong connection there." Mrs. Ashwood's notion that girls in the literacy collaborative may connect to the texts because of its representation of African-American girls were corroborated by participants.

During mid-point interviews, many of the girls shared their feelings about the texts. The following table shares responses of some of the girls when asked the following questions: a.) What if anything do they like about the texts and b.) Can you relate to any of the experiences detailed in our texts?

Table 6

Participant Responses to Text

Participant	Response
Hannah	“It’s AMAZING! Because it tells you about an African-American girl.”
Jasmine	“Okay I really like both of the books because Dyamonde reminds me of me. I have a sassy attitude, I have unruly hair underneath these braids. And...stuff like that. I can really relate to her. Like I don't have my own room. Yeah she doesn't have her own room.”
Angel	<p>“I like how it talks about a black girl because most of the books we read not to be mean but it talks about white people.</p> <p>And it’s like rare it’s like one out of ten that the main character is a black girl.</p> <p>And I like how it talks about different problems are and real life lessons and things to use.”</p>
Mariah	“I like the books because it’s about the life of a black girl and it’s also a little funny to read too and she is kinds like confident for herself.”
Lynn	“Um. Having to move. Because my mom got a new job, she got laid off from her other job and we had to move down here.”

Hannah, Jasmine, Angel, Mariah, and Lynn all point to the ways in which reading about an African-American girl are enjoyable as it relates to their everyday lives. Jasmine pointed to the way in which Dyamonde’s hair and attitude are both reminiscent of her own. Lynn furthers their

connections by illuminating how her mom and Dyamonde’s mom both experienced job loss. In addition to the five interview responses shares in Table 3, two of the remaining seven girls, Lauren and Ashley, used free-writing opportunities to discuss their connections to texts.

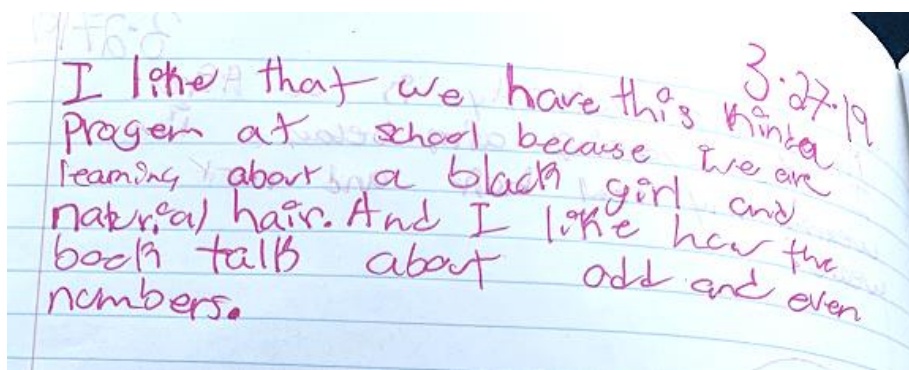


Figure 22. L4BG Journal Topic: “Free Write.” Participant: Lauren.

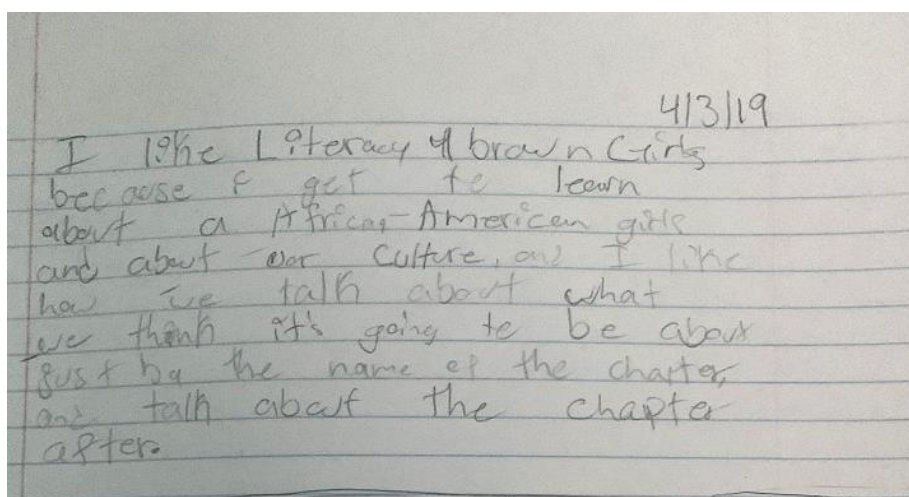


Figure 23. L4BG Journal Topic: “Free Write.” Participant: Ashley.

Like Jasmine’s discussion on hair, Lauren’s journal entry illuminated how this literacy collaborative was relatable because of Dyamonde and our discussions on natural hair. She stated that, “I like that we have this kinda program at school because we are learning about a black girl and natural hair.” Ashley echoed Lauren’s sentiments stating that the program was enjoyable

because “I get to learn about a African-American girl and about our culture.” Seven of the twelve girls in the literacy collaborative spoke to the ways in which they identified with *Dyamonde Daniel* because of her being an African-American girl.

In addition to revealing the relatability of our texts, excitement and engagement were displayed during our sessions. For example, I note that “we read chapter seven because chapter six was so short. Girls made great predictions about chapter seven based off of chapter six and schema” (field notes, April 23rd). Further along in our literacy collaborative, girls were still excited during the readings of our second text, *Rich.*: “Hannah was excited to keep reading! Sasha wanted to keep reading too! Chapter four was really exciting for them! They really enjoy predictions” (field notes, May 7th, 2019). Field notes also reveal improvement in girls’ literacy skills abilities. “They liked the chapter. They were really excited. Girls read chapter seven with great expression! Seemed to really get the main idea quicker and details quicker. They made great predictions and seemed really engaged” (field notes, May 15th, 2019). “They did really well with main idea and supporting details! They made really good connections” (field notes, May 22nd, 2019).

Relatedly, some of the girls pointed to specific ways in which the texts aided in their literacy skill growth. During our mid-point interview, Mariah shared that “and plus that book is helping us read better. So who knows? I might be on a 7th grade level up in reading now!” *That* book, as shared by Mariah, points to her connection between *Make Way for Dyamonde Daniel* and her perceived reading level growth. Relatedly, Hannah shared how reading in our group has aided with not only her reading abilities, but also her overall interest in reading.

Hannah: Cuz it’s a good group. I would tell them if they had trouble reading and stuff but if they don’t they shouldn’t come.

Researcher-facilitator: So it's about reading?

Hannah: Yeah cuz i don't like reading before this group. I would throw away books my mama gave me

Researcher-Facilitator: Whaaat?!

Hannah: [Laughs]. But when the group was here, I don't throw them away.

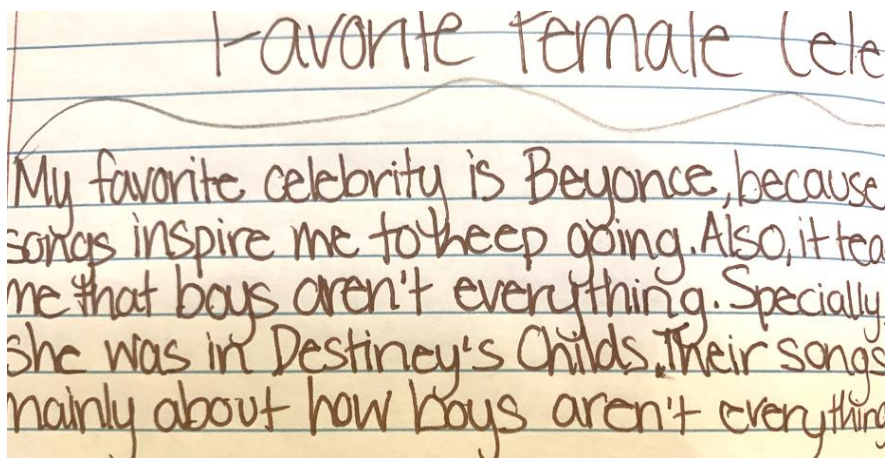
For girls in the literacy collaborative, culturally relevant texts seemed to not only be engaging but liberating. Our space, then, became one where girls recited and read words that affirmed their identities. Naturally, as discussed next, our writings too became a form identity expression by affording girls the space to connect what they wrote about to their identities and experiences.

“Well, It's Like Another Way of Like How We Express Ourselves.”

As outlined in chapter three, according to Muhammad (2012), the use of texts by prominent African-American, female writers, making space for free writing, and allowing time for discussion and sharing of those writings all prove to be characteristics of emancipatory practices for African-American girls. ELA should be a time when these students can read works by authors who are representations of themselves, write about what inspires them and express themselves however they see fit. Regrettably, this is not their reality. For this reason, other spaces are imperative for African-American, female students so they are able to read, write and communicate (Wissman, 2011; Muhammad, 2012) in a safe *other* space. While girls' identities were supported through the use of culturally relevant texts, emancipatory writings also afforded them the space to write about what was of importance to them.

In our *other* space, writings were often centered on the identities and desires of the girls as a means of providing a safe other space for the girls. During pre-literacy collaborative

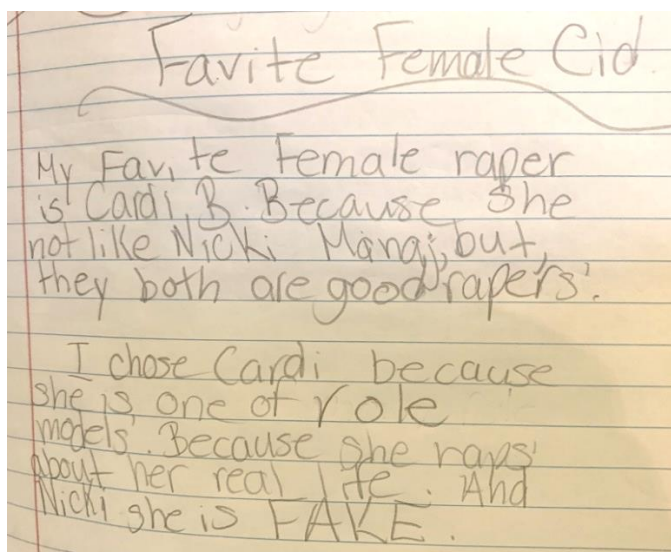
interviews, girls and I discussed positive examples of African-American women. Five of the twelve girls referenced celebrities such as Beyoncé, Alicia Keys, and Cardi B as role models that they enjoy listening to. In an attempt to connect writing experiences with the girls' identities, one of our journaling prompts asked girls to write about their favorite female celebrities. Four of the twelve girls chose to write about Beyoncé, Cardi B, or both of them.



Favorite Female Cele

My favorite celebrity is Beyonce, because songs inspire me to keep going. Also, it teaches me that boys aren't everything. Specially she was in Destiny's Child. Their songs mainly about how boys aren't everything.

Figure 24.. L4BG Journal Topic: "Write about your favorite female celebrity and why she is your favorite." Participant: Angel.

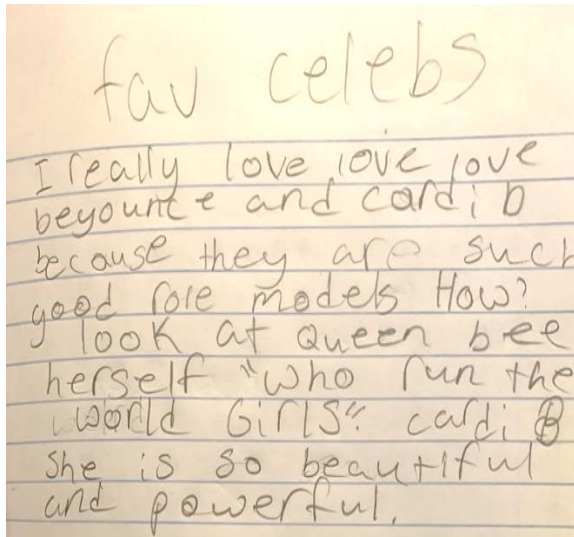


Favite Female Cid.

My Favite Female rapper is Cardi B. Because she not like Nicki Minaj, but they both are good rappers.

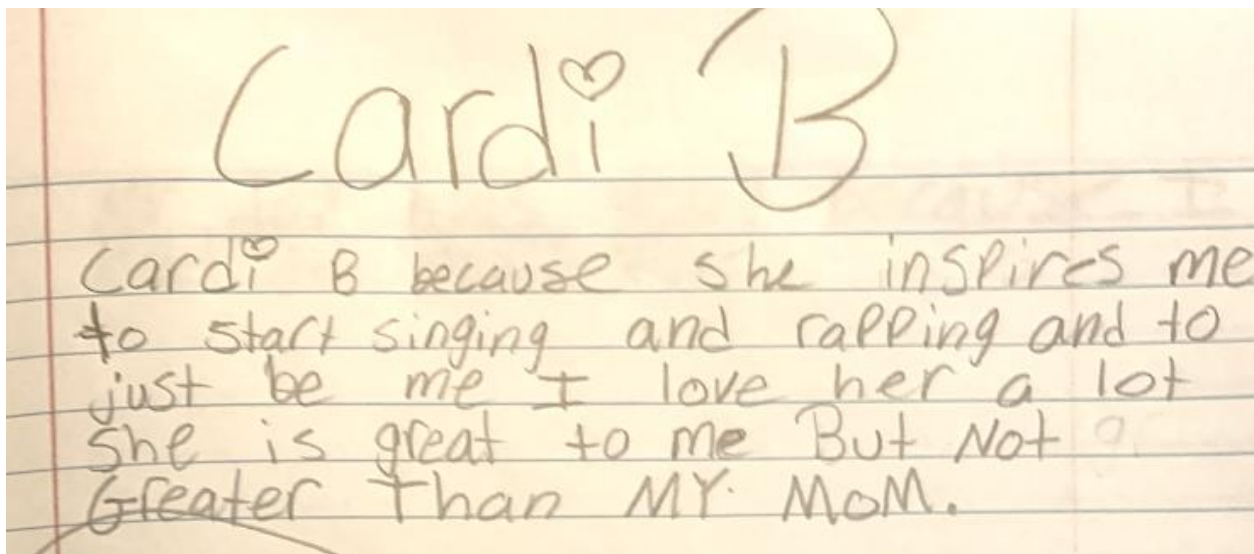
I chose Cardi because she is one of role models. Because she raps about her real life. And Nicki she is FAKE.

Figure 25. L4BG Journal Topic: “Write about your favorite female celebrity and why she is your favorite.” Participant: Sasha.



fav celebs
I really love love love
beyonce and cardib
because they are such
good role models how?
look at queen bee
herself "who run the
world girls" cardib
she is so beautiful
and powerful.

Figure 26. L4BG Journal Topic: “Write about your favorite female celebrity and why she is your favorite.” Participant: Jasmine.



Cardi B
Cardi B because she inspires me
to start singing and rapping and to
just be me I love her a lot
she is great to me But Not
Greater Than MY MOM.

Figure 27. L4BG Journal Topic: “Write about your favorite female celebrity and why she is your favorite.” Participant: Hannah.

The journal entries above depict girls’ connections to either Cardi B or Beyoncé. Angel, Sasha and Hannah share how Beyoncé and Cardi B are inspiring stating that they are “role models” and

they are not “fake.” Jasmine furthers their analysis stating that Cardi B “is so beautiful and powerful.” Using descriptions such as inspiring, beautiful, and powerful, point to the ways in which the four girls admired women of color while simultaneously illuminating the ways in which they themselves wanted to be seen.

Our writings, centered on the identities and experiences of African-American girls, were also rooted in literacy skills and standards. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Literacy 4 Brown Girls focused on the core standard: main ideas and supporting details which is associated with fifth-grade students (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2011). Building on the journaling session on girls’ favorite celebrities and focusing on identification of main ideas and supporting details, girls were asked to share their favorite rap songs by identifying the chorus as the main idea and choosing three supporting verses as details.

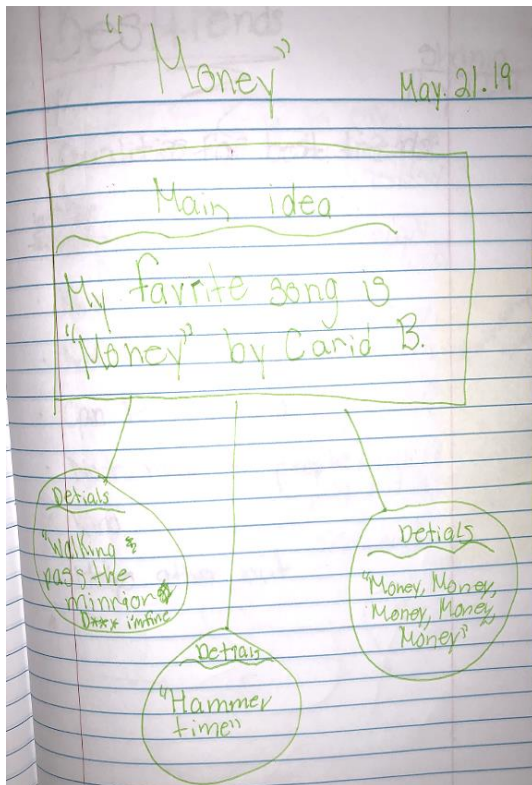


Figure 28. L4BG Journal Topic: “Choose your favorite song as your main idea and write the verses you know as supporting details!” Participant: Sasha.

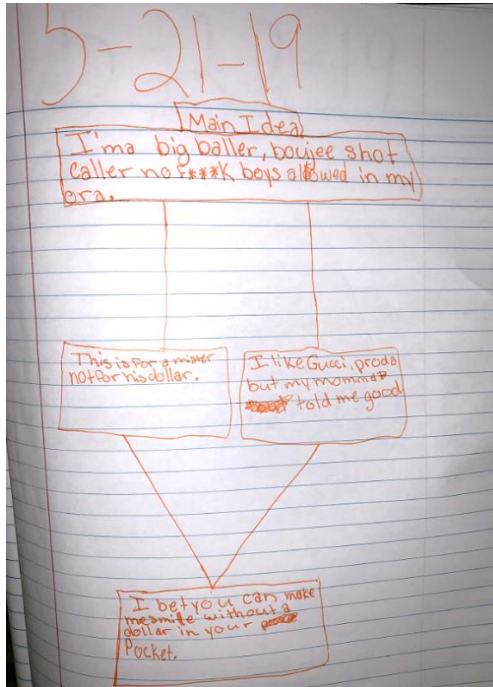


Figure 29. L4BG Journal Topic: “Choose your favorite song as your main idea and write the verses you know as supporting details!” Participant: Ashley.

These two journal entries depict the Sasha and Ashley’s understanding of main idea and supporting details by highlighting one verse from the chorus of their respective songs as the main ideas and selecting supporting verses to support it. Perhaps, though, more importantly, two of the twelve girls chose songs written by artists who were women of color.

The songs depicted in the journal entries above were both written by women of color, Cardi B and Kiana Lede. Both artists are known for speaking out against expected financial dependence on men, freely discussing their confidence in their identities and sexualities, and creating engaging songs that encourage girls and women of color to be unapologetically *them*. In

her song “Big Spender,” Lede calls herself a “Big baller, boujee shot caller. No fuck boys allowed in my aura. Misses want a mister, not for his dollar. If you're tryna flex, don't bother, 'cause I'm a Big spender, bling on my 'genda. Last time I paid? I just can't remember I don't have the time to play with pretenders. You might have your own but I'm the big spender.” (Lede, 2018)). Relatedly, Cardi B states that, “I was born to flex (Yes). Diamonds on my neck. I like boardin' jets, I like mornin' sex (Woo!) But nothing in this world that I like more than checks (Money). All I really wanna see is the (Money). I don't really need the D, I need the (Money). All a bad bitch need is the (Money) (Cardi B, 2018).” During our share out, girls reported how these songs affirmed female independence and inspired them not to rely on anyone else to be successful. Writing activities in which girls’ interests and identities were woven into their learning experiences proved to be enjoyable, inspiring, and cathartic for the girls in the literacy collaborative (field notes, May 21st, 2019).

In addition to girls sharing their excitement as a result of the journaling prompts that were rooted in their identities (e.g., describe your experiences as an African-American girl or Dyamonde Daniel has natural hair. What do you think about natural hair? Tell me if you like natural hair or not. Explain why), they also revealed how journaling was a means of self-expression. The following table reflects girls’ responses when asked what, if anything, they enjoy about journaling.

Table 7

Participant Responses to Journaling

Participant	Response
Lauren	“Cuz we get to express how we feel about Literacy 4 Brown Girls.”
Autumn	“Because you get to write about...well some topics you get to write about how you feel and I like writing about our books and stuff.”
Hannah	“It’s awesome because we get to journal about anything.”
Jasmine	“I like when we journal because I write a lot. I have a diary at home that I write in a lot. It's mostly about literacy.”
Sasha	“I like the prompts and that we get to like free write.”
Kyla	“I like both. I like when you give us something and when we just write about anything.”
Ashley	“You just tell us make it appropriate like we don’t got a million restrictions. We just got one...well two stay at level at level zero but that’s not really bad. And we can talk about whatever we want and I can tell you about my day.”
Angel	“The thing I like about free journaling is it’s like a time. A place I’m comfortable to express myself and like not to get like a reaction I don’t want towards it or a comment that they don’t like or something and I get to share with the group and tell them how I feel.”
Mariah	“Well, it’s like another way of like how we express ourself.”

As reflected in the responses above, nine of the girls reported free writing or journaling time as a means of positive expression. Girls pointed to the freedom to write about what was of relevance to them, prompts centered on their identities, and the ability to write without restrictive directives as desirable. These experiences, which were contrary to those in the classroom that proved to be non-inclusive, not relatable, and issued with “a million restrictions,” afforded girls in the literacy collaborative the opportunities to explore and affirm their identities through their writing.

Data revealed that through prompts and free-writing centered on the identities and experiences of African-American girls, our writing time afforded girls the space to be themselves and discuss what was of importance to them. Literacy 4 Brown Girls provided girls with a safe *other* space to write and communicate in ways imperative to their identities. These identity-infused activities countered girls’ experiences with their misrepresentation and maltreatment; As shared below, discussions of these experiences were also core to our sessions.

“None of This Stuff on TV is True”

During our pre-collaborative interview, when asked what sort of conversations students are able to have in their classrooms, Kyla shared that “...our discussions don’t be about black African girls.” Relatedly, during a discussion on her current classroom discussions, Mariah shared that things have changed since she no longer has an African-American, female teacher.

Mariah: Back in my old class I had a black African-American teacher and we would talk about hair and her natural hair. It was at this school before she quit.

Researcher-Facilitator: Ok now do you have an African-American teacher?

Mariah: No

Researcher-Facilitator: Okay so do you still have those kinds of discussions?

Mariah: No

Researcher-Facilitator: Did you like those discussions that you had with your former teacher?

Mariah: Yes.

Scholars point to the ways in which culturally relevant pedagogy, like discussed by Mariah and Kyla above, is crucial to the learning experiences of African-American girls (Butler, 2017; Evans-Winters, 2005; Greene, 2016; Morris, 2016, 2019; Muhammad, 2012, Price-Dennis et al., 2017, Sutherland, 2005; Wissman, 2011). Not only did Midwest School's ELA curriculum miss the mark in terms of its cultural relevance, teachers, like Mrs. Ashwood, also neglected the identities of African-American girls through their lack of cultural knowledge and non-inclusive instructional practices. Our space, similar to the spaces implemented by the aforementioned scholars, confronted the neglect girls experienced during their school day by making space for discussions centered on their identities and lived experiences.

Making space for their identities and lived experiences through conversations meant that we addressed the ways in which African-American women and girls are perceived. During our pre-collaborative interview, Lynn shared how she felt television misrepresented African-American females. She stated:

Like the shows my mom watch. They are very pretty but they usually have a lot going on with them. And if they're not really pretty. I don't like using this term. I really don't. But, like they're a little ghetto. If they're living in that area, not a very good area, they're usually...they always seem like they're not doing the right thing at all...My mom

watches a lot of movies like that and this girl was acting super-fast. That's what my mom calls it. She wasn't acting her age. She wasn't wearing what they should be wearing for a teenager. They're always like doing drugs or being super-fast and I don't like that cuz that's not true. Because I have met so many smart like African-American girls here and I love it because they're so smart. None of this stuff on tv is true.

Lynn's statement revealed how African-American girls are misrepresented in the media and, relatedly, how that contradicts with what she sees in other African-American girls at Midwest School.

As we read more of *Make Way for Dyamonde Daniel*, girls gleaned insight on Dyamonde's character (see table 5 for an overview of L4BG activities to understand the findings).

Table 8

L4BG Week 3 Chapter Summary, Connections, & Journal Prompt(s)

Chapter Summary	Text to Life Connection	Journal Prompt
Dyamonde finally confronts Free. She scolds him for being mean to a schoolmate, another boy, and assertively makes him apologize. From then on, she keeps her eyes on his behavior.	Current events surrounding assertiveness of African-American females (For example, Linked In statement by CPS CEO Janice Jackson). Ladies vs. Loudies (see Fordham, 1993; E. Morris, 2007).	Pretend you are on the news and someone is asking you to explain your experiences as an African-American girl. What would you say?

Excited by the idea that Dyamonde stood up for what she believed in and used her assertiveness for good, girls then discussed what it meant for them to be Black girls. Relatedly, as depicted

above in table 5, I chose to ask the girls to write responses to the following prompt: “Pretend you are on the news and someone is asking you to explain your experiences as an African-American girl. What would you say?”

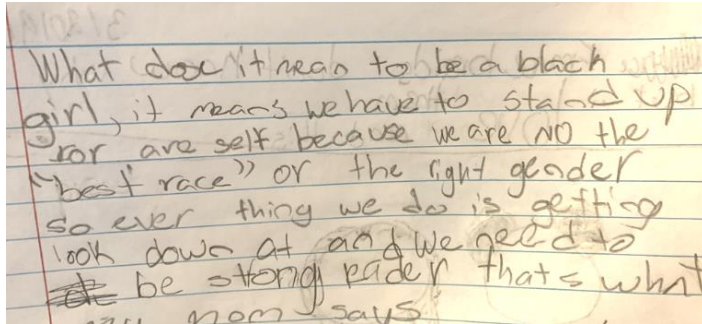


Figure 30.. L4BG Journal Topic: “Pretend you are on the news and someone is asking you to explain your experiences as an African-American girl. What would you say?” Participant: Lynn.

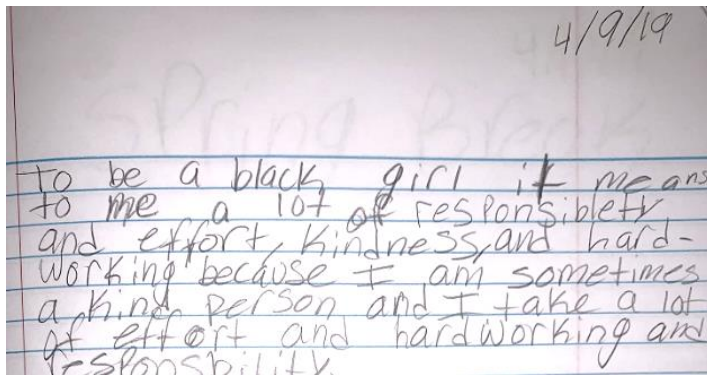


Figure 31.. L4BG Journal Topic: “Pretend you are on the news and someone is asking you to explain your experiences as an African-American girl. What would you say?” Participant: Hannah.

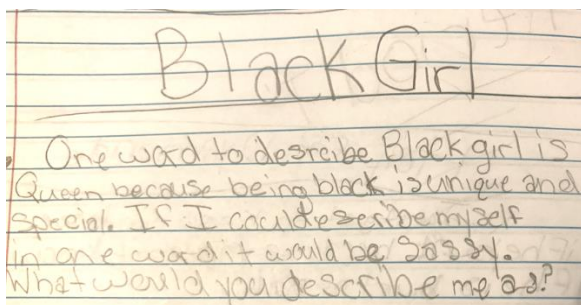
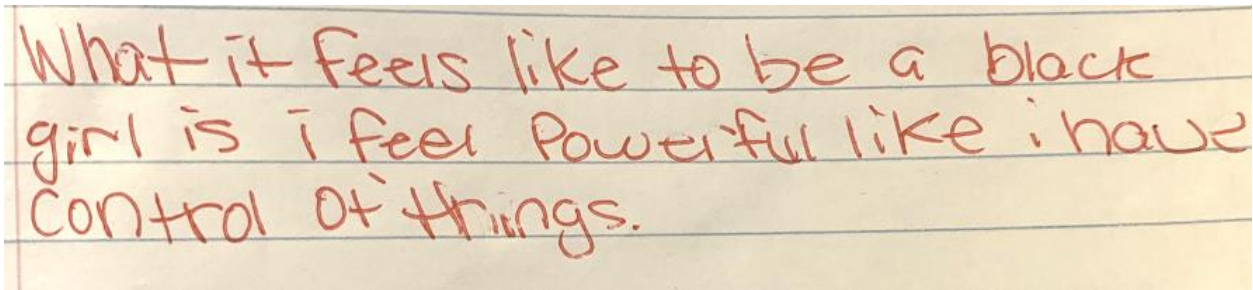
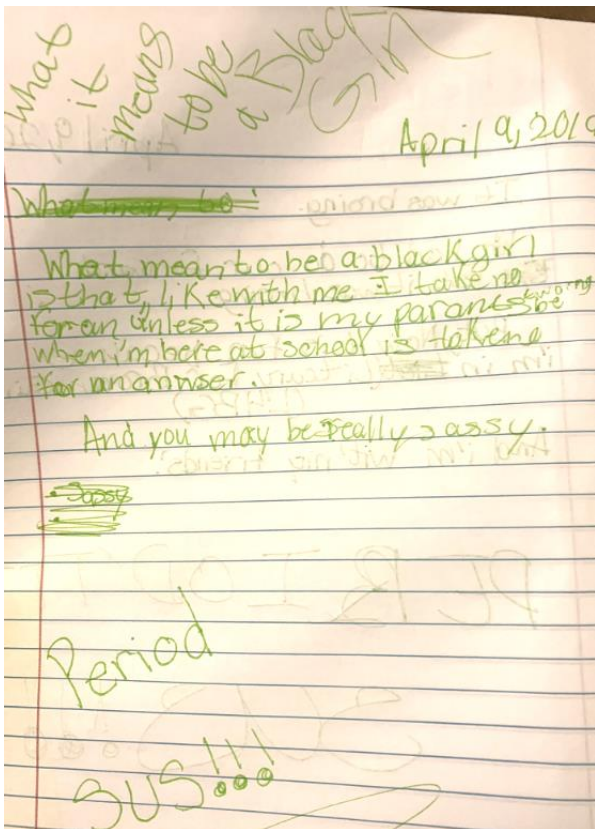


Figure 32. L4BG Journal Topic: "Pretend you are on the news and someone is asking you to explain your experiences as an African-American girl. What would you say?" Participant: Ashley.



What it feels like to be a black girl is i feel Powerful like i have control of things.

Figure 33. L4BG Journal Topic: "Pretend you are on the news and someone is asking you to explain your experiences as an African-American girl. What would you say?" Participant: Autumn.



What it means to be a black girl
April 9, 2019
~~What means to be~~
What mean to be a black girl
is that like with me I take no
for an unless it is my parents
when i'm here at school is taken
for an answer.
And you may be really sassy.
~~sassy~~
Period
SUS!!!

Figure 34. L4BG Journal Topic: "Pretend you are on the news and someone is asking you to explain your experiences as an African-American girl. What would you say?" Participant: Sasha.

What Does it Mean to be a
Black Girl

What means to be a black girl is to always be you and
don't let anyone stop you. It also means to be proud of
who you are as an individual person. It also means to
show your race as it is. Never be afraid of what people
might say to you about being black.

I'm Done For Today 😊

Figure 35. L4BG Journal Topic: “Pretend you are on the news and someone is asking you to explain your experiences as an African-American girl. What would you say?” Participant: Angel.

Blackness

My shoes are black
and so is my face
~~and~~ so please do
not disrespect
my face

Figure 36. L4BG Journal Topic: “Pretend you are on the news and someone is asking you to explain your experiences as an African-American girl. What would you say?” Participant: Jasmine.

Hannah, Ashley, Angel, Autumn, Lynn, Jasmine, and Sasha all shared powerful responses that spoke to both the trials and triumphs associated with life as an African-American girl. Lynn stated that, “it means we have to stand up for are self because we are no[t] the ‘best race’ or the right gender. So ever[y] thing we do is getting look down at and we need to be strong leader[s]. That’s what my mom says.” Lynn’s entry points to the unfair way in which society views and treats African-American girls and women. Her solution, to stand up for oneself, is a means of combatting this treatment and re-representing African-American girls as strong, confident, and assertive. Relatedly, pointing towards societal impact on the life African-American girls, Hannah wrote that it takes “a lot of responsibility and effort.” Ashley, Autumn, Sasha, and Angel highlighted the ways in which being an African-American girl means being seen as a “queen, powerful, not taking no for an answer, and being sassy.” Jasmine adds to the discussion by composing a poem demanding respect. She wrote, “my shoes are black and so is my face. So please, do not [disrespect] my race!” Angel’s reinforcing statement that “it also means showing your race as it is. Never be afraid of what people might say to you about being Black,” symbolizes that while, as noted by Lynn and Hannah, being an African-American girl in this society ain’t been no crystal stair (see Langston Hughes, 1922), their identities are important.

As Crenshaw (1991) discusses, misrepresentation of African-American females and their identities can also lead to their mistreatment. How African-American girls are depicted in the media and society can directly impact how they are viewed or treated in their everyday lives. Relatedly, during our post-literacy collaborative interview, Angel shared how she was treated as the only African-American girl in her classroom and subsequently addressed how the literacy

collaborative helped to combat societal views. She stated that “because like at my old school when I was up in third grade I would get teased a lot because I was the only African-American girl in my class and I used to feel bad about myself and I thought it was wrong....a positive African-American girl is somebody who’s proud to be an African-American girl. Not like how I used to be. It’s a lot of things we can do even if the world limits us. It’s a lot of things we can do if we go for it. So, to me, a positive African-American girl does what they believe in not just like stand what people tell them to do... and they stand strong in their power. Because like so many other races limit us.” Angel points to an important aspect of life for African-American girls, the world’s limitations of their abilities. Relatedly, she highlights the ways in which African-American girls can combat those limitations by standing “strong in their power.”

As shared above, nine of the twelve girls in the literacy collaborative revealed how they felt underrepresented in their curriculum, how they were misrepresented in the media and in their everyday lives, and how that misrepresentation led to others treating them unfairly. Due to these conversations, I suggested that the girls create a collaborative piece of art that spoke against these injustices and for the identities of African-American girls.

Brown Girls Are...



Figure 37. L4BG Concluding Collaborative Art Project: “Brown Girls Are...”

As we concluded our final text, girls continued to have powerful conversations centered on race and gender (see table 9 for an overview of L4BG activities in order to understand the upcoming findings).

Table 9

LABG Week 12 Chapter summary, Objective, & Final Activity

Chapter Summary	Identity Objective	Discussion Prompt/Final Activity
Damaris takes Dyamonde’s advice and writes about where she lives. She not only enters it into the poetry contest, she wins first place!	Structural intersectionality	Think about everything we have discussed (race, gender, hair, relationships, beauty, representation versus perception, and friendships) and create your own poem. Let it be a reflection of all we have discussed and a representation of who you are.

The final chapter revealed the ways in which two, African-American girls worked together to affirm and support one another. Rather than respond with individual poems, girls in the literacy collaborative concluded our sessions together with a collective, visual response to the prompt “brown girls are...” They responded with words of affirmation claiming that African-American girls are “smart, fine, funny, Black queens, dependable, different, and worth it.” Much like the poetry-infused youth work conducted by Muhammad & Gonzalez (2016), this project helped to define the girls’ “multiple identities and explore their own positionality in the world—which is multilayered and changing” (p. 449). Through this collaborative art project, girls in Literacy 4 Brown Girls reclaimed their identities through the use of language and art challenging the “deficit perspectives of young Black women” (see Price-Dennis et al., 2017) perpetuated by the absence of inclusive learning experiences at Midwest School.

The journal entries and collaborative poster shared above indicate that at a school where the identities of African-American girls were not embedded in the curriculum and classroom discussions, Literacy 4 Brown Girls helps to serve as a safe *other* space where girls developed their identities through in-depth discussions, emancipatory writings, and readings of culturally relevant texts. Below, Angel solidifies this by choosing to free-write about the ways in which the literacy collaborative helps the girls construct their identities by stating that “L4BG is a great group because it helps the other girls and I get to talk about things that black girls go through.” She continues by addressing the impact of the book. She states that “to me the book was a good experience because it taught me a lot about how people change the little things. The book also teaches kids what black girls have to go through. *Dyamonde Daniel* is a good representation of black girls in the world.”

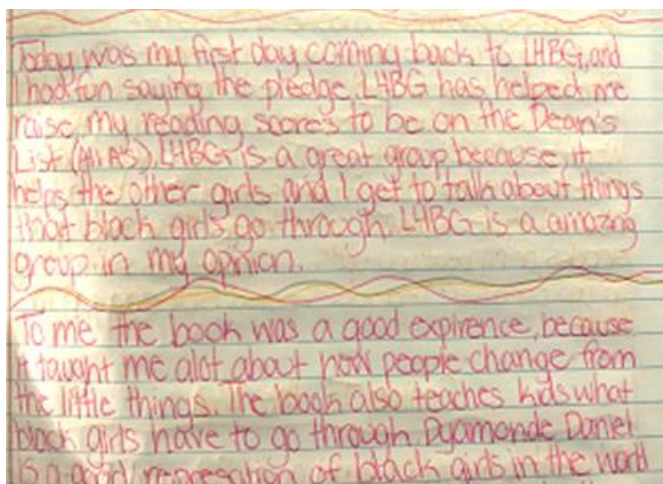


Figure 38. L4BG Journal Prompt: “Free Write.” Participant: Angel.

Through the use of culturally relevant texts, emancipatory writings, and relevant discussions centered on girls’ identities, girls in the literacy collaborative received culturally relevant pedagogy necessary to their identity construction (see Muhammad, 2012; Muhammad and

Haddix, 2016; Sutherland, 2005; Greene, 2016) and imperative to their academic engagement and success (see Bell & Clark, 1998; Clark, 2017).

“Yeah, I be Giving the Main Idea of the Story Sometimes.”

While identity-infused activities are crucial to the academic success of African-American girls (see Greene, 2016; Morris, 2019; Muhammad, 2012; Sutherland, 2005), this literacy collaborative also focused on the support of girls’ understanding of main ideas and supporting details. As a reminder, Wisconsin’s Department of Instruction states that by the end of fifth grade, students focusing on this standard should be able to “quote accurately from the text, compare and contrast characters, and determine the theme of the text” (Department of Public Instruction, 2019, p. 38). Additionally, girls in the collaborative practiced literacy skills learned during the school day including but not limited to the following: close reading techniques, analysis of text, making predictions, and text to life connections. Throughout the duration of our literacy collaborative, girls practiced these skills through poster activities. The following images display girls’ understanding of main idea and supporting details, comparing and contrasting of characters, quoting accurately from texts, and making predictions.

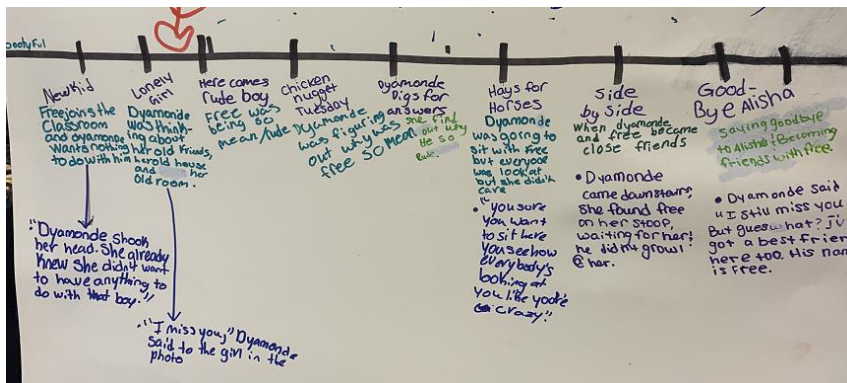


Figure 39. L4BG Poster Topic: Main ideas and supporting details.

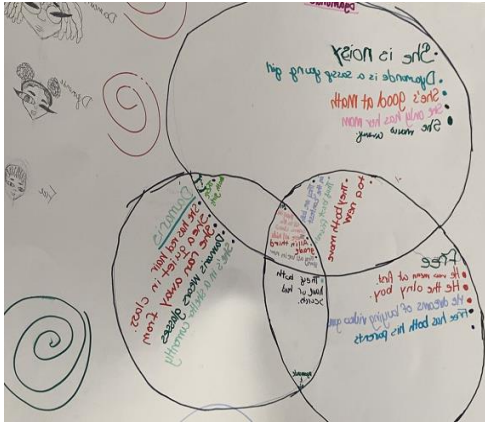


Figure 40. L4BG Poster Topic Comparing and contrasting characters.

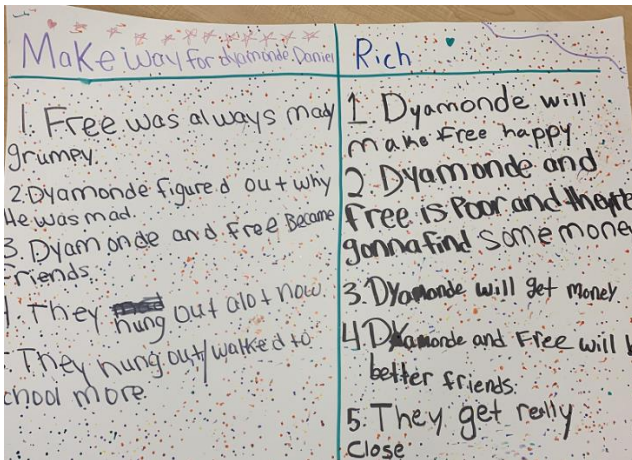


Figure 41. L4BG Poster Topic Predictions.



Figure 42. L4BG Poster Topic: Comparing and contrasting.

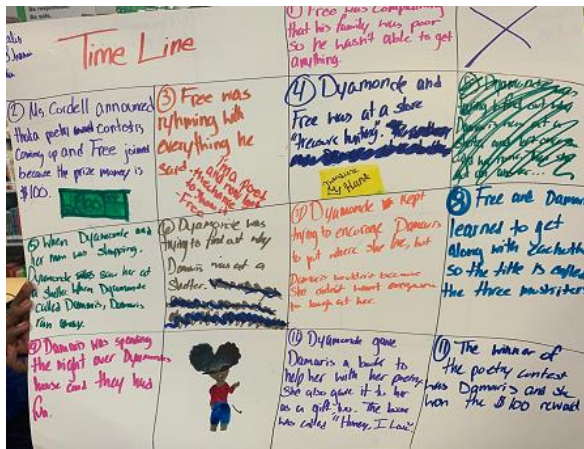


Figure 43. L4BG Poster Topic: Main idea timeline.

In Figures 39 and 43, girls worked together to recall the main events from each chapter. Autumn volunteered to add in supporting details so that the girls could also display their understandings of how supporting details have to connect to and provide support for the main idea. In Figures 40 and 42, girls displayed their understandings of comparing and contrasting characters by writing out similarities and differences between the main character Dyanonde and supporting characters Free and Damaris. In Figure 41, girls displayed their understandings of making predictions through first charting what happened in our first text, *Make Way for Dyanonde Daniel*, and secondly connecting it to predictions as to what will happen in our next text, *Rich*. Girls predicted that “Dyanonde will make Free happy, Dyanonde and free is poor and they’re gonna find some money, and Dyanone and Free will get really close.” These predictions were all substantiated in our next text, *Rich*, when Dyanonde and Free displayed a closer, best friend relationship, and, when they discussed entering a poetry contest to win one hundred dollars.

While the above figures depict girls’ understandings of main idea and supporting details, making predictions, quoting accurately from a text, and comparing and contrasting characters,

the girls’ understandings of theme were revealed through their exit tickets. Exit tickets were distributed to girls prior to our twelve-week literacy collaborative and at the end. Seven girls were able to complete both rounds of exit tickets⁴. The following table focuses on their responses to the following question: Do you think you can identify the theme of a text?

Table 10

Participant Exit Ticket Responses

Participant	Pre-Collaborative Response	Post-Collaborative Response	Post- Collaborative Exemplar
Jasmine	No response	“The main story/text was talking about but in one word.”	“Jealousy!!”
Lauren	No response	“Jealousy...what describes the text.”	“Friendship”
Sasha	“The theme of a text is like the setting.”	“The theme is the moreol or learn of the story.”	“Friendship.”
Autumn	No response	“An theme is a morale or an lesson.”	“Dyamonde bought Damaris a poetry book. Theme is friendship and being generous.”
Ashley	No response	“I identify the moral of the text.”	“Friendship.”
Angel	“The theme of little Red Riding hood is to never trust a stranger.”	“The theme is the moral or the lesson of the story.”	Friendship is the main theme of the text so far.”
Tammy	No response	“She was sharing mind it about they thing is that happened to her.”	“She met a girl so she have two friends.”

⁴ Five of the twelve girls were not in attendance on the day assessments were given.

As shared earlier in the section detailing the importance of culturally relevant texts, much of the two texts selected for use in this literacy collaborative, *Make Way for Dyamonde Daniel* and *Rich* were centered on the trials and tribulations associated with making friends. Six of the seven girls who completed the exit ticket assessment accurately listed friendship as a theme associated with the two texts⁵.

While the recognition of the girls' literacy skill growth was evident through their posters and exit ticket responses, three of the twelve girls also self-reported their perceived growth. During our interview, Sasha shared that she was utilizing literacy skills at home when discussing the literacy collaborative with her family. She stated that "yeah I be giving the main idea of the story sometimes and whatever I remember of the book I will probably give them a detail." When asked about her experiences so far in the literacy collaborative, Autumn shared that "I like it. Main ideas were hard for me and it still is but when I came to the group it helps me out more. So. Um. I don't be getting bad grades in ELA and stuff." Similarly, Angel reported how the skills she developed in the literacy collaborative are often brought up with her mom. She stated, "I share it with my mom a lot because my mom is like my best friend. I share about the book, main idea, details, and like predictions." During a discussion following our reading of *Rich*, Angel also displayed excitement about her perceived literacy skill growth. "Angel thinks this would help her grade in ELA. She said her grade went up in reading and she thinks it's because of the group because we go over the same topics (main ideas/inferences/etc.)" (field notes, May 8th, 2019).

⁵ While Jasmine's response was not directly related to the texts, it does provide a post-literacy collaborative exemplar of a *possible* theme.

As evident through the above depicted posters, exit tickets, self-reports, and discussions, girls in the literacy collaborative built their literacy skills through culturally relevant pedagogy, writings, and discussions. Contrary to their school day experiences, academic engagement and success were rooted in identity-infused activities that inextricably linked who they were to what they learned. From three until five, Literacy 4 Brown Girls provided safe *other* space that positively impacted girls' identities and literacies.

Conclusion

This chapter revealed a) school characteristics that led to ineffective administrative practices, limited teacher support, resources, and classroom management, poor relationships among staff and students, and the residual impact these characteristics had on participants in Literacy 4 Brown Girls and b) the ways in which Literacy 4 Brown Girls served as a safe *other* space to combat these issues while supporting girls' identities and literacies through culturally relevant pedagogy and literacy skill instruction.

The findings from this study revealed that some of the African-American girls at Midwest School experienced subtractive school characteristics (see, Valenzuela, 1999) such as school disorganization, issues with relational trust that impacted their relationships, and a lack of cultural care in the classroom that both impacted teacher-student relationships and furthered their neglect in curricular materials. Relatedly, their social and emotional needs, care, and yearning to learn more about themselves and other African-American girls and women are unmet. The resulting effect of these experiences exacerbated their academic neglect.

To combat this neglect, African-American girls appreciated a safe *other* space in order to receive the care, attention, and instruction they deserve (see Greene, 2016; Muhammad, 2012; Price-Dennis et al., 2017; Wissmna, 2011). Similar to Price-Dennis et al. (2017), Literacy 4

Brown Girls was able to provide a safe *other* space “steeped in identity development, healing, and joy. As academic development was advanced, so was the personal development of Black girls and they engaged in identity meaning making and used literacy to heal and recover” (Price-Dennis et al., 2017, p. 13). Findings from this study also revealed that Literacy 4 Brown Girls helped to add to the twelve girls’ learning experiences, countering the effects of the *school to collaborative pipeline*, through restorative practices and culturally relevant readings, writings, and discussions. The following chapter provides an in-depth discussion of these findings.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative, single, case study was to explore the potential impact of a literacy collaborative on the literacies and identities of twelve, fifth-grade, African-American girls at Midwest School. The previous chapter explored this impact in great detail highlighting the ways in which Midwest School exhibited subtractive school qualities (see Valenzuela, 1999) that ultimately exacerbated the neglect of the twelve, African-American, fifth-grade girls that participated in Literacy 4 Brown Girls, and, consequently, how Literacy 4 Brown Girls served as a safe other space to rebuild relationships, build identities, and reinforce literacy skills. This chapter will expand on the discussion of the previous chapter by further examining the findings, illuminating implications, detailing the limitations of the study, and suggesting next steps.

School Disorganization

This study revealed that Midwest School was greatly impacted by disorganization and chaos, rooted in a lack of trust, which caused a breakdown of relationships, classroom issues, lack of trust, inadequate curricula, and student boredom. Much like scholars have discussed (see Bryk & Schneider, 2002), Midwest School's inability to build trust among members of their school resulted in school dysfunction and disorganization. Relatedly, the administrative team at Midwest School was inept at addressing the needs of the teachers and the general student body. Failing to attend to the needs of teachers and students subsequently meant that they were not only neglecting, but further exacerbating the issues faced by their most vulnerable students: African-American girls. Thus, school disorganization and dysfunction perpetuated the neglect of the identities of African-American girls. This neglect, experienced school-wide, was intensified in their classrooms by a lack of general cultural sensitivity and awareness that resulted in inadequate learning experiences and strained relationships.

Neglect of African-American Girls: Curriculum & Practice

Findings from this study also revealed that classrooms and curricular materials at Midwest School lacked the necessary cultural inclusion for students. Scholars discussed in chapter two address the impact a lack of cultural sensitivity can have on girls' learning experiences (see Butler, 2017; Greene, 2016; Price-Dennis et al., 2017; Price-Dennis, 2018; Muhammad, 2011; Muhammad and Haddix, 2016; Brown, 2013; Sutherland, 2005; Wissman, 2011) and their relationships with teachers (see Morris, 2007; Scott-Jones & Clark, 1986). Mrs. Ashwood shared her lack of cultural sensitivity and ultimately revealed her inability to relate to her students. This lack of relatability left students bored, neglected, and ostracized during their school day. Not only did her lack of cultural awareness hinder their learning experiences by

neglecting to put their identities at the forefront of her pedagogical practices, it simultaneously exacerbated their subtractive learning experiences through disengagement, tension filled relationships, and racial insensitivity.

For African-American girls in her classroom, this insensitivity meant that she expected them to not “act so tough” when in her presence. This expectation, rooted in White femininity and based on age old perceptions of what it means to be a woman (see Fordham, 1993; Morris, 2007), meant that their lackluster experiences in her classroom were compounded by her inability to care for them as both African-American and female. Additionally, her use of the “N” word solidified her general lack of cultural sensitivity worsening the classroom experiences of girls by reigniting the pain and suffering that is all too familiar to African-Americans in this country. This horrific miscalculation of a “teachable moment” further strained her relationships with the girls.

Her failure to build meaningful relationships informed by the intersectionality of the girls’ identities also negatively contributed to their relationships with one another. Scholars address the direct impact of teacher-student relationships on students’ abilities to form relationships with one another (see Allen, 2010; Stasio et al., 2016; Varga. 2017; Wang et al., 2014). Ashwood’s inability to create an equitable, supportive, caring classroom environment, partly due to her lack of support from the administrative team, resulted in her being unable to tend to the needs of her most vulnerable students. The social emotional needs of the African-American girls in her classroom went unmet. Subsequently, girls did not learn healthy communication skills or relationship building practices. Our safe *other* space then needed to employ restorative practices to rebuild and restore relationships prior to engaging with culturally relevant curricular materials.

Literacy 4 Brown Girls

Due to the compounding neglect and school disorganization experienced by girls at Midwest School, our safe other space needed to combat the subtractive learning experiences of their school day. As discussed in chapter four, Literacy 4 Brown Girls served as a safe other space for relationship building, identity construction, and literacy skill growth. This was achieved through the intentional use of restorative practices, identity-infused activities, and systematic review of literacy skills and standards.

Restorative Practices. Restorative practices in our other space were exhibited during our Sister Circles. These circles, also referred to by scholars as trust circles (see Boyes-Watson, 2008), were crucial in teaching girls how to build relationships with one another, support one another, and foster healthy communication. Findings from this study revealed that through our Sister Circles, the girls in the literacy collaborative were able to build relational trust. This trust, imperative to the success of learning environments (see Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Morris, 2019), meant that girls felt safe. During times of war on African-American girls' minds, bodies, and souls (see Crenshaw, 2015; Morris, 2016, 2019), their feelings of safety and support should be of the utmost concern.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogical Practices. In addition to our safe other space being rooted in restorative practices, the learning experiences were founded on their identities. As discussed by scholars in chapter two, it is crucial that other spaces use culturally relevant pedagogy that supports the identities of African-American girls (see Greene, 2016; Harrison, 2017; McArthur & Muhammad, 2017; Morris, 2016, 2019; Muhammad & Womack, 2015; Muhammad, 2012; Price-Dennis, 2016; Sutherland, 2005; and Wissman, 2011). Relatedly, findings from this study revealed the necessity of a triage of culturally inclusive pedagogical

practices necessary for the academic success of African-American girls. Through the use of culturally relevant texts, emancipatory writings, and discussions based on the needs of the girls, the twelve girls in Literacy 4 Brown Girls received academic experiences that ultimately supported their identities and their learning needs.

The Dyamonde Daniel series not only displayed an African-American girl on the cover, it dissected some of the many issues that plague the African-American community. Not surprisingly, girls in the literacy collaborative were then able to connect to both the physical appearance of Dyamonde as well as her lived experiences, increasing their engagement and comprehension (see Clark, 2017). Much like the texts, girls were also able to connect to the writings. Journal prompts were extracted from concepts in the text which in turn sparked interest and engagement with writing. Additionally, free-writes afforded girls the opportunities to journal about what was of immediate importance to them (e.g. lack of care from teachers and peer relational issues) which subsequently informed our discussions. These discussions, centered of the girls' identities, were also critical to the success of our other space. Due to the relational trust we worked so diligently to build, girls felt comfortable discussing issues surrounding race, domestic violence, beauty, and poverty. In sum, this triage of transformative educational practices aided in the identity construction of the girls. Relatedly, these practices also supported girls' literacy skills.

Literacy Skill Foci. As discussed in chapter two, Sutherland (2005) discusses the importance of including literacy skill foci in other space work with African-American girls. The findings from this study revealed that through a systematic review of Wisconsin core standards, girls in the literacy collaborative improved in reading engagement, main idea identification, comparing and contrasting characters, making predictions, and thematic analysis. These literacy

gains were identifiable through responses from teachers, administrative staff, and the girls themselves. Additionally, activities created during the literacy collaborative (e.g. literacy practice posters) and exit tickets revealed literacy skill growth. Thus, through the use of culturally relevant educational practices, the literacy skills of the girls were enhanced.

Summary of Discussion

As the findings from this study revealed, Literacy 4 Brown Girls served as a safe *other* space that provided additive learning experiences for twelve, African-American girls in an attempt to counteract the subtractive experiences exhibited by Midwest School. Through restorative practices, identity-infused pedagogy, and literacy skill instruction, girls in the literacy collaborative formed relationships, learned healthy communication skills, constructed and solidified their identities, and gained valuable literacy skill practice that ultimately resulted in their academic growth.

Much like the studies conducted by the scholars discussed in chapter two (see Butler, 2017; Crenshaw, 2015; E. Morris, 2007; Greene, 2016; Harrison, 2017; McArthur & Muhammad, 2017; Morris, 2016, 2019; Muhammad & Womack, 2015; Muhammad, 2012; Price-Dennis, 2016; Sutherland, 2005; and Wissman, 2011), a safe *other* space designed with the identities and literacies of African-American girls in mind added to their learning experiences by reinforcing the importance of an intersectional frame when working with African-American girls. That is to say, because Literacy 4 Brown Girls was rooted in intersectional practices, the resulting curricular materials, restorative practices, and general experiences were reflective of the needs and desires of the girls. Thus, findings from this study revealed that African-American girls crave representation of themselves in their texts, writings, and classroom discussions; doing so displays care, support, and love for their identities, often not exhibited in their classrooms (see

Crenshaw, 2015; E. Morris, 2007; Morris 2016, 2019, Price-Dennis et al., 2017). Thus, Literacy 4 Brown Girls positively impacted girls' relationships, identities, and literacies.

Implications for Practice

Intersectionality 101

As discussed in chapters one and two, intersectionality is a theoretical frame that provides a lens that can illuminate the ways in which African-American women and girls disproportionately experience discrimination due to their intersecting identities. When discussing the need for an intersectional frame, Crenshaw (1989) stated the following:

It is not necessary to believe that a political consensus to focus on the lives of the most disadvantaged will happen tomorrow in order to recenter discrimination discourse at the intersection. It is enough, for now, that such an effort would encourage us to look beneath the prevailing conceptions of discrimination and to challenge the complacency that accompanies belief in the effectiveness of this framework. By so doing, we may develop language which is critical of the dominant view and which provides some basis for unifying activity (p. 167).

In order for African-American girls to be truly successful in K-12 schools, the educational system must unveil the ways in which they perpetuate their marginalization. Thus, schools must take an intersectional approach in all that they do. One way in which schools can ensure that this happens, is by ensuring all school personnel are culturally aware, sensitive, and inclusive in their pedagogical practices. This can be done through professional development which is rooted in intersectionality and seeks to illuminate the sets of experiences, knowledge, and understandings possessed by African-American girls. Morris (2019) agrees. She states the following:

What educators believe about their students determines how they engage with their students. Schools that create trauma-informed, healing-responsive conditions for girls of color do so by preparing their educators to respond to these symptoms with empathetic classroom management. These strategies shift the mid-set of educators to recognize that one of the strongest predictors of classroom behavior is the quality of a student's relationship with her teacher (p. 56).

Boute (2015) continues the discussion led by Morris (2019) on the importance of ensuring teachers are culturally trained when she states the following:

Effectively teaching African American students often requires reconceptualizing what we educators do in our classrooms, rather than dreaming of changing families and home contexts (over which we have no control) or insisting that students have particular prerequisite skills or dispositions for being able to be taught (instead of figuring out how students can learn what is necessary). The reality is that we can only change what is within our power to do and learn to see the strengths that children do bring rather than what they do not have. Part of this recognition is that virtually all students have informal and cultural knowledge that can be used as a link to academic skills" (p.16).

In an article analyzing race relations in predominately White institutions, Johnson & Bryan (2016) agree suggesting that professional development that highlights the pervasive impact of race and racism is crucial for pre-service teachers.

This study argues that teachers must understand that at the intersection of race and gender lie additional forms of discrimination that hinder the academic success of their most vulnerable students: African-American girls. To begin school reform that seeks to honor the identities of

African-American girls, our educators must first seek to learn, understand, and support who they are. This, as previously stated by Morris (2019), is key in building effective relationships with African-American girls.

Trust Us

If school personnel possess an understanding of and respect for the unique identities of African-American girls, and the ways in which their identities create additional forms of discrimination, perhaps their ideals surrounding trust will shift. That is to say, if educators value who African-American girls are, they can subsequently value the importance of developing and maintaining trusting relationships with them. Morris (2019) illuminates the importance of these relationships when she states that “real safety emerges from strong relationships among school personnel, parents, and students.” (p. 30). Thus, when relational trust is exhibited to African-American girls, we not only ensure their academic success, we can begin to guarantee their safety.

In the case of Midwest School, the administrative team failed to develop and maintain trust amongst all its school members. Consequently, there was a school-wide breakdown in trust. As discussed by Bryk & Schneider (2003), it is not enough for administrators, teachers, and other school personnel to *say* they will work towards building relational trust with African-American girls; they must *show* it. The authors suggest that this is done first through the words and actions of the principal or administrative team. If schools are to build relational trust with its most vulnerable students, it starts from the top. Administrators, teachers, students, families, and community members must all be involved in transparent conversations centered on the needs and desires of African-American girls. Once those conversations begin, actionable steps need to be taken to display, develop, and maintain relational trust.

Once relational trust is formed between school personnel and African-American girls, true healing can begin. As previously mentioned by Morris (2019), healing also takes place in the curricular choices set forth by educators. Educators must be careful to include culturally relevant pedagogical practices when working with African-American girls. This study argues that there is a transformative triage of curricular materials necessary to ensure that the identities of African-American girls are honored in their classrooms.

ELA Our Way: The Transformative Triage

As discussed in chapter two, scholars have illuminated the ways in which ELA classrooms perpetuate the academic neglect of African-American girls (see Butler, 2017; Crenshaw, 2015; E. Morris, 2007; Greene, 2016; Harrison, 2017; McArthur & Muhammad, 2017; Morris 2016, 2019; Muhammad & Womack, 2015; Muhammad, 2012; Price-Dennis, 2016; Sutherland, 2005; Wissman, 2011). Young et al. (2018) adds to this discussion when they illuminate the unique ways in which African-American girls experience discrimination in their ELA classrooms when stating the following:

The racial violence that Black girls encounter in school cannot be separated from the remnants of the afterlife of slavery within Pre K–12 schools and in English language arts classrooms. Although traditional forms of modern-day chattel slavery have ended, Black girls are still experiencing slavery through more modernized weaponry that has advanced beyond shackles and chains. We unapologetically state that schools not only are prison for Black girls but that schools are actively reproducing slavery in its afterlife in English language arts. When Black girls' identities, ways of learning, and leadership capacities are symbolically bonded by chains through a White-only curriculum, culturally biased

literary texts, and pedagogical standards, Black female students are in fact experiencing normalized racial violence (p. 103).

As addressed by the authors, ELA classrooms can serve to perpetuate the discriminatory experiences of African-American girls rooted in their intersecting identities. The findings from this study suggest that the combined use of culturally relevant texts, discussions, and writings can serve as a means of countering these negative experiences. The transformative triage of educational practices utilized in this study not only aided in the identity construction of the twelve African-American girls, but also helped to support their literacy skills. Scholars address the ways in which the use of culturally relevant texts propel the academic success of students (see Ladson-Billings, 1996; Young, 2017), especially so in their ELA classrooms (see Feger, 2006). Thus, it is imperative that educators utilize culturally relevant pedagogical practices in their ELA classrooms, especially so since “literature has the power to oppose or uphold stereotypical depictions of Black girls and women” (Young et al., 2018, p. 103).

Limitations & Recommendations for Future Research

First, though the findings of this study suggest strong implications connected to the identity construction and literacy skill support of African-American girls, it is not without its limitations. Namely, this study focuses on the intersecting identities of African-American girls as they relate to race, gender, and social class. It is important to note there are other acting identities that work to perpetuate the neglect of African-American girls (e.g. national origin, religion, sexuality, trauma, and learning disability). If additional research is to be done on the impact that safe *other* spaces can have on the identity construction and literacy skill development of African-American girls, scholars should be careful to include the varying identities possessed by

participants. Inclusion should not only inform the methodological practices of the study, but also the curricular choices.

Secondly, this study focused on the impact of a literacy collaborative on the identities and literacies of fifth-grade girls. Though this study can serve to help fill a gap in scholarly literature discussing early adolescence, it neglects to investigate the potential impact of such a collaborative on younger African-American girls. In early academic years, students are learning to read versus reading to learn. It would behoove future researchers to examine the impact a culturally inclusive literacy collaborative might have on younger students in relation to learning to read in connection with identity construction.

Thirdly, though the goal of this qualitative case study was to provide rich, thick data to relay the impact a literacy collaborative had on the identities and literacies of African-American girls at Midwest School, it does lack generalizability (see Yin, 2009). Since this was a single, case study conducted at Midwest School, its findings might not be applicable to non-charter schools or schools in other parts of the nation. Future researchers might seek to implement these other spaces at non-charter schools or urban schools situated in other parts of the nation to understand if the findings of this study are generally applicable.

Concluding Thoughts

As stated in chapter one of this study, the intersection of race, gender, and class are prominent in societal structures (see Crenshaw, 1991). In addition, the way in which African-American girls are viewed, treated, and expected to behave in schools directly connects to their neglect in the classroom. Without an understanding of the ways in which society continues to marginalize African-American girls, educators will not be able to effectively confront their biases and place African-American girls' identities at the forefront of their pedagogical practices.

African-American girls and their learning needs should be acknowledged school-wide through intersectional practices, development and maintenance of relational trust, and utilization of culturally relevant curricular materials.

Another important finding of this study points to the ways in which educators can effectively instruct their most vulnerable students: African-American girls. This study revealed that through restorative practices, culturally relevant readings, emancipatory writings, and discussions, twelve, fifth-grade African-American girls were successful in relationship building, identity construction, and literacy skill growth. In a society that tells African-American women and girls that they are less than when compared to their White counterparts (see Davis, 1981; hooks, 1981; Hill-Collins & Bilge, 2016) and, consequently, render their lives as expendable,⁶ educators and the academic institution have a responsibility to African-American girls; their identities and literacies must be examined, understood, and acknowledged if we truly care about their educational experiences and their lives. Not doing so further posits that their needs, identities, and literacies are unimportant and perpetuate their academic push-out, disengagement, and neglect.

⁶ For further information on the current attacks of African-American women and girls, due to their societal positioning, see <http://aapf.org/sayhernamewebinar>.

NOTES

1. For further insight on these standards, see Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's English Language Arts Standards: <https://dpi.wi.gov/standards>).
2. This administrator served as a substitute teacher for a fifth-grade classroom for approximately two weeks. Due to her short stay in the classroom, our interview was not as lengthy as others.
3. Four of the twelve participants did not participate in post-literacy collaborative interviews. Kyla transferred schools two weeks prior to the end of classes. Mariah, Krystal and Lynn did not report to school during the last week of classes.
4. Five of the twelve girls were not in attendance on the day assessments were given.
5. While Jasmine's response was not directly related to the texts, it does provide a post-literacy collaborative exemplar of a *possible* theme.
6. #SayHerName is a movement that illuminates the violence against African-American women and girls. For further information on the current attacks of African-American women and girls, see: <http://aapf.org/sayhernamewebinar>.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: L4BG Flyer



**BOOK: DYAMONDE
DANIEL**

IDENTITY ACTIVITIES!

MAIN IDEA ACTIVITIES!

FUN DISCUSSIONS!

REFRESHMENTS!

**FIRST COME, FIRST
SERVED BASIS!**

**REFRESHMENTS WILL BE
SERVED!**

LITERACY 4 BROWN GIRLS IS AN
EXPLORATIVE STUDY THAT SEEKS TO
UNDERSTAND WHAT IMPACT A LITERACY
COLLABORATIVE WILL HAVE ON THE
IDENTITIES AND LITERACIES OF AFRICAN-
AMERICAN GIRLS.

Appendix B: Literacy 4 Brown Girls Parent Informational Session Script

Hello! Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedules to come here today. Please feel free to grab some light refreshments and we will begin.

My name is Jendayi Mbalia and I am a doctoral student at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. I am in the Urban Education department and I am working on my dissertation. My study is a literacy collaborative and I hope to explore its impact on the identity and literacy of African-American girls. Your school has invited me to share my study with you and ask if any of you may be interested in participating/having your children participate. This literacy collaborative will meet for two days per week, for two hours after school. The entire literacy collaborative will last for 12 weeks.

Participation is completely voluntary. If you agree to let your child participate now, you can always change your mind later. There are no negative consequences, whatever you decide.

Like I stated, I want to understand if a literacy collaborative helps with the identity and literacy of African-American girls in K-12 schools.

In the program, your child will be asked to do the following:

- We'll ask your child questions about their identity (10 mins)
- We'll have your child read *Dyamonde Daniel* (15 mins)
- We'll have your child write in a journal (15 mins)
- We'll have your child talk with other children about their journal writings (15 mins)
- We'll have your child discuss the book with other children (20 mins)
- We'll have your child answer main idea questions (20 mins)
- We'll have your child talk about current events (10 mins)
- We'll have your child write a poem (10 mins)
- We'll have your child recite a pledge that they created (5 mins)

If your child is interested in participating, the administrative team and I will share next steps with you (this will include: days and times of sessions, another brief informational session and an explanation of consent and assent forms). If you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to hang out and talk to me. If not, I hope you consider participating or having your child participate and I look forward to speaking with you soon!

Thank you for your time!

Appendix C: Participant Pre-Literacy Collaborative Interview Protocol

1. Hello, thank you for agreeing to be a part of Literacy 4 Brown Girls! Can you help me to learn more about you by telling me about yourself?
 - a. favorite hobby
 - b. favorite part of the day
 - c. favorite food
 - d. What is something that makes you special?
2. Do you identify as an African-American girl? Why or why not?
 - a. If so, do you have any thoughts you would like to share about being an African-American girl?
3. What do you think a positive image of an African-American girl would show?
 - a. Why do you think that is?
 - b. Can you think of any examples you could tell me about? Maybe from a book or a TV show or a movie or somewhere else.
 - c. Could you draw a positive image of an African-American girl for me?
 - d. Do you think there are negative images of African-American girls?
 - e. If so, could you give me an example and tell me what makes those images negative?
 - f. If not, why do you think that is?
4. Are you involved in any groups or clubs with other African-American girls?
 - a. If so, please tell me about those and your experiences.
 - b. If so, how do you feel when you participate in the groups or clubs?
 - c. If so, do you feel like those groups or clubs are safe spaces?
 - d. If you are not involved in any groups of clubs, would you like to join one?
 - e. If so, what kind of group or club would you join and why?

- f. If not, why do you think that is?
5. Do you watch television and if so, what types of shows do you watch?
 - a. Do you watch any shows with African-American women in them?
 - b. If so, can you tell me how African-American girls are portrayed and how that makes you feel?
 - c. If so, please tell me about those shows.
 - d. If not, please share with me who stars in the shows you watch.
 6. Do you listen to music and if so, what kind of music do you listen to?
 - a. Do you listen to music with African-American women as the artists?
 - b. If so, can you describe some of their songs?
 - c. Do you listen to music that discusses African-American women?
 - d. If so, how are they described?
 - e. How does that make you feel?
 - f. If not, who is represented in the music you listen to?
 7. Do you watch YouTube videos?
 - a. If so, what kinds of videos do you watch?
 - b. If you watch YouTube videos about African-American girls, can you tell me about those?
 - c. How are African-American girls and women portrayed in YouTube Videos?
 - d. How does that make you feel?
 8. What kind of books do you read at home for fun?
 - a. Do you enjoy reading those books? Why or why not?
 - b. If you do read books at home, do you read books with African-American girls and/or women?
 - c. If so, how are they represented? How does that make you feel?

- d. If you do not read books about African-American girls or women, why do you think that is?
 - e. If you don't read at school or at home, do you have any thoughts on why not?
9. Have you read books by African-American, female authors in your ELA classroom or at school?
- a. If so, who were the authors?
 - b. Did you enjoy the books? If not, would you like to read books by African-American, female authors?
 - c. Do you think this is important? Why or why not?
10. Have you read books with African-American girls or women as the main characters in your ELA classroom at school?
- a. If so, what did you think about the book?
 - b. If so, how were the characters portrayed in the book? How did that make you feel?
 - c. If you have not read books with African-American girls or women as the main characters, why do you think that is?
11. What is it like for you at school when you have writing time during ELA time?
- a. How do you feel about the writing assignments you have to do?
 - b. Do you have the opportunity to write about what you want in your ELA classroom?
12. What do you hope to learn in this literacy collaborative?
13. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

Appendix D: Participant Mid-Point Literacy Collaborative Interview Protocol

1. Please tell me about your experiences in Literacy 4 Brown Girls so far?
 - a. Do you feel like Literacy 4 Brown Girls provides a safe space for you to express yourself?
 - b. If so, please tell me why.
 - c. If not, please tell me why.
2. Have you discussed Literacy 4 Brown Girls with other friends or family members?
 - a. If so, please tell me what you have shared.
 - b. If not, why do you think that is?
3. What, if anything, do you enjoy about the book we are reading?
 - a. Can you relate to any of the experiences discussed so far?
 - b. If so, what experiences in the book can you relate to and why?
 - c. If not, do you have any ideas about why that might be?
 - d. If you could change the topics of the book we are reading, what would you change it to and why?
4. What, if anything, do you like about free journaling?
 - a. What has your experience with that been like?
 - b. Could you tell me about some things you enjoy about it and some things you don't enjoy as much about it?
 - c. If you could change our free journaling time, what would you change?
5. What are some things you like and some things you dislike about our discussions?
 - a. Do you have any favorite topics that we have discussed so far?
 - b. Do you have any least favorite topics that we have discussed so far?

- c. If you could choose our topics for the remainder of the literacy collaborative, what topics would you choose?
 - d. If you could change our discussions, what changes would you make?
6. Would you like to share anything else with me about your experiences so far in Literacy 4 Brown Girls?

Appendix E: Participant Post Literacy Collaborative Interview Protocol

1. When we started, you shared with me how you identify as an African-American girl. Has anything changed?
 - a. If so, what has changed?
 - b. If not, remind me of how you identify as an African-American girl.
2. When we started, you talked about positive images of African-American girls. Have those images changed?
 - a. If so, what images represent positive African-American girls?
 - b. Could you draw a positive image of an African-American girl for me?
 - c. Do you think there are negative images of African-American girls?
 - d. If so, could you tell me what makes those images negative?
 - e. If not, why do you think that is?
3. When we started, you shared with me your involvement in clubs with African-American girls. Has your involvement changed?
 - a. If so, please tell me how.
 - b. If not, please share with me why you think that is.
4. When we started, you shared with me the type of television shows you watched. Has anything changed?
 - a. Can you remind me of the type of television shows you watch?
 - b. If something has changed, what kinds of shows you watch now and why?
 - c. If not, why do you think that is?
5. When we started, you shared with me the type of music you listen to. Has anything changed?
 - a. Can you remind me of the type of music you listen to?

- b. If they have changed, what type of music do you listen to and why?
 - c. If not, why do you think that is?
- 6. When we started, you shared with me the kinds of YouTube videos you watched. Has anything changed?
 - a. Can you remind me of the type of videos you watch?
 - b. If they have changed, what kinds of videos do you watch and why?
 - c. If not, why do you think that is?
- 7. When we started, you shared with me the kinds of books you read at home. Can you please share the kinds of books you read at home now?
 - a. If they have changed, can you please share with me why that is?
 - b. If they have not changed, why do you think that is?
 - c. If you do not read books at home, why do you think that is?
- 8. When we started, you shared with me your experiences reading texts from African-American, female authors. Have those experiences changed?
 - a. If so, how have they changed?
 - b. If not, why do you think that is?
- 9. When we started, you shared with me your writing experiences. Have those experiences changed?
 - a. If so, how have they changed?
 - b. If not, can you tell me why you think that is?
- 10. What were some of the more enjoyable and less enjoyable things about Literacy 4 Brown Girls?
 - a. What, if anything, would you keep if you were in charge?

- b. What, if anything, would you change if you were in charge?
11. Have you shared anything that we have done in Literacy 4 Brown Girls with your family or friends?
- a. If so, can you tell me what you shared?
 - b. If not, why do you think that is?
12. What were some of the more enjoyable and less enjoyable things about the two books we reads?
- a. Did you like them? If so, why?
 - b. If you did not like them, why do you think that is?
13. What were some of the more enjoyable and less enjoyable things about journaling?
- a. Why were those parts enjoyable?
 - b. Why were those parts less enjoyable?
14. If you were in charge of Literacy 4 Brown Girls, what are some things you might keep and some things you might change?
- a. If you would make changes, please explain what they are and why.
 - b. If you would not make changes, please explain why that is.
15. What topics were the worst ones of the collaborative? What topics were the best of the collaborative?
- a. Are there topics we discussed that you would like to learn more about?
 - b. If so, please tell me about them.
 - c. If not, why do you think that is?
16. What were some of the worst parts and the best parts about the poem we created together?

- a. Did you share the poem with anyone?
 - b. Have you written any other poems since then that you'd like to share?
 - c. If you did not like the poem, why do you think that is?
17. Would you recommend Literacy 4 Brown Girls to your friends? Why or why not?
18. Do you have anything else you would like to share with me?

Appendix F: Teacher Pre-Literacy Collaborative Interview Protocol

1. Hello, can you please share some things about yourself?
2. How long have you been teaching at Midwest School?
3. Why did you decide to become an ELA teacher?
4. What does ELA time look like for your class?
 - a. What writings do you assign?
 - b. What texts do you assign?
 - c. What topics do you discuss?
5. How do you decide which texts the students will read?
6. What topics have you been working on in ELA this year?
7. How do you decide what students will write about in ELA?
8. Looking at the list of participants for the literacy collaborative, can you identify and share literacy strengths and weaknesses for each?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

Appendix G: Teacher Post Literacy Collaborative Interview Protocol

1. I would like to recap our last interview and ask if there is anything new you would like to share with me?
2. Can you tell me about any new texts or authors you have added to your curriculum since the last time we talked?
3. Can you tell me about any new writing assignments you have added to your curriculum since the last time we talked?
4. Looking at the list of participants for the literacy collaborative, can you identify and share their current understanding of main idea and supporting details?
5. Looking at the list of participants for the literacy collaborative, can you identify and share literacy strengths and weaknesses for each?
6. Have you noticed any academic, emotional, social or general differences in the students that participated in the collaborative?
7. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

Appendix H: Administrator Protocol I

1. Would you mind sharing what you do here at Midwest School?
 - a. How long have you been working in your field?
 - b. What made you decide to pursue a career here?
 - c. How long have you worked here?
 - d. Are there informal roles you hold at Midwest School in addition to your formal role?
 - e. If you plan to continue in your role next year, would you mind sharing with me efforts made to retain staff here at Midwest School?
 - f. If you do not plan to continue in your role next year, would you mind sharing with me why that is?

2. Would you mind sharing your thoughts on the current ELA curriculum here at Midwest School?
 - a. How do you feel the about the curriculum?
 - b. Do you believe it serves the needs of all students?
 - c. If you could make changes to the ELA curriculum, what would they be and why?
 - d. If you would not make changes to the ELA curriculum, why do you think that is?

3. Throughout the duration of Literacy 4 Brown Girls, many of the participants experienced some form of confrontation with their classmates. Would you mind sharing your thoughts on peer relationships here at Midwest School?
 - a. Why do you think the girls experience so many issues with one another?
 - b. Do you have any suggestions as to how to eliminate some of these issues for the 2019-20 school year?
 - c. Do you believe peer conflict impacts other aspects of schooling here at Midwest School?
 - d. If so, how and what does it impact?
 - e. If not, why do you think that is?

4. Based on your experiences here, why do students/families decide to enroll here?
 - a. Do you have any insight on why families decide to un-enroll?
 - b. Do you think there is a high amount of turnover?
 - c. If so why do you think that is?
 - d. If not, what keeps students/families committed to Midwest School?
 - e. What efforts do you all make to ensure that students return?
 - f. Would you mind sharing your thoughts on why some of my program participants are no longer attending Midwest School?
 - g. How does student mobility affect teaching and learning?

5. Would you mind sharing your thoughts on the current programs that are accessible to these students?

- a. Are there programs for girls to participate in here at Midwest School?
 - b. Do you think there should be additional programming for girls?
 - c. If so, what types of programs do you think would be beneficial for the girls?
 - d. If not, why do you think that is?
6. Many of the participants in Literacy 4 Brown Girls suggested a program be implemented to help with peer relationships among girls in the school. What are your thoughts on such programming?
- a. Do you think this type of program would be beneficial?
 - b. If so, why?
 - c. If so, what would this program look like to you?
 - d. If not, why do you think that is?
7. Have students at Midwest School expressed feeling forgotten about or uncared for?
- a. If not, why do you think that is?
 - b. If they have, why were those concerns expressed?
 - c. Can you generally share examples of those concerns without identifying specific students?
 - d. Have any students shared such sentiments about staff members not caring for them?
 - e. Have other faculty/ staff members expressed that students have shared the need for greater care from faculty/staff?
 - f. If not, why do you think that is?
 - g. If yes, would you mind sharing with me what students have reported?
 - h. If yes, have there been any changes to the school curriculum to address those needs?
 - i. If yes, have there been any changes in faculty/staff regarding formal and informal support systems to meet those needs?
 - j. If so, please share.
 - k. If not, please explain.
 - l. Is there any protocol or program in place to address students' needs for care?
 - m. If there are, are teachers/staff members trained in the socioemotional support of students?
 - n. If there are, are there support systems such as professional development, collegial relationships/arrangements, and/or leadership/principal support to help teachers do the socioemotional support work with their students?
 - o. If yes, please share examples.
 - p. If not, how do staff members react to limited staff support considering students' needs?
8. Is a program like Literacy 4 Brown Girls useful to students at Midwest School?
- a. If so, in what way could a program like Literacy 4 Brown Girls complement the curriculum and/or offerings here at Midwest School?

- b. If so, please specifically address what the program could provide to complement the school or provide what the school cannot fulfill?
 - c. If so, in what ways would a program like Literacy 4 Brown Girls be difficult to implement?
 - d. If not, why do you think that is?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

Appendix I: L4BG Summaries & Activities I

Dyamonde Daniel: Make Way for Dyamonde Daniel

Chapter 1 Summary: Dyamonde Daniel is introduced as a skinny girl with wild and crazy hair. She is new to her school due to a recent divorce. She lives with her mom. A new student, Free, is introduced in this chapter.

Literacy Objective: Introduction to identification of main idea

Identity Objective: Hair, colorism, and size.

Text to Life Connections: Natural hair in the news/media, depiction of dark-skinned women in the media, size as it relates to beauty for African-American girls.

Discussion prompts: Dyamonde is pictured on the cover as a skinny, dark-skinned, girl with natural hair. Why do you think her hair is described as wild and crazy? What does this say about natural hair or other kinds of hair? Why do you think it matters that Dyamonde sees herself as a “toothpick?” Do you know anyone who looks like Dyamonde? Why isn’t she described as beautiful?

Chapter 2 Summary: Dyamonde explains a bit more about living with her mom. Her apartment is small and she no longer has her own bedroom. She misses her best friend from her old house in Brooklyn (brownstones) to Washington Heights. The new neighborhood is a lot noisier, although Dyamonde does not mind the action.

Literacy Objective: Main idea and supporting details

Identity Objective: Social Class

Text to Life Connections: Varying neighborhood resources

Discussion Prompts: Why do you think Dyamonde’s neighborhood is so different? Why do you think she no longer has her own bedroom since the divorce of her parents? She misses her old best friend, why do you think she does not try and contact her? She also misses her dad. Do you think she is able to contact him? Have you had to relocate due to reasons out of your control? How did that make you feel? What were some differences between the two places? Have you ever lost a best friend? Why?

Chapter 3 Summary: The new student, Free, really bothers Dyamonde. He is mean and rude in her opinion. He does not speak to anyone and always grunts. Dyamonde is determined to figure out where his attitude stems from.

Literacy Objective: Main idea and details/Comparison of two characters

Identity Objective: Gender/relationships

Text to Life Connections: Popular relationships in the media, negative versus positive relationships

Discussion prompts: In chapter one, Dyamonde described Free as being attractive, why do you think it bothers her so much that he is mean and rude? She even addressed her concerns with the teacher. Have you experienced a rude person before? How did that make you feel? Do you think it matters that Free is a boy? Why or why not?

Chapter 4 Summary: Dyamonde finally confronts Free. She scolds him for being mean to a schoolmate, another boy, and assertively makes him apologize. From then on, she keeps her eyes on his behavior.

Literacy Objective: Main idea and supporting details/theme

Identity Objective: Representational intersectionality

Text to Life Connections: Current events surrounding assertiveness of African-American females (For example, Linked In statement by CPS CEO Janice Jackson). Ladies vs. Loudies.

Discussion Prompts: Why is it important that Dyamonde stood up to Free? Why do you think she did that when he was not bothering her? Why do you think the three girls Dyamonde was sitting with did not confront Free? What does that say about Dyamonde? Have you ever been in a similar situation? If so, how did you feel? What did others say?

Chapter 5 Summary: Dyamonde confronts Free again. This time, she seeks to understand why he seems so angry all the time. She finds out a lot about his family having to downsize due to his father losing his job.

Literacy Objective: Main idea and details/theme

Identity Objective: Social Class

Text to Life Connections: Unemployment

Discussion Prompts: Why do you think Free is so mad at his father for losing his job? What changes did he experience because of his job loss? Unemployment can cause a lot of changes, what are some of those and how do you think you would react to them? How can Free's experiences relate to Dyamonde's? Do you think they have some things in common? What are they?

Chapter 6 Summary: Dyamonde and Free seem to be getting along. Dyamonde even made the bold decision to sit with Free at lunch. Free is not popular at all so he questioned why Dyamonde would sit with him. He was so impressed with her ability to not care what others think about her.

Literacy Objective: Main idea and details

Identity Objective: Representation of self

Text to Life Connections: Current events surrounding decision making of African-American women

Discussion Prompts: Why do you think Free is so impressed that Dyamonde does what she wants without considering how other will look at her/what they will think about her? What does that say about Dyamonde? Do you think people's beliefs about you impact what you say or do? If so, how?

Chapter 7 Summary: Free begins to open up to Dyamonde as he complains about his new close quarters living reality. Apparently, some of his grouchiness stems from his lack of sleep and having to share a bed with his siblings. Free complains about his excess of family members while Dyamonde dreams of having such problems.

Literacy Objective: Main idea and details/ compare and contrast characters

Identity Objective: Social Class

Text to Life Connections: Current television shows that depict intergenerational living

Discussion Prompts: Why does Free have to live with his grandmother and all of his family members? How can Dyamonde relate to part of his problem? Do you have experiences sharing housing with a lot of family members? If so, describe those experiences. What do you have in common, if anything, with Free and Dyamonde's reality?

Chapter 8 Summary: This is the close of part one of the introduction to Dyamonde Daniel. In this chapter, Dyamonde and Free become best friends and suddenly, Dyamonde does not miss her old best friend quite as much.

Literacy Objective: Main idea and details/theme

Identity Objective: Concluding summary/discussion of the intersections identified in previous chapters

Text to Life Connections: Closing thoughts on experiences shared with fictional characters

Discussion Prompts: Do you think their relationship will progress or regress? What have we learned about the kind of girl Dyamonde Daniel is? What does that say about her? Do you think Dyamonde's experiences are relatable to the experiences of African-American girls in real life? If so, how and why? Can you relate in any way to Dyamonde now that we have completed part one of her introductory series?

Appendix J: L4BG Summaries & Activities II

Dyamonde Daniel: Rich

Chapter 1 Summary: This is part two of the introduction to Dyamonde Daniel series. In this chapter, Dyamonde has a discussion with Free about money and being poor. Free claims to be poor ever since his dad lost his job and dislikes this reality. Dyamonde tries to educate him on what being poor really means.

Literacy Objective: Main idea and details

Identity Objective: Social Class

Text to Life Connections: Cost of popular items and issues with materialism/How do popular artists encourage this line of thinking?

Discussion Prompts: Why is Free so bothered about not having a lot of money? How does Dyamonde compare herself to him? Why does she think he is not poor? What does poor mean to Dyamonde? How would you define not having a lot of money? Are there issues associated with not having a lot of money? If so, what are they and how can they be solved?

Chapter 2 Summary: Mrs. Cordell, their teacher, announces a poetry contest that awards the winner with \$100! Free raised his hand to participate as he would love the opportunity to purchase some things he is now unable to. A very quiet girl Damaris, who according to Dyamonde never volunteers for anything, raised her hand to participate. Dyamonde describes Damaris as very pretty with reddish colored hair that reminds her of a lion's mane. She plans to learn more about Damaris and get to the bottom of her sudden desire to participate in class.

Literacy Objective: Main idea and details

Identity Objective: Social Class/Beauty

Text to Life Connections: Continuation of chapter one discussions.

Discussion Prompts: Do you think money influenced Free's decision to participate? Do you think it influenced Damaris's decision to participate? Why do you think a monetary award would mean so much for the students? Why do you think the color of Damaris's hair stood out to Dyamonde? Does hair color matter in terms of beauty? Why or why not?

Chapter 3 & 4 Summary: At lunch, Free and Dyamonde discuss the poetry contest. Dyamonde changes the subject and invites Free on a treasure hunt. In chapter four, this treasure hunt turns out to be an excursion to a local second hand store. Free does not like this as he has had experience with second hand stores and gets upset that the things are not "new." Dyamonde explains to him the joys of finding used things and the stories they come with. Speaking of stories, on their way out Dyamonde spots Damaris entering a building down the street from the second hand store.

Literacy Objective: Main idea and details/theme

Identity Objective: Class/Hegemonic Standards and their influence

Text to Life Connections: Discussion of second hand stores and experiences/current reality shows or celebrities that promote spending a lot of money

Discussion Prompts: Why do you think Free disliked the secondhand store so much? What did Dyamonde share with him? Do you think that changed his perspective? Why do you think Dyamonde does not have a problem with second hand stores? What does this tell us about her? Do you have any experiences similar to Dyamonde or Free's? Where do you think Damaris was going? If that was indeed Damaris, why did she not turn around when Dyamonde called her name?

Chapter 5 Summary: Dyamonde and her mom went on another treasure hunt, although her mom calls it "shopping." When they were leaving, Dyamonde spots Damaris again. She calls her name and Damaris turns around and runs in the other direction. Dyamonde and her mom walked past the building she saw Damaris leave and it said "shelter" on the front. Dyamonde starts to put things together.

Literacy Objective: Main idea and details/compare and contrast characters

Identity Objective: Structural intersectionality (intersection of identities with structural inequality)

Text to Life Connections: Damaris is also female and African-American like Dyamonde, do you think she hid living in a shelter for a reason? What do you know about shelters? What are they for and why do people go there? How do they help people?

Discussion Prompts: Why do you think Dyamonde prefers to call going to the second hand store a treasure hunt versus shopping? Why do you think Damaris ran when she heard Dyamonde call her name? What is a shelter and what does that mean for Damaris?

Chapter 6 Summary: Dyamonde finally catches up with Damaris at school and asks her leaving the shelter and not acknowledging her. Damaris denied it for awhile before admitting that is where she lived. The next day at lunch, Dyamonde shares some of her excess of food.

Literacy Objective: Main idea and details

Identity Objective: Continuation of last chapter's objectives

Text to Life Connections: Continuation of last chapter's text to life connections

Discussion Prompts: Have you had experiences with knowing someone in a shelter? Did they reveal to you that they lived there? Why do you think Dyamonde gave Damaris her chicken nuggets? What does this tell us about Dyamonde's character? Do you think the two have anything in common?

Chapter 7 Summary: Dyamonde, who was sworn to secrecy about Damaris living in a shelter, encourages her to write about her home for the poetry contest. Damaris is upset at that suggestion. Finally, Damaris shares with Dyamonde why she is living there and considers writing about it in her poem.

Literacy Objective: Main idea and details/comparing and contrasting characters

Identity Objective: Structural intersectionality

Text to Life Connections: Discussion of various living spaces and the people who occupy them

Discussion Prompts: Damaris is in the shelter because her mom lost one of her jobs and they were evicted. Do you think this is fair? Why or why not? Why might Damaris and her family have to live in a shelter if her mom has found another job now? Why do you think Damaris did not want to write about her home in her poem? Would you share/write about where you live like Dyamonde encouraged Damaris to? Why or why not? Why do you think it took so long for Damaris to tell Dyamonde the truth? What do Dyamonde and Damaris have in common that led to their new living arrangements

Chapter 8 Summary: Free returns to school to find that he is now a part of a friend group. He asks Damaris why she never invites him to their house. Of course he does not know as Dyamonde was sworn to secrecy.

Literacy Objective: Main idea and details

Identity Objective: Gender relationships

Text to Life Connections: Friendships/relationships

Discussion Prompts: Why do you think Dyamonde continued to keep Damaris's living arrangements a secret even from her best friend? Have you ever had to keep a secret even from friends? Do you think Damaris will eventually tell Free? Why or why not?

Chapter 9 Summary: Dyamonde invites Damaris to her house for a sleepover. They have tons of fun until it is almost time to go and Damaris reveals her desire to stay.

Literacy Objective: Main idea and details/comparing and contrasting characters

Identity Objective: Intersection of race, class, and gender

Text to Life Connections: Friendships

Discussion Prompts: Do you have a friend that you can relate to on some level? What do you have in common? Why do you think Damaris does not want to leave?

Chapter 10 Summary: Dyamonde decides to cheer up Damaris by purchasing her a book of poetry on her latest treasure hunt. Dyamonde is stunned by Damaris's reaction.

Literacy Objective: Main idea and details

Identity Objective: Intersection of race and Gender

Text to Life Connections: Discussion of poet Eloise Greenfield (Damaris's favorite poet)

Discussion Prompts: After reading a poem by Eloise Greenfield, why do you think she is Damaris's favorite poet? If you were Damaris, what would your poetry be about? Can you relate to Damaris in any way? If so, how would that be reflected in your poem?

Chapter 11 Summary: Damaris takes Dyanonde's advice and writes about where she lives. She not only enters it into the poetry contest, she wins first place!

Literacy Objective: Main idea and details/theme

Identity Objective: Structural intersectionality

Text to Life Connections: Create a poem based off of our text readings and discussions

Discussion Prompts: Think about everything we have discussed (race, gender, hair, relationships, beauty, representation versus perception, and friendships) and create your own poem. Let it be a reflection of all we have discussed and a representation of who you are.

Appendix K: L4BG Journal Prompts

1. Pretend you are on the news and someone is asking you to explain your experiences as an African-American girl. What would you say?
2. If you could design your own club, what would it be like? What would the name be? Who would you invite and why? What would you all do in the club?
3. If you had to explain your experiences as a student to a new girl in your class, what would you say? How would you help her navigate 5th grade? Share with me your tips!
4. Pretend you and your best friend are going to the mall, what stores would you choose that are similar and different? Explain why. Share with me what you bought!
5. Write about what you think of other African-American girls you see on television, YouTube, or on the internet. Describe them to me. Explain what they do. Share with me if you like them or not. Tell me why!
6. Choose your favorite song as your main idea and write the verses you know as supporting details!
7. Think about the theme “friendship” and write a short story about it.
8. If you were a character in your own book, what would be the most important details to share about your character?
9. Describe your favorite hairstyle and explain why you like it. Draw a picture of the hairstyle so we understand why it is so fabulous!
10. If you had an endless amount of money, what vacation would you go on? Who would you take? Explain your decisions.
11. If you could read any books in class, what would you read and why? Pretend you are convincing your teacher to let the class read the book. Be convincing!
12. If you could write about any topic in class, what would you write about and why?
13. If someone asked you to share your three most favorite things about yourself, what would you tell them and why?
14. Write about your favorite female celebrity and why she is your favorite.
15. Think about some positive and negative images of African-American women. Tell me what you think makes them positive and negative.
16. Dyamonde is really good in math. Do you have a favorite subject in school? If so, tell me about why it is your favorite. If you don't have a favorite subject, tell me why and make up your own!
17. If you could give any advice to Dyamonde Daniel, what would you tell her? Explain why.
18. If you could give any advice to Damaris Dancer, what would you tell her? Explain why.
19. Draw a picture of Dyamonde and Damaris. Share with me their similarities and their differences. Do you like one better than the other? Tell me why or why not.
20. Dyamonde Daniel has natural hair. What do you think about natural hair? Tell me if you like natural hair or not and explain why.
21. Pretend you are making a YouTube video about beauty. What would you share with your subscribers? What does beauty mean to you?

22. We talked about stereotypes and what they are, do you think stereotypes are harmful? If so, please explain why. If not, why do you think that is?
23. Write a short story about what it means to be an African-American girl in 2019. Add illustrations!
24. If you were friends with Dyamonde and Damaris, what would you all have in common? What would you all not have in common?
25. If you were to enter the poetry contest with Damaris and Free, what would your poem be about? Provide a sample!

Appendix L: L4BG Field Notes Rubric

Categories	Observations/Field Notes	Researcher Reflections
Gender		
Race		
Class		
Hair/Beauty		
Stereotypes		
Classroom/School experiences		
Colorism		
Intersection of Identities		
Other		

Appendix M: L4BG Journal Rubric

Context	Literacy Objectives	Identity Objectives

Appendix N: L4BG Participant Assent Form



Minor Assent for Research Participation

IRB #: 19.A.216

IRB Approval Date: February 27, 2019

Study title Literacy 4 Brown Girls: An Explorative Study Centered on the Identity and Literacy of African-American Girls

Researcher[s] Jendayi Mbalia, Doctoral Candidate/PhD/Urban Education

We're inviting you to be in a research study. A research study is a way to learn new things. We are trying to learn more about if this group can help you learn more reading skills and allow you to talk about who you are.

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to meet after school for two hours two days a week. It will last for twelve weeks. We will ask you to:

- Read a book.
- Write in a journal.
- Share some of your writings.
- Talk to other girls in the group about the book and about yourself.
- Talk to the researcher about the book and about yourself.
- Write a poem.
- Participate in main idea activities.
- Answer questions about yourself in an interview.

In the interview, we will ask you questions about:

- Who you are and what you like.
- What you like to read about.
- What you like to write about.
- What you read about in class.
- What you write about in class.
- What kinds of groups you are involved in.

A risk is something bad that could happen to you. Being in this study might have some risks. Some of the things we ask could make you upset or have bad memories come back. You don't have to answer any questions you don't want to.

A benefit is something good that happens. Being in this study might have some benefits for you like:

- You might feel better after talking with us.
- You might learn more reading skills.

- You might learn more about yourself and other girls your age.
- We hope this study will help other kids someday, too.

You don't have to be in this study. It is up to you. No one will be mad, no matter what you decide. If you say yes now, but change your mind later, that's ok too. Just let me know.

When we are finished with this study, we will write a report about what we learned. This report won't have your name in it, or that you were in the study.

Signatures

If you decide you want to be in this study, write your name on the line below.

Name of Participant

Date

Name of Researcher obtaining assent (print)

Signature of Researcher obtaining assent

Date

Appendix O: L4BG Parent Consent Form



Parental Permission for Research Participation

IRB #: 19.A.216

IRB Approval Date: February 27, 2019

Study title

Literacy 4 Brown Girls: An Explorative Study Centered on the Identity and Literacy of African-American Girls

Researcher[s]

Jendayi Mbalia, Doctoral Candidate/PhD/Urban Education

We're inviting your child to participate in a research study. Participation is completely voluntary. If you agree to let your child participate now, you can always change your mind later. There are no negative consequences, whatever you decide.

What is the purpose of this study?

We want to understand if a literacy collaborative helps with the identity and literacy of African-American girls in K-12 schools.

What will my child do?

- In our program:
 - We'll ask your child questions about their identity (10 mins)
 - We'll have your child read *Dyamonde Daniel* (15 mins)
 - We'll have your child write in a journal (15 mins)
 - We'll have your child talk with other children about their journal writings (15 mins)
 - We'll have your child discuss the book with other children (20 mins)
 - We'll have your child answer main idea questions (20 mins)
 - We'll have your child talk about current events (10 mins)
 - We'll have your child write a poem (10 mins)
 - We'll have your child recite a pledge that they created (5 mins)

Risks

Possible risks

Some questions may be personal

Others in the literacy collaborative sharing your child's responses

Breach of confidentiality (your child's data being seen by someone who shouldn't have access to it)

How we're minimizing these risks

Your child can skip any questions they don't want to answer.

We ask all participants to keep everything said during the literacy collaborative confidential. However, we can't control what others say, so we also remind everyone not to share anything they don't want others to know.

- All identifying information is removed and replaced with a study ID.
- We'll keep your child's identifying information separate from the research data, but we'll be able to link it to them by using

a study ID. We will destroy this link after we finish collecting and analyzing the data.

Discussions may be personal

Your child can skip any discussion topics they don't want to talk about.

Journal writings may be personal

Your child will be reminded not to share anything they don't want others to know.

There may be risks we don't know about yet. Throughout the study, we'll tell you if we learn anything that might affect your decision to let your child participate.

Other Study Information

Possible benefits

- Your child will receive literacy instruction from an experienced literacy instructor.
- Your child will participate in main idea activities.
- Your child will participate in discussions about being African-American and female.
- Your child will have discussions with other children her age.
- Your child will be able to write about topics that she chooses.
- Your child will read about other African-American, female authors and writers.
- Your child will be able to create a poem.

Estimated number of participants

10-12 students

2 teachers (to be interviewed only)

How long will it take?

- Your child will meet for two days per week.
- Your child will meet for two hours after school for each day.
- Your child will participate for 12 weeks.

Costs

None

Compensation

None

If I don't want my child to be in this study, are there other options?

- If your child cannot commit to the entire study, arrangements may be made for her to participate.
- This study is voluntary. Your child does not have to participate.

Future research

De-identified (all identifying information removed) data may be shared with other researchers. You won't be told specific details about these future research studies.

Photographs

We will photograph some of your child's work. The photography of your child's work is optional. Please check ___ yes or ___no for permission to photograph your child's work.

Communication with teachers

We will ask your child's teacher questions about her strengths and weaknesses in literacy.

Confidentiality and Data Security

We'll collect the following identifying information for the research: your child's name. This information is necessary so we know everyone in the literacy collaborative and can take attendance at each session. All information will be de-identified.

Where will data be stored?

On our computers and in a locked office.

How long will it be kept?

Data will be kept for five years.

Who can see my data?

Why?

Type of data

The researchers

To analyze the data and conduct the study

- Coded (replaced with an id number)
- De-identified (no names, birthdate, address, etc.)

The IRB (Institutional Review Board) at UWM

To ensure we're following laws and ethical guidelines

- Coded (replaced with an id number)
- De-identified (no names, birthdate, address, etc.)

The Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) or other federal agencies

Anyone (public)

If we share our findings in publications or presentations

- Aggregate (grouped) data
- De-identified (no names, birthdate, address, etc.)
- If we quote your child, we'll use a pseudonym (fake name)

Mandated Reporting

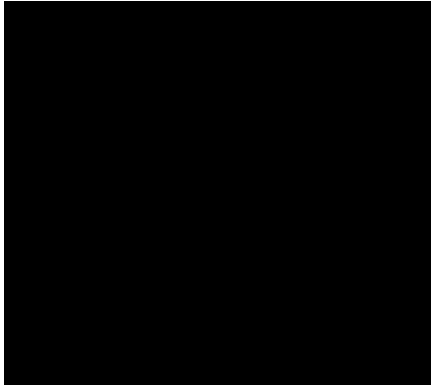
We are mandated reporters. This means that if we learn or suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, we're required to report this to the authorities.

Contact information:

For questions about the research Jendayi Mbalia

For questions about your child’s rights as a research participant IRB (Institutional Review Board; provides ethics oversight)

For complaints or problems Jendayi Mbalia
IRB



Signatures

If you have had all your questions answered and give permission for your child to participate in this study, sign on the lines below. Remember, your child’s participation is completely voluntary, and you’re free to remove them from the study at any time.

Name of Child (print)

Name of Parent or Guardian (print)

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Name of Researcher obtaining consent (print)

Signature of Researcher obtaining consent

Date

Appendix P: L4BG Teacher Consent Form



Informed Consent for Research Participation

IRB #: 19.A.216

IRB Approval Date: February 27, 2019

Study title Literacy 4 Brown Girls: An Explorative Study Centered on the Identity and Literacy of African-American Girls

Researcher Jendayi Mbalia, Doctoral Candidate/PhD/Urban Education

We're inviting you to participate in a research study. Participation is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate now, you can always change your mind later. There are no negative consequences, whatever you decide.

What is the purpose of this study?

We want to understand if a literacy collaborative helps with the identity and literacy of African-American girls in K-12 schools.

What will I do?

- At your school:
 - You'll answer interview questions about the participants and your English Language Arts curriculum
 - You'll participate in two interviews. The first interview will occur before the study begins and the second interview will occur after the study is completed.
 - You'll spend approximately one hour in each interview.
 - Your responses will be audio recorded.

Risks

Possible risks

Breach of confidentiality (your data being seen by someone who shouldn't have access to it)

Some questions may be personal

How we're minimizing these risks

- All identifying information is removed and replaced with a study ID.
- We'll keep your identifying information separate from the research data, but we'll be able to link it to you by using a study ID. We will destroy this link after we finish collecting and analyzing the data.
- You can skip any questions you don't want to answer.

There may be risks we don't know about yet. Throughout the study, we'll tell you if we learn anything that might affect your decision to participate.

Other Study Information

- Possible benefits**
 - You are helping us to understand any literacy needs of your students.
 - You are helping us to understand the importance of English Language Arts for African-American girls.
- Estimated number of participants**
 - 10-12 students
 - 2 teachers (to be interviewed only)
- How long will it take?**
 - 120 minutes for each teacher
- Costs**
 - None
- Compensation**
 - None
- If I don't want to be in this study, are there other options?**
 - This study is voluntary. You do not have to participate.

Future research De-identified (all identifying information removed) data may be shared with other researchers. You won't be told specific details about these future research studies.

Recordings We will record your interviews. The recordings will be used to help in designing the study and to help understand the needs of participants.

The recording is necessary to this research. If you do not want to be recorded, you should not be in this study.

Confidentiality and Data Security

We'll collect the following identifying information for the research: your name. This information is necessary for the researcher to be able to review interview responses. All information will be de-identified.

Where will data be stored? On our computers and in a locked office.

How long will it be kept? Data will be kept for five years.

Who can see my data?	Why?	Type of data
The researchers	To conduct the study and analyze the data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coded (replaced with an id number) • De-identified (no names, birthdate, address, etc.)

The IRB (Institutional Review Board) at UWM

To ensure we're following laws and ethical guidelines

- Coded (replaced with an id number)
- De-identified (no names, birthdate, address, etc.)

The Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) or other federal agencies

Mandated Reporting

We are mandated reporters. This means that if we learn or suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, we're required to report this to the authorities.

Contact information:

For questions about the research

Jendayi Mbalia

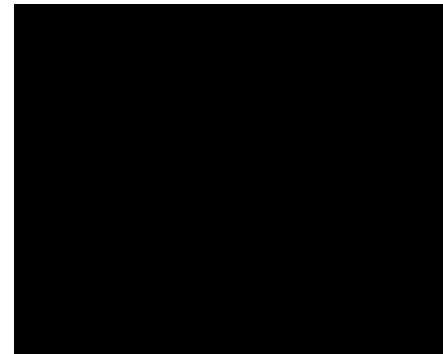
For questions about your rights as a research participant

IRB (Institutional Review Board; provides ethics oversight)

For complaints or problems

Jendayi Mbalia

IRB



Signatures

If you have had all your questions answered and would like to participate in this study, sign on the lines below. Remember, your participation is completely voluntary, and you're free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Name of Participant (print)

Signature of Participant

Date

Name of Researcher obtaining consent (print)

Signature of Researcher obtaining consent

Date

Appendix Q: L4BG Staff Consent Form



Informed Consent for Research Participation

IRB #: 19.A.216

IRB Approval Date: June 27, 2019

Study title Literacy 4 Brown Girls: An Explorative Study Centered on the Identity and Literacy of African-American Girls

Researcher Jendayi Mbalia, Doctoral Candidate/PhD/Urban Education

We're inviting you to participate in a research study. Participation is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate now, you can always change your mind later. There are no negative consequences, whatever you decide.

What is the purpose of this study?

We want to understand if a literacy collaborative helps with the identity and literacy of African-American girls in K-12 schools.

What will I do?

- At your school:
 - You'll answer interview questions about the school, students, the program, and your responsibilities.
 - You'll spend approximately forty-five minutes in the interview.
 - Your responses will be audio recorded.

Risks

Possible risks

Breach of confidentiality (your data being seen by someone who shouldn't have access to it)

Some questions may be personal

How we're minimizing these risks

- All identifying information is removed and replaced with a study ID.
- We'll keep your identifying information separate from the research data, but we'll be able to link it to you by using a study ID. We will destroy this link after we finish collecting and analyzing the data.
- You can skip any questions you don't want to answer.

There may be risks we don't know about yet. Throughout the study, we'll tell you if we learn anything that might affect your decision to participate.

Other Study Information

Possible benefits

- You are helping us to understand any literacy needs of your students.

- You are helping us to understand the importance of English Language Arts for African-American girls.
- Estimated number of participants**
- 10-12 students
 - 2 teachers (to be interviewed only)
 - 2 staff members (to be interviewed only)
- How long will it take?**
- 45 minutes
- Costs**
- None
- Compensation**
- None
- If I don't want to be in this study, are there other options?**
- This study is voluntary. You do not have to participate.

Future research De-identified (all identifying information removed) data may be shared with other researchers. You won't be told specific details about these future research studies.

Recordings We will record your interviews. The recordings will be used to help in designing the study and to help understand the needs of participants.

The recording is necessary to this research. If you do not want to be recorded, you should not be in this study.

Confidentiality and Data Security

We'll collect the following identifying information for the research: your name. This information is necessary for the researcher to be able to review interview responses. All information will be de-identified.

Where will data be stored? On our computers and in a locked office.

How long will it be kept? Data will be kept for five years.

Who can see my data?	Why?	Type of data
The researchers	To conduct the study and analyze the data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coded (replaced with an id number) • De-identified (no names, birthdate, address, etc.)

The IRB (Institutional Review Board) at UWM

To ensure we're following laws and ethical guidelines

- Coded (replaced with an id number)
- De-identified (no names, birthdate, address, etc.)

The Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) or other federal agencies

Mandated Reporting

We are mandated reporters. This means that if we learn or suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, we're required to report this to the authorities.

Contact information:

For questions about the research

Jendayi Mbalia

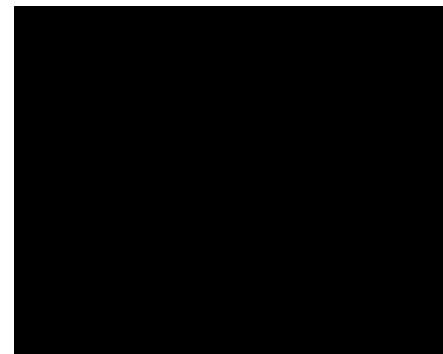
For questions about your rights as a research participant

IRB (Institutional Review Board; provides ethics oversight)

For complaints or problems

Jendayi Mbalia

IRB



Signatures

If you have had all your questions answered and would like to participate in this study, sign on the lines below. Remember, your participation is completely voluntary, and you're free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Name of Participant (print)

Signature of Participant

Date

Name of Researcher obtaining consent (print)

Signature of Researcher obtaining consent

CURRICULUM VITAE

JENDAYI MBALIA

Education

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Urban Education Doctoral Program

Doctoral Candidacy: February 2019

Graduation Date: December 15, 2019

Dissertation: Literacy 4 Brown Girls: an Explorative Study Centered on the Identities and Literacies of African-American Girls

Advisor: Raquel Farmer-Hinton, Ph.D.

Master of Science

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Cultural Foundations of Education

Department of Educational Policy Studies

May 2014

Thesis: Stereotypes and Perceptions: Their Direct Impact on Minority and Low-Income Students' Engagement in Education

Thesis Advisor: Raquel Farmer-Hinton, Ph.D.

Bachelor of Science

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

School of Community Engagement & Education

May 2012

Majors: Africology & Educational Policy

Grants, Honors & Awards

Urban Education Doctoral Program Student Travel Award: May 2019

Distinguished Dissertation Fellowship Nomination: February 2019

Chancellor Graduate Student Award: 2018-19 Academic Year

Graduate Assistantship Award: April 2018

Presentations

Workshop Facilitator, FEBRUARY 2020: Confronting & Combatting Racial Injustice through Intersectional Educational Practices. Workshop facilitator at the Social Workers Confronting Racial Injustice Conference, Madison, WI

Poster Presentation, MARCH 2019: Literacy for Brown Girls: Healing in Education. Poster presentation at the annual Globalization, Diversity & Education Conference, Airway Heights, WA

Paper Presentation, APRIL 2017: Stereotypes and Perceptions: Their Direct Impact on Minority and Low-Income Students' Engagement in Education. Roundtable Session at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Antonio, TX

Poster Presentation, APRIL 2015: Farmer-Hinton, R. and Mbalia, J. Going to College: Exploring Key Supports and Resources Used in Chicago's Nonselective High Schools. Poster presentation at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL

Professional Service

Article Reviewer, *The Journal of African-American Women & Girls in Education*, reviewed article on Black Girls and the Arts, September 2019

Professional Associations and Membership

Pi Lambda Theta Education Honor Society: March 2018- Present

American Educational Research Association: 2017-2018

Professional Experience

Literacy 4 Brown Girls Instructional Facilitator:

Seton Catholic Schools

September 2019-Present

Milwaukee Center for Children and Youth

June 2019-Present

Teacher in the Library-Reading & Math Support:

Milwaukee Public Library

November 2018-March 2019

TITLE I Reading Teacher:

Catapult Learning

November 2017-September 2018

Family Engagement Coordinator:

SPARK Early Literacy Program

August 2013-September 2015

Early Literacy Tutor:

SPARK Early Literacy Program

September 2012-August 2013