

RECLAIMING BLACK GIRLHOOD: AN EXPLORATION INTO SEXUAL
IDENTITY AND FEMININITY

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of
San Francisco State University
In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree

Masters of Arts

In

Ethnic Studies

by

Jewell Lynn-Marie Bachelor

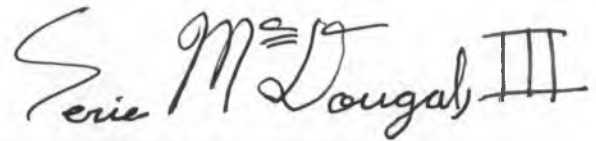
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read *Reclaiming Black Girlhood: An Exploration into Sexual Identity and Femininity* and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Master of Arts in Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Serie McDougal III". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the "III" written in a stylized, slightly larger font.

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RECLAIMING BLACK GIRLHOOD: AN EXPLORATION INTO SEXUAL IDENTITY AND FEMININITY

Jewell Lynn-Marie Bachelor
San Francisco, California
2016

As Black girls are synonymously identified as Black women throughout popular social language, media, and pop culture, there is a need to study the childhood of Black girls. This study seeks to explore the complexity of Black girls, and reimagine sexual identity and innocence as a nuanced part of shaping Black girlhood. With the perception of Black girls being “promiscuous”, “fast” and “academically immature” this thesis attempts to humanize and reaffirm Black girls as agents of power, innocence and youth. Grounded in Black feminist thought, this qualitative inquiry amplifies the voices from 20 Black girls’ narratives as knowledge that contributes to further understanding how they conceptualize femininity, sexuality and childhood. Therefore, the data from this research reveals how participants understand girlhood, sisterhood, navigating ideas of sexual identity, and sexual decision-making.

I certify that the abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.

Serie M^{rs} Douglas, III
Chair, Thesis Committee

5-25-16
Date

PREFACE AND/OR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my students, who reaffirm my love for teaching; thank you for offering your stories that create a part of this research. Dr. Head, you taught me what it means to be dedicated and intentional. Dr. McDougal, my passion within our field is always refueled when I'm in your presence. Dr. Fischer, thank you for reminding me to ask the right questions- you encourage empathy within my studies. Mom, you are my God. You are love, my creator and because of you, I am.

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Introduction

This study offers an alternative approach to researching and understanding Black girlhood. Black girlhood in this work is operationally defined as a self-identified Black/African American female who is also considered a child or young person. This project will attempt to regard girlhood as a state of being, and not just a transition into womanhood. The events of terrorizing Black female students, such as being tackled and arrested at school or neighborhood pool parties may make one wonder how this happens to a child. In addition, statistics such as “60 percent of Black girls experience sexual abuse from Black men before the age of eighteen” is alarming, and these realities call into question why Black girls seem to be frequently susceptible to experiences that prohibit them from being protected as children (Cox, 2015, p. 71-2). Much academic literature concerning Black girls reflects a pervasive social perception that condones their stereotype and treatment as “promiscuous,” “fast,” and “academically immature.” These totalized tropes and notions of Black girlhood must be further explored. More importantly, how do Black girls resist and/ or navigate these tropes and related social stigma. Stereotypical images and coded racist language that is used within day-to-day conversations, and perpetuated through social/visual media to describe Black girls, is examined in this study, but the thrust of the research centers how Black girls make meaning of their intersectional identity as it relates to sexuality.

This research investigates how Black girls understand their girlhood, femininity and sexual identity. Due to the hyper-sexualization of Black girls and women, it was of interest to explore if stereotypes play a part in Black female socialization, and if so, how? In a similar vein to many scholars of this subject (Collins, 2002; Cox, 2015; hooks, 1999; Hurston, 1990 [1937]), my own experience of being a Black girl and accepting sexualized images as one way of embracing Black girlhood and womanhood led me to this research. Acknowledging that many are socialized to accept Black girls as only being valuable for sex, like Patricia Hill Collins (2002), Aimee Cox (2015) and other scholars on this topic, I seek to contribute to the burgeoning data concerning (a) how high school-aged Black girls make meaning of girlhood, and (b) how they understand femininity and the complexity of their sexual identity development.

Due to social understandings of sex being seen as an “adult” act/decision and Black girls being sexualized due to (historical and current) racist and sexist systems, this research explores Black girls particular experiences with sexuality and sexual identity development. Research questions that emerged during this study include: What constitutes Black girlhood (as defined by Black girls)? What is the relationship between Black girlhood, femininity, and sexual identity? Lastly, how do Black girls experience their femininity and sexual identity development? Because taboo ideas of sex, sexuality and hypersexual stereotypes of Black girls may shape their social experiences, it is essential to understand sexual identity development through how we understand Black childhood. The purpose of this empirical study is to rethink and re-image sexual identity in the context of Black girls.

The literature review following this chapter provides the reader with research that has been previously conducted, as well as ways in which this thesis can expand on those empirical studies and theories. The methods section is designed to detail the participants and demographic information that are unique in this study: self-identified Black and/ or African American girls ages 14-18 from San Francisco. For this qualitative study, the methods section is framed by using six focus groups and 15 in-depth interviews for analysis. Although this is a minimal amount of focus groups and in-depth interviews compared to other empirical studies, my position as an educator at the school also allows for me to add auto-ethnographic reflection and field notes that augment girls' narratives with those who are similarly defined (see Fischer, 2012, p. 88-89). That is, my experiences as a Black woman working within a certain school district are linked with others' narratives, from those whom I interviewed as well as other educators to communicate the varied ways in which Black girls and women find solutions to problems in our social lives and educational experiences. Overall the methods section provides the reader with the tools that were used for analyzing the collected data, and I explain how focus groups, and in-depth interviews were conducted.

The results section reveals the responses of participants throughout the study. This section is organized according to themes that emerged during my research process (focus groups and interviews). The aim of this chapter is to present salient contributions from participants' narratives. The discussion/ analysis compares the literature review and themes that emerged from participant responses. The analysis section also provides the reader with alternative ways in which we can reimagine Black girlhood and support all

girls who live at the intersection of racist, sexist, ageist systems by using *Black Feminist Thought* as a theoretical framework. This section concludes and summarizes findings in this study. Recall that the aim of this thesis is a call to deconstruct and reimagine what Black girlhood looks like as they develop a sexual identity and understand femininity.

Key Terms Section:

Black Girlhood: Aimee Cox (2015) works as a scholar within the discipline of African and African American studies primarily focusing on Black young women and how social ills such as poverty, racism and sexism affects their living situation; this need for them to survive is explored through a 8-year case study in Detroit's female homeless shelter. Cox comments on the lack of research centered around girlhood, and specifically Black girlhood.

Girlhood: Girlhood as defined by Cox is “changing nature of citizenship for young women who are defined primarily by their status as both female and adults in the making” (2015, p. 12). She furthermore complicated how girlhood studies lacks an intersectional approach and states that “in the late twentieth and early twenty- first century (their)...idea of a universal girl (was) conceived as white, American,.. middle class and burdened with the baggage of internalizing the negative connotations of her marginalized gender status” (Cox, 2015, p. 13). This specific understanding of girlhood excludes how girls of color could be experiencing this stage as a child, while also facing racial barriers.

Black Girl: In response to the lack of literature on Black girlhood, Brown (2013) who is a scholar in Gender and Women's studies and African American studies expands on ideals of girlhood while looking at how hip-hop, story telling, and her program Save Our Lives, Hear Our Truths all play a role in the political socialization of this group. In her book *Hear Our Truths: The Creative Potential of Black Girlhood* she simply defines Black girl as “ a political articulation that intentionally points to Black girls... beyond those who identify and are identified as Black girls” (2013, p.7).

Femininity: Lorena Garcia (2012) who is a sociologist did an in-depth study on Latina adolescent females and what it means to respect and protect yourself as it relates to sexual decision making. A key factor that stood out and sometimes explained their ideals towards gender identity and sexual decision-making was what it means to be feminine. Garcia explores femininity and states “There may be group-specific ways to produce a femininity that is rewarded such as one based on body weight, skin color, hair length and texture, and/ or use of makeup. However, it is important to bear in mind that, depending on the context, only some women may be able to produce a femininity that is considered to be desirable, so not all women may have access to privilege through their expressions of femininity” (Garcia, p. 182). Although she offers a fluid and unfixed definition of what it means to be feminine, it allows for the research to examine the desirability of feminine traits that may vary based on the narratives of the participants.

Sexual Identity Development: Renee White who is a sociologist did an ethnographic study with Black adolescents and sexual experiences and defined sexual behavior as “an individual (who) develops sexual attitudes, gender identity, and gender roles; it involves

the acquisition of sexual skills, knowledge, and societal values” (1999, p. 76). Although in this research we are looking at sexual identity development and not sexual behavior, this definition allows for this study to continue to explore and understand *sexuality* as a process connected to childhood, gender, racial identity as well as investigating the relationship that sexual representation plays in sexual understanding or decision-making.

Intersectionality: To acknowledge that Black girls are living with multiple intersecting social barriers such as racism, sexism and ageism is to acknowledge the work of Crenshaw whom coined the term and theory. This term can be understood as an individual living with multiple identities that shapes their experiences due to systems being designed to exclude them. In the recent study by Sumi Cho, Kimberle Williams Crenshaw and Leslee McCall they further explore intersectionality studies by discussing it as a “theory, application and praxis” (2013, p. 785). With the scholars framing the conversation with “what intersectionality does rather than what intersectionality is” their claim is that intersectionality is not about the linkage of identities yet about the “political and structural inequalities” (2013 p.795-7). Their critique of previous academic literature using intersectionality as synonymous to identity politics provides the reader with understanding the difference of seeing structures as oppressive, versus seeing people’s identities as oppressive. Identity politics refers to social articulation of an individual or group of people, while intersectionality refers to structural and political inequalities such as racism, and sexism, which shapes how someone is perceived, treated and identified.

Literature Review

The review of the following literature highlights theories and narratives of Black adolescent females while providing a critical understanding of Black girlhood. The dimensions and variables that will be analyzed is how they understand sexuality and femininity. Historical and contemporary perceptions of Black girlhood will also be reviewed to better understand their social context. This study follows five major themes: *(1) Socializing Black Girls (2) The Black and African Female Body at the Intersection of Terror and Resistance (3) Understanding Black Girl Sexuality through Hip Hop Feminist Discourse and Popular Visual Media (4) Challenging the Boundaries of Femininity in High-School (5) Social Support to Sustain Black Girlhood: The Potential of Healthy Sexual and Identity Development*. These five themes were created to answer how Black girls understand sexual identity development and their ideals of femininity.

Socializing Black Girls

Black girls' socialization is shaped by their multi-faceted identity, thus shapes their social experiences. Socialization as defined by Thomas and King is "the preparation of children to accept adults roles and responsibilities in society through the teaching and learning of conventional beliefs, values, and patterns of behavior" (2007, p.137). They found that Black American mothers are socializing their daughters to be self-determined and assertive, presumably because they know that their Black daughters will be under constant scrutiny and criticism (Thomas and King, 2007, p.139). Despite images that Black women/girls are bombarded with such as "ho," "ghetto," or "loud," the literature on how Black parents, in particular mothers, and how they positively socialize their

daughters suggest that Black American guardians are faced with raising their kids with the intent to help them be competent within a racist and sexist society (Jones, 2010; Morris, 2007; Thomas, King, 2007, p. 137).

Factors that come into play when attempting to understand social identity are the patterns of racialization and gender socialization. Scholarship that explores racialization such as Mandara (2002) explains how Black childhood can be challenging due to the valuing of whiteness, and the reinforcement of Blackness as condemning. She further discusses how the impact and role of symbols such as “black is bad, and white is good” help shape children's understanding of race, as well as the hierarchy of race (2002, p. 78). Mandara contends that the “misunderstanding of the use of color may threaten the developing self-conception of which racial identity and awareness are important aspects” (2002, p. 79).

Gender socialization is also modeled through the studies of Ward as she discusses how “adults can help girls...identify and name the attitudes, behaviors, definitions, and assumptions that create barriers to healthy development” (2007, p. 254). In the discipline of education and counseling Tamara R. Buckley and Robert T Carter (2005) examine gender roles, racial identity and self-esteem as it related to Black girls. Their focus was to “understand factors that influence Black girls positive self-esteem and to respond to calls for additional research on Black girl development” while using questionnaires that focused on sex roles, racial identity and self-recognition (2005, p. 647). Participants were recruited from New York high schools and with the consent of 200 Black adolescent girls the researchers were able to develop an exploratory analysis.

Their study found that there was a high amount of Black adolescent females who were pro-Black and those same participants also had high self-esteem. Contrary, results also indicated that Black girls who scored high “on pre-encounter racial identity attitudes” detailed reduced self-assurance linked to their racial identity. When understanding the relationship between gender roles and Black racial identity as it related to Black girls, Buckley and Carter found that “Black girls who reported an internalized defined Black racial identity (internalization) as reported an androgynous gender role” (2005, p. 658). Contrary, Black girls also described these characteristics of androgynous gender roles as unfavorable (Buckley and Carter, 2005, p. 658). The importance of racial and gender empowerment around intersecting identities can positively affect girls and create pathways for social solutions in response to social issues such as derogatory perceptions and damaging stereotypes that are related to their race, gender, and age.

As different understandings of socialization are analyzed, the historical understanding of Blackness should be key in understanding the context of racialization. In Muhammad’s book *The Condemnation of Blackness*, he states that in 1836 “...the negro is constitutionally indolent, voluptuous, and prone to vice...the African in all ages and countries, a slave—is the natural consequence of the inferiority of his character” (2010, p. 21). The historical understanding and construction of Blackness as criminalized, characterized as “prone to vice”, and “unambitious,” creates the illusion that Black bodies are inferior based on a system that supports the degradation of Blackness (Muhammad, 2010, p. 21). This brings up an interesting question as it connects to Black children, in

particular Black girls: If Blackness is condemned, then what happens to the experiences of children who are also Black?

The Essence of Innocence explored the extent of protection that Black children are afforded compared to white children (Goff, P., Jackson, M., Leone, B., Culotta, C., & Ditomasso, N., 2014). It is a universal understanding that children are afforded the right to be protected, yet this study found that Black children were vulnerable to being targeted as adults. This research study created scenarios about Black and white male adolescents who are accused of committing a crime. By looking at the description and identity of the suspect, each participant is asked to assume the age of the subject. In all procedures Black boys were identified as older than their white counterparts thus vulnerable to harsher consequences. Empirical studies that examine the social context of Black children being perceived as adults also contributes to the lack of protection Black girls are warranted.

Anita J. Thomas, Jason D. Hacker and Denada Hoxha (2011) study looks at the importance of understanding intersecting identities such as race and gender. While using focus groups of 17 African American adolescent females (15-21) they look to see how these participants understand their social identity. In this study the participants had varied responses about their identity including 42% stating “the importance of racial pride, heritage, family” etc. yet 35% responses centered on stereotypes that African Americans experience (Thomas, Hacker, Hoxha, 2011, p. 534). When asking about their ideals of womanhood, 50% of the responses are said to “reflect stereotypes of women and barriers including sexism” (Thomas, Hacker, Hoxha, 2011, p. 535). When asked about their race

and gender separately, participants often responded by intersecting both race and gender in their answers (p. 539). This study, which encourages more qualitative research states that, “the findings also suggest limitations in the approaches of single identity models in explaining identity for ethnic minority girls” (Thomas, Hacker, Hoxha, 2011, p. 538). The need for further research to understand how intersecting identities work can help provide a more thorough analysis of Black female social development.

Joyce West Stevens’ scholarship focuses on adolescent development, specifically the identity development of African American females. *Smart and Sassy: The Strengths of Inner City Black Girls* (West Stevens, 2002) explores the psychological and social factors that contribute to the development of Black girls. In her study she contextualizes the historical experiences of Black females in the United States and offers theories that encompass the past and present structures that influence Black girls. In her 1997 article published through Child Welfare, she documents the experiences of African American female students from a public middle school in Northeastern inner city spaces. She pulled her sample from the Pregnancy Prevention Intervention Research (Growing Up: Learning to Make Choices) created in 1994. The themes that developed out of the study were centered around Black American girls’ socialization experience which she described as (1) The Euro American value system (2) “a devalued social status” (as a result of racism and sexism) and (3) The Afro American value system (West Stevens, 2002, p. 154). As these girls are subjects of research, they were also able to express their difficulty navigating through schools and at home.

Through this program the participants were given a space to reveal the challenges they had with navigating relationships with their mothers and school officials. While describing an argument with the school administrative assistant, one participant in describing her frustration said, “Cursing means you better get outa my face before I make you get out of it. You better leave me alone cause I didn’t do nothing to you and you better leave me alone...” (West-Stevens, 1997, p.158). As West Stevens observes how the participant discusses the argument she finds that the girls felt as if they were “asserting strength... independence... and demanding respect” while others may have perceived the students response as disrespectful (1997, p. 158). West Stevens found that the cultural differences in how these Black girls behaved and the expectations of the school environment differed and challenged the “school norms” (West Stevens, 1997, p.159). Because the participants in this study struggled with gaining and maintaining healthy relationships with authority figures, calls into question how this type of exposure may affect their idea of girlhood and how they understand sexuality. If Black girls are struggling with preserving necessary relationships with adults in academic environments and at home, how does that affect their development as a child?

The Black and African Female Body at the Intersection of Terror and Resistance

While studying the records of enslavement, scholars Ned and Constance Sublette (2016) discuss the brutal realities of Black females, including girls as their bodies were the site of sexual terror.

“If a slave-owner wanted to enjoy the adolescent daughters of his workforce, he has absolute authority over them. No one would say

no—not even his wife who had few legal rights and who had perhaps grown up ignoring her own resemblance to the enslaved half-sister who served her.

Slavery was rape. A person who has no right to refuse has no consent to give, so even absent the use of physical force at the moment of the sex act, an enslaved woman could not be consensual sex with a white man. The lack of consent was explained away by what has become known as the Jezebel libel, which characterized Black women as incorrigibly licentious, always willing, and irredeemably dishonored from birth” (Sublette, N., & Sublette, C., 2016, p. 35-6).

In their book *The American Slave Coast: A History of the Slave-Breeding Industry*, the authors explore how enslavement was built and maintained with the controlling of Black female bodies to reproduce economic labor, and to also reproduce fear among the enslaved. Other recent scholars that study the development of Black girlhood state how Black women and girls bodies have been historically used as “sexual product(s)” in the United States which were controlled, objectified and forced for the purposes of reproducing (French, 2013, p. 36.).

Facts such as the above may compel one to question how historical violence against Black females relates to the current existence of Black girls. With mainstream American feminism catering to the victimization of white women and the exclusion of women of color, particularly Black women being viewed as unworthy of protection, how could that affect Black girls? Richie states that “violence against women must be

understood from within the context of race, class, gender” and I would add age (2012, p. 59). The historical degradation of Black female bodies and lack of protection stems from the “historical representation of Black women as sexually promiscuous, insatiable, and incapable of rape were created to justify the sexual exploitation of Black women” as referred to as Jezebel (French, 2013, p. 36). Black females as a marginalized group have been exempt from legal and social protection. Crenshaw (1989) argues that traditional feminist theory and racist policy both tend to exclude Black women either due to their race, gender or class status. Black women who are politically erased through legal cases calls for the purpose of her intersectional, Black feminist discussion. With systems such as racism and sexism creating and maintaining barriers that make it difficult for Black women to survive, the same must be explored for their female adolescent counterparts.

Because this research is grounded in understanding Black American girls social experiences as they go through girlhood, it is also important to share pre-colonial traditions that previously and still do shape the lives of some African girls. It’s important to offer multiple understandings of girlhood and how cultural practices enforce gender ideals through different traditions and/or rituals. Njambi (2004) complicates western views, in specific, western feminism around African female body politics and more specific, female genital mutilation. She argues that:

““anti-female genital mutilation (FGM) discourse... is locked in a colonial discourse that replicates the ‘civilizing’ presumptions of the past, and presents a universalized image of

female bodies that relies upon particularized assumptions of what constitutes 'naturalness' and 'normality'" (2004, p. 282).

The binaries that are shaped, Njambi argues, through the western colonial discourse only allows for people to see this cultural tradition as a dichotomy. Discourse that controls the language around female genital mutilation is always at opposition, such as: "science/ superstition; medical knowledge/ tradition; healthy body/ unhealthy bodies; normal sexuality/ abnormal sexuality..." (Njambi, 2004, p. 283).

As the author deconstructs the problematic discourse that shapes anti-FGM, she also discusses western society's historical (and current) obsession with African women's genitals (Njambi, 2004, p. 284). She reminds us of Sara Baartman's story and how "the genitalia of a South African woman... (was) sliced from her and displayed in a museum in Paris, France; part of the continuing eroticization and fascination with African women's sexuality on the part of neo-colonial European societies" (Njambi, 2004, p. 285). The irony, as Njambi points out, lies within Western societies privilege as they have the power to turn a cultural "issue" into a scientific or medical concern, yet they didn't have the same regard for Baartman's life. The central concern is that "sexual fascination and voyeurism continues to play an important role in the ways in which the practices of female circumcision are understood in some communities" (Njambi, 2004, p. 285). Taking cultural context out of any perceived social concern disrupts the truth and the cultural understanding of that perceived social issue. African bodies whether in Africa or throughout the diaspora, have had a history of being exploited – when connecting this

to the representation of Black girls in the United States and how their girlhood has been constructed, sexual objectification is central.

The way in which Black bodies are represented, and the coded discourse that is used to describe Black female adolescents can be further explored through this discussion of female genital mutilation. To continue the conversation about bodies and how Black and/or African bodies have been at the intersection of terror and resistance this study will further examine how Black young women have resisted with their body as home. In Cox's (2015) 8-year ethnographic case-study with Black adolescent females (some minors and others transitioning into adulthood), she observes how their bodies are constantly being challenged and sometimes invaded like their home spaces. All the Black girls were living in a transitional homeless shelter and Cox observed as they were forced by circumstance to navigate poverty. She elaborately explains "The young women in *ShapeShifters* stay in their bodies to rewrite the socially constructed meanings of shackled to them. The body, like the notion of home for these young women, can be by turns a space of safety and protection or one of instability and expulsion" (Cox, 2015, p. 29). In addition, her theory of body politics discuss how both "the body as well as in home" are spaces that "are inherently unpredictable for young Black women" (Cox, 2015, p. 29). With this understanding of how young Black women navigate body politics, Cox contends that they have recreated this concept of body as home. Because these young women are consistently uncertain of their physical living space they resist by making their body their home (Cox, 2015, p. 29).

Understanding Black Girl Sexuality through Hip-Hop Feminist Discourse and
Popular Visual Media

Hip-Hop as an epicenter of Black sexual discourse has influenced a body of literature that attempts to understand how young people make meaning of their sexual attitudes as behaviors (Cohen, 2007, p. 1). When publications such as the “Black Youth Project” report that Black young people consume 25% of “television rap programming daily,” it is also important to investigate how rap and the images immersed through their music videos influences sexual attitudes and/ or behaviors (Cohen, 2007, p. 1). Young people are not only consumers of rap but also able to critically analysis these images with reports indicating that “57% of young Black males and 66% of young Black women agree that rap music videos portray Black women in bad and offensive ways” while also noting that “68% of Black youth.... agree ‘that rap music videos have too many references to violence’” (Cohen, p. 2, 2007).

Some academics argue that Hip-Hop is linked to Black girls’ political liberation because it provides a platform to be seen, heard, and negotiate identity politics vocally and through style (Brown, 2007, p. 123). Within the discipline of African American studies Lindsey (2013) uses popular visual media to discuss empowerment and disempowerment of African-American girls with a Hip-Hop feminist pedagogy. According to Lindsey (2013) and Hooks (1999) very little efforts have been made to challenge or change the discourse and “dehumanizing representation” of Black Americans within mass media (Lindsey, 2013, p. 22). (Black) Feminism and Hip-Hop are both models that are used to empower Black women and girls and allow for their voice to

be centered, which is also why it is the theoretical framework for her study. With using Morgan's (2000) book *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: A Hip Hop Feminist breaks it Down* as her focal point in her theoretical frameworks, Lindsey claims that Black women's sexuality, has been discussed within Hip-Hop feminism as "sexual pleasure discussed and sexually expressive... in empowering adult women and trans-people" (2013, p. 24).

Lindsey research questions originate from Black Hip-Hop feminism and inquires how Hip-Hop empowers Black girls as well as questioning the term "empowerment" in the context of "public/popular culture" of Black womanhood being sexualized for exploitative purposes (2013, p. 24-5). Through visual media (such as video-recordings), and depictions of a Black girl participating in sexual activity with a Black boy in October 2011 sparked members of social media to label her as a "slut, whore, hypersexual and stupid" while paying little to no attention to the male (Lindsey, 2013, p. 25). This video created a dialogue about girls, sex, mass media and "fueled discussion about hypersexuality and Black womanhood" (Lindsey, 2013, p. 25). This example displays the monopoly on Black girlhood, and how visual media and pop culture have the power to perpetuate myths of Black girls being hypersexual. Mediums such as visual media, and hip-hop culture can also provide Black women and girls with a space to represent themselves.

In the field of social research, Rana Emerson (2002) seeks to explore how Hip-Hop culture particularly influences Black young women as they are "producers, creators and consumers of Hip-Hop" (Emerson, 2002, p. 116). Her argument is that the

relationships Black women have in music videos create ambiguity for Black girls who are making sense of their “Blackness, womanhood, and sexuality” (Emerson, 2002, p.119). Emerson investigates 56 music videos to analyze how Black women are depicted or how Black women position themselves within music videos. She uncovers numerous themes as she codes and uses textual analysis to describe observation, but for the purpose of my study we will focus on the information that is relevant for Black girls; how they understand as well as shape their femininity and sexuality based off of this form of visual media. Aside from Black women being “video girls” in the Hip-Hop industry, artists such as Ericka Base or India Arie have embraced Blackness as a political and cultural identity through their music.

Emerson argues that Black female artists are representing themselves outside of “video girls” or “African goddesses” binaries. This discourse of Black women in Hip-Hop Emerson argues, that Black women negotiate themes such as femininity and sexuality which can presumably offer Black girls a multi-dimensional way of internalizing ideals of femininity and sexuality. With a Black feminist approach she contextualizes how Black women are not just victims of sexual objectification but also use “their platform to have conversations around self-valuation, self determination” (Emerson, 2002, p.133). Black women and girls can complicate how they interact with visual images that may be perceived as stigmatizing by continuing to complicate the boundaries of femininity and sexuality.

Stokes investigates how southern Black girls (14-17) construct and describe sexual scripts, self-definition and hip hop cultures based through the exploration internet

home pages (2007, p. 169). The central question that the research is structured around is does the “hypersexual and deviant sexual scripts in hip hop music videos shape how Black girls view themselves (Stephens and Phillips 2003)” (Stokes, 2007, p.169). The theoretical framework that is used to structure this literature is through 3 theoretical scripts (cultural scenarios, interpersonal scripts, and intrapsychic scripts), which help develop a socio-cultural understanding of the causes, and effects that shape Black female identity (Stokes, 2007, p. 170). Through academic literature, Stokes found that some girls use Internet home pages for “sexual self-expression, self-disclosure, identity construction, and media appropriation” (2007, p.172). The social networking page known as ‘NevaEvaLand’ (pseudonym) where thousands of Black young people connected with their peers is the database Stokes used to collect the data on Black girls (2007, p.172). She was able to collect data using “ethnographic and quantitative content analysis” to “code pages meeting the eligibility criteria to analyse their narratives, sounds, and images” (Stokes, 2007, p. 173).

The characteristics of sexual scripts identified through coding were: “A lady in the streets, but freak on the web: the freak; My goodies stay in the jar: the virgin; Aint scared to fight a ho: The down- ass chick/ bitch; ladies is pimps too: the pimpette; and the resisters” (Stokes, 2007, p.174-8). Beside the term “resisters”- all characteristics were developed through how these subjects described and defined themselves. Stokes explains that “the Hip-Hop cultural practice of ‘representin’ (also known as reppin)- in other words, constructing self-definitions to elevate their social status” (2007, p.174). Furthermore, the internet provided the girls with a space “to experience with their

sexuality” without the consequences of being or feeling shamed (Stokes, 2007, p. 179-80).

Terms such as “the freak” were used as a contemporary version of the “jezebel” who is known as a sexually adventurous black woman. Although the girls defined a “freak” as someone who is sexually open, but not always “freaky” with multiple people. The “virgin” which aligns with the “good girl” image maintains the idea that they are not sexually active (Stokes, 2007, p.176). Stokes states that, “ ‘the virgin’ reinforced the ‘good’ girl image that Black girls have been historically encouraged to adopt by their parents and other adults (Wyatt 1997, Stephens and Phillips 2003)” (Stokes, 2007, 176). The “Down-ass chick/ bitch” which derived from the term “sapphire” combined with “self- sacrificing... mammy” is a Black woman that is abrasive with her attitude, yet supportive through her actions (Stokes, 2007, p.176).

The “pimpette” redefines gender-norms in the context that she is a “ ‘female pimp’ who is able to manipulate a relationship for sexual and/ or economic gain while maintaining a romantic/ sexual network consisting of more than one romantic/ sexual partner” (Stokes, 2007, p.177). Finally, the resisters (which wasn’t a term the girls used but a term the author identified) is defined through Patricia Hill Collins (2002) work as “self-defined by Black women ourselves Black women’s sexualities can become an important place a resistance (p.128)” (Stokes, 2007, p.178). The resisters are understood as Black women and girls that go against stereotypical images of Black females that are reinforced through multi-media (Stokes, 2007, p.178). This research complicated the understanding of girlhood because of the sexual references to their identity. This study

suggests that if sexual education programs are not enforced through education then Black girls may be at risk due to the role of media (Stokes, 2007, p.180).

Through previous academic literature Black girl sexuality has been discussed as a problem or consequence, yet hearing from Black and their “sense of sexual expectation” is explored by French (2013). She explains that sexual scripts are “places behaviors within cultural interpersonal, intrapsychic forces” (French, 2013, p. 36). Furthermore, “sexual scripts are roles that are created, recreated and enacted ways of engaging in relationships and sexual behavior, and the gendered and developmental norms associated with them” (French, 2013, p. 36). French explores how Black women and girls’ bodies have been historically used as “sexual product” which was controlled, objectified, and forced to reproduce for a system that benefited white male enslavers economically (French, 2013, p. 36).

This empirical study in Midwestern high schools uses 21 participants; 19 Black girls and 2 white girls. The study focused on Black female adolescents, sexual scripts, and how they make meaning of sexual coercion, only Black girls’ narratives were used within this study. Data was collected through focus groups that were designed to understand the participants’ understanding of sexual coercion in relation to intersections of race and gender. The main themes that were identified through the data were *personal responsibility* and *finding sexual agency and desire* which “center on Black girls’ individual responses and resistance strategies to sexual scripts and sexual coercion” (French, 2012, p. 42). The last 2 themes were *media transformation* and *giving voice*

“focus on girls” suggestions to combat the dominant sexual scripts for Black girls within society and interpersonally” (French, 2012, p. 41).

Media transformation was centered on how Black women and girls can change the language and imagery of Black women and girls in media. Participants expressed how media impacted “their exposure...and interest in sex” as well as identify how men treat them, in specifically music videos (French, 2012, p. 45). French states that girls from both focus groups identified that the information passed through media pertaining to Black females needs to be transformed (French, 2012, p. 45). Participants recognized the importance of having open forums around Black girls sexuality and how it can “reduce the silence” (French, 2012, p. 45). French concluded by discussing the importance of participants talking about sexual coercion and pressure with trusted adults; these discussion are theorized to decrease the feeling of shame, and increase the sense of safety and inclusion within sexual dialogue.

Although sexualized images of Black females are not isolated to Hip-Hop or popular visual media, the mere fact that Black women and girls are seen through these mediums as solely sexual beings should call for a Black feminist approach to understanding Black female sexuality. This thesis which (also) expands on understandings of femininity, sex, and sexuality, offers a nuanced analysis that uses the voices of Black girls as a way to understand their specific lived experiences.

Challenging the Boundaries of Femininity in High-School

Among the following literature is a reflection of Black girls experiences in school as hostile and unsafe space. Within this space they are often questioned about their

femininity if they do not behave, or conform to the ways in which they are expected to. Through a qualitative analysis Blake, Butler, Lewis, Darenbourg (2010) focus on how Black girls experiences are shaped within school and how disciplinary actions may be different and or disproportionate compared to their Latino female classmates. They explain that Black girls, especially from the inner-cities, are typically described as defiant and going against traditional euro-centric feminine ideals (Blake, Butler, Lewis, Darenbourg, 2010, p. 93). Their finding, which matched their theories in the literature review concluded that “Black girls were most often cited for defiance followed by inappropriate dress, using profane language toward a student, and physical aggression” (Blake, Butler, Lewis, Darenbourg, 2010, p. 100). This study also suggested that teachers who already have preconceived ideals of their Black students affects how the Black girls and children experience their education based on the teachers low-expectations and high-referrals (Blake, Butler, Lewis, Darenbourg, 2010, p. 101). It was indicated that Black girls (just as their Black male counterparts) are “overrepresented in various discipline infractions and subsequent exclusionary discipline practices” that shape their experiences in education (Blake, Butler, Lewis, Darenbourg, 2010, p. 101).

Through Africana literature Tsuruta (2012) offers a cultural analysis that discusses the behavior of Black females and how they assert “womanish” ways of being and/ or speaking. This theory offers an alternative and cultural perspective of Black girl behavior and communication style which is often mistaken as disrespectful or defiant in school. Womanism is defined by Dr. Tsuruta as “culturally-affirming and transformative ideal of the self-agency and social struggle of Black women to resist all forms of

oppression and assert themselves in freedom, confidence and creativity” (Tsuruta, 2012, p. 3). Through Tsuruta’s theoretical study she articulates how Black girls and women have created and maintained a cultural practice that manifests itself through their behavioral patterns, their assertive responses, and through Black women and girls’ culture. Tsuruta further explains that ‘womanish’ is a term that “describes Black girls who evince characteristics of wit, will, grit, smarts, empathy, curiosity, thoughtfulness, loyalty, risk taking... and stubbornness as necessary to remain strong against attempts to undermine her intelligence or kill her spirit” (2012, p.4). Black girls who assert themselves are perceived as going against the politics of respectability and traditional ideals of femininity. Black girls and women who reject normalized ideals of what it means to be a “true woman” or “lady” are working on a womanish paradigm because they are choosing to define themselves for themselves which can also be seen as a form of day-to-day resistance. Although these womanish ways are forms of resistance against a hegemonic, racist, sexist society, others, in this specific context teachers/educators do not typically understand nor receive these ways in which Black girls communicate.

In the context of Black girls being misunderstood because of their perceived aggressive behavior, it is important to analyze how culture plays a big part in how Black girls and women are conditioned to communicate amongst each other, as well as with others. Through Scott’s (2000) article she explores how Black women’s race and gender affects the way in which they communicate amongst themselves, and others. She points out that it is important to understand “communication research [and] how the struggle to survive in contradictory worlds and multiple identities involves Black woman’s

communication behavior (Scott, 2000, p. 237). This research gives an in-depth cultural analysis of ways in which Black women, and I would even argue Black girls communicate- while also taking in consideration of how these communicative patterns are not understood, or received by others because of cultural disconnect, especially in schools. Lei finds that “within this matrix of structuring social and institutional practices ‘loud Black girls’ are marked as ‘bad students’, to reinforce the normalcy of ‘good students’ in contrast to the otherness of ‘bad students’”(2008, p. 166). The perceptions from teachers, administrators and peers of Black girls reinforces dominant ideals of Black girls being loud, visible, and unwelcomed in academic settings because of their non-traditional behaviors as well as the lack of cultural competency.

Some girls who were perceived by teachers as not following the norms of femininity in the classroom, which included not being “soft spoken and submissive” got in trouble due to what Murphy etc. (2013) identified as a “cultural mismatch.” The misunderstandings often took place when teachers and girls of color had different understandings of what’s appropriate, especially in the context of communication. Although Murphy etc. (2013) uses girls of color in this study, for the purpose of this thesis it will be contextualized for Black girls, as well as because they use Black feminist epistemology as apart of their theoretical framework to center Black female voices.

Morris (2007) examines the perception and experiences of Black girls in classroom settings and his findings indicate that many of the educators in this study viewed their Black female students as “loud,” “fast,” and “promiscuous.” Furthermore, his findings suggest that Black female students don’t receive adequate support because

they don't behave with characteristics that align with being "ladylike". This perceivably problematic practice of how some educators interact with Black girls results in the students receiving harsher consequences compared to their white and Latina counterparts.

Patterns of Black girls being adultified comes up as Morris suggests that "the power struggle" between the teachers and Black girls exemplifies the "adultification of Black females who teachers see as too controlling or aggressive at a young age" (2007, p. 502). Cultural differences resulted in some of the girls being disengaged with their teachers and learning. Although the girls may have been perceived as "loud, unladylike, or disrespectful" they felt misunderstood, misrepresented, and even silenced despite their loud projection when talking. These girls being loud could be an interpretation of them finding a way to remain heard despite being pushed aside. Murphy etc. suggest that their loudness could also be a means of them not only finding their voice, but also "coming into their own voice, almost as a rite of passage" (2013, p. 601). If cultural barriers were confronted and deconstructed, maybe teachers could understand the sense of self that these girls of color are consistently defending, and refining.

With a contemporary concentration on the school-to-prison pipeline in the context of criminalizing Black girls, the following study shows how the condemnation of Black girlhood transcends in schools and constructs how school policies respond to Black girls when they are being disciplined. Morris defined the school-to-prison pipeline as "the collection of policies, practices, conditions, and prevailing consciousness that facilitate both the criminalization within educational environments and the processes by which this criminalization results in the incarceration of youth and young adults" (2012, p. 2). The

first part of her report focuses on how the racialization of Black boys has been used to determine how schools punish them- but also the lack of scholarship found on how schools discipline Black girls. Morris states that, “with respect to Black girls’, discipline and zero tolerance policies are also among the most researched of the education- system pipeline to incarceration” (2012, p. 5).

Black girls are consistently expected to identify and behave as a ‘good’ girl to prove themselves within this marginalized group, yet when or if they act ‘ghetto’, Morris states that they are “deviating from the social norm” of girlhood, thus they are “subjected to criminalizing responses (2012, p. 5). Furthermore, Morris continues by stating that Black youth are “treated more harshly for engaging in behaviors deemed problematic to a school environment” (2012, p. 5-6). In this case, it can be argued that “womanish” behaviors are deemed as problematic because of school educators not taking Black female culture into consideration. Although Black boys and girls are not seen as a ‘threat’ in the same way, the manifestation of the hard, adult like consequences, tend to look familiar. Morris’ second section focuses on the racialization of masculinity, thus looking at how Black children are seen as ‘racial threats’ (2012, p.6).

Morris (2012) states that through these multiple studies where ‘racial threat’ is discussed, the data has no diverse gender analysis. She states that although there is a “lack of restorative and holistic approaches” at schools that are predominately Black, the response to disciplining these students usually results with “the presence of law enforcements” (Morris, 2012, p. 6). The reinforced myth of “racial threat” has caused many Black males and females to be perceived as inherently “defiant” versus looking at

external factors that shape one's reactions. An example of racial threat in reference to how educators respond to Black girls is the case of Mikia Hutchings in Stockbridge, Georgia. Vega (2014) who is a writer for *The New York Times* wrote an article on how discipline differs based on race and hue for girls of color- especially Black girls. Mikia, a high school student, was caught writing the word "Hi" on bathroom walls. Mikia's family was asked to pay restitution for 'damages' done to school property, which they decided not to pay. Nonetheless, Mikia friend's family (who are white) decided they could pay the restitution for the property and shoes the friend damaged. It is believed by others that due to Mikia's family not paying restitution (or not being able to) resulted in "a school disciplinary hearing... and a visit from a uniformed officer from the local sheriff's department" (Vega, 2014, p.1). Mikia was accused of "trespassing misdemeanor and potentially a felony" (Vega, 2014, p.1). Vega concluded by stating that Black girls are misrepresented, yet perceived as "unsophisticated, hyper-sexualized, and defiant" (2014, p.3).

Morris (2012) focuses on these violent, hostile environments that Black young people are subjected to learn in; yet Black young people are not seen as victims that survive and thrive within these environments. This idea of "moral panic" is a response to students who are perceived to be misbehaving, which is used as "justifications for the increasingly punitive infrastructure that developed in urban schools" (Morris, 2012, p.8). She continues to state that "within the context of urban schools prone to violence, the reproductive function of schools has served to criminalize and marginalize Black youth" (Morris, 2012, p. 8). Morris continues by stating that Black girls are caught in a space

“between male and other women” and the intersectionality of their race, gender and age leaves them in a vulnerable, “powerless” place, which shifts their reality and makes their experiences completely different from their male counterparts—and their non- Black female counterparts (2012, p. 10). Black girls whom are perceived as being “loud or defiant” are reacting in ways that they have historically used to survive (Morris, 2012, p.9).

Social Support to Sustain Black Girlhood: The Potential of Healthy Sexual and Identity Development

Afrocentric cultural programs that cater to Black girls who are transitioning into womanhood take on an intentional approach to adolescents. Pratt-Clarke confronts the “Black female crisis” in the U.S. due to the disproportionate Black women and girls being affected with health challenges, rising incarceration rates, under-representation in the political arena, and working for inequitable wages (2012, p.102-6). Pratt-Clarke acknowledges Black women, and girls societal challenges and offers a “theory to praxis” framework with a focus on “African thought, traditions, and practices, as symbolized by Ma’at and rites of passage” (2012, p.100). This Afrocentric approach is a response to “the current reality of African American girls and women of disharmony, inequalities, and disorder (which) justifies the need for a restoration of order, balance and harmony” (Pratt-Clarke, 2012, p.108). “Rites of passage” is used as a transitional tool that facilitates “the mastery of emotional, spiritual and physical tests and tasks” (Pratt-Clarke, 2012, p.109). It is mentioned by Pratt-Clarke that “In the African tradition, the youth must ask

for the rite (right) or permission of passage (passing on) to a higher level of human social and educational development” (2012, p. 9).

Rites of passage programs for Black American girls have consisted of multiple components such as: transitioning from girlhood into womanhood, storytelling, expressing gratitude for ancestors, being in a larger community of women, honoring Black/African-American culture, “discussing values, purpose, and responsibility, setting goals... creating journals”... and discussing sexuality (Pratt-Clarke, 2012, p.109). Pratt-Clarke as the researcher, highlights the significance of Ma’at as an African centered principle. Martin defines Ma’at as “a comprehensive construct that existed throughout ancient Egyptian civilization... Ma’at is the principle of order that informs the creation of the universe” (2008, p.952). Ma’at as a cosmological creation is a goddess that represents balance a “a moral and ethical principle that all Egyptians were expected to embody in their daily actions toward” others including their communities and god (Martin, 2008, p.952). Programs that use Ma’at “as the foundation for a radical reconstruction” such as: *The Candance Rites of Passage Program*, and *The Sojourner Truth Adolescent Rites Society Program* have used multiple African-centered practices to help empower and inform youth on how to navigate societal issues (Pratt-Clarke, 2012, pg. 110). Both programs offer a cultural and gendered approach to help Black girls transition into womanhood by using the feminine symbol of Ma’at with the goal to empower their racial and gender identity.

Although Pratt-Clarke (2012) doesn’t use the term restore or restoration yet her study mentions the need to have programs for Black/African-American girls to “reclaim

their power” through learning their history. The social ills that she identifies such as increasing incarceration rates for Black women and girls, disenfranchisement from the political system, and economic disparities can be responded to through transformative programming that seek to restore racial and gender empowerment (Pratt-Clarke, 2012, p.103-5). These resistance strategies are theorized to invoke self-love, self-defining, community loving, racially embracing identities that could have the potential to restore Black women and girls’ power.

From an education and counseling perspective Holcomb-McCoy and Moore-Thomas (2001) look into why African American girls can benefit from counseling in schools (2001, p.19). This research is in response to “the growing number of African American females experiencing depression, eating disorders and suicide” (Holcomb-McCoy, Moore-Thomas, 2005, p.19). Within this theoretical and single case study, Holcomb-McCoy and Moore-Thomas (2005) identify variables such body image, racial and gender socialization, religion and other important components that contribute to African-American girls understanding of self. With using these variables, they identify resources that counselors can use to best serve African-American girls. With understanding the push back that some counselors may receive from Black girls, the authors outline intentional steps that could best serve the needs for their unique development. Like many students, Black girls “approach counseling with...anxiety, distrust and apprehension” (Holcomb-McCoy, Moore-Thomas, 2005, p.22). Through praxis and research the authors explain that reinforcing agency “personal responsibility”

in Black girl's, while understanding the context of their lived experiences can empower them (2005, p.20-22).

They argue that counseling can provide Black girls with a sense of agency and reclaiming of life choices; activities such as goal setting in counseling can help them become intentional with life choices (Holcomb-McCoy, Moore-Thomas, 2005, p. 22). Other variables such as young people being 'encouraged' to learn about their racial/ethnic history and culture can be suggested by counselors to support Black girls and help them understand their relationship to their racial or ethnic identity. Furthermore, outside support such as religious and spiritual guidance intersected within a counseling session can empower Black girls (Holcomb-McCoy, Moore-Thomas, 2005, p. 23). Angela as the subject (of this study) was in counseling at a predominantly white, wealthy school after leaving an all Black school. As a result of her transition, she began to withdraw from school academically and socially.

After going to counseling, the counselor used variables such as racial empowerment and goal setting. Although the counselor was there to help Angela with social and academic challenges, the counselor also "highlighted Angela's personality and academic characteristics" to counteract the idea that beauty is just physical (Holcomb-McCoy, Moore-Thomas, 2005, p.24). Methods such as "empathy, encouragement, reflection and feeling" that the counselor used to assist Angela concluded in Angela receiving higher grades, gaining a social life, and most importantly being comfortable with herself and the transition (Holcomb-McCoy, Moore-Thomas, 2005, p.24). Holcomb-McCoy and Moore-Thomas (2005) conclude that it is essential for counselors to be

conscious and aware of the racial and gender stigmas Black girls are facing in order to seriously assist them in social and emotional learning.

This literature review provides historical and contemporary scholarship regarding the social experiences of Black girls. Because the language around Black girls is often sexualized, this review followed the common discourse of how Black female adolescents are perceived and treated. Themes within this study allow for the reader to see the common thread of hyper-sexualized language and actions used when referring to Black girls. Furthermore, this literature review provides ways in which Black girls resist stereotypes and define their own identity; this thesis follows in understanding how Black girls understand and experience their femininity and sexual identity. The preceding chapter will discuss the methods and procedures that took place for this study.

Methods Section

The objective of the methods section is to describe how the research study took place, and the how the data was analyzed. This qualitative empirical study will consist of me as the researcher facilitating focus groups and in-depth interviews to answer the questions: What constitutes Black girlhood? How do Black girls understand Black girlhood. In specific, this research study seeks to hear from Black girls at a high school in San Francisco and what they think of sexuality and femininity in relation to their social identity. This methods section consist of five sub-sections: (1) Participants and Recruitment, (2) Methodology and Theory, (3) Instrument, (4) Procedures (5) Dissemination plan.

Participants and Recruitment:

For the purpose of this study, female students in grades 9-12 who identify as Black or African American were targeted. This grade group of high school age participants was used to explore if girls in the 9th and 10th grade (Group A) understood their girlhood differently compared to older girls in the 11th and 12 grade (Group B). The reason for having two separate groups is to see if Group A and Group B understand girlhood and womanhood differently. Based on each group (Group A and Group B), it is assumed that variables such as sexual identity, and femininity will be perceived differently. With this, I was looking for answers that honor the diversity of Black girls - by creating two groups, my attempt was to honor how some Black adolescent females may want to be with their age group for maturity and social reason. The purpose of using

Black female adolescents who are in high school is due to their developmental and social stage of life. This age group is mature enough to have this conversation and young enough to talk about their experiences with girlhood. Some girls who are in the 11th and 12th grade may not see themselves as Black girls, but young women. Therefore, this grade group 9-12th allows for the study to be nuanced and speak to different experiences of “girlhood”, and transitions into adulthood or womanhood.

The recruitment process started with me asking and discussing the topic with the principal for permission to conduct the research at the school (*see Appendix G.*) with the Black female student population. Following was a meeting to clarify any further questions regarding the research study. In mid-October I received a letter of approval from the principle to do the study from December 1 2015 to April 2016 (*see Appendix C*). With consent from the principle, all focus group sessions took place during advisory because it was a non-academic class, and they did not lose class credit. All focus groups were video recorded and allowed for me to further review the sessions of the participants with the intent to make a more in-depth analysis.

The recruitment process for participants started in December. Most recruitment took place with me introducing the study in classes and, recruiting through the Black Student Union at the high school. The research was introduced as a study that explores what Black girls think about sexuality and femininity. The inclusion, exclusion process for participants consisted of purposive sampling to reach at least 22-24 Black girls. Purposive sampling is defined as “a type of non-probability sampling in which the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher's’ judgment about which ones

will be the most useful or representative” (Babbie, 2008. p. 527). In other words, purposive sampling allows for the researcher to be intentional with the population they select and study. This form of sampling aided me in selecting study participants. For this study, Black girls in grades 9th-12th are the intentional targets to fulfill this research.

The study consists of 6-focus groups, and 15 in-depth interviews of Black adolescent girls. These two forms of data collection were necessary for finding answers about Black girls’ understanding of girlhood, and the perceptions they have about femininity and sexual identity. Focus groups allowed for Black girls to collectively discuss their experiences through these specific themes: identity formation, girlhood, Blackness, femininity, sexual identity and media and social representation (in relation to their Blackness). With the use of 3 sessions for Group A and Group B it allowed for me to explore these different dimension. The reason for multiple focus groups is to help answer the nuance experiences of Black girlhood that cannot be captured in just a single focus group session.

Methodology and Theory:

Black Feminist Thought created and defined by Patricia Hill Collins is used to center Black female narratives (2000). Collins defines Black Feminist Thought as a “critical social theory (that) encompasses bodies of knowledge and sets of institutional practices that actively grapple with the central questions facing U.S. Black woman as a collectivity” (2000, p. 9). For the purpose of this thesis, Black Feminist Thought will be extended to Black American girls who face racial and gender oppression, as well apart of a vulnerable population due to their age. Dimensions within this study such as girlhood,

Blackness, femininity and sexual identity are used with the intent to address the research question. Transcriptions from both focus groups and interviews were analyzed to see if responses aligned or went against the information stated in the literature review.

This research study calls for a more nuanced understanding of Black girls that is about “contributing to change” (cf., Taylor, Gilligan, Sullivan, 2007, p.6) and adding to the discourse on ideals of femininity and sexual identity development. Also grounded in Black feminist epistemology, this study privileges Black girls’ voices and narratives as important contributions and “agent[s] of knowledge”. The inclusion of Black girls’ voices as a primary source helped to clarify the ways they identify with, and make meaning of their girlhood. Moreover, the inclusion of girls’ voices allowed for their own interpretation of what Patricia Hill Collins calls “controlling images” and other popular media or social pressures that intersect with their daily experiences as children (or not being considered/ allowed the privilege of childhood).

Instrument:

The theory Black Feminist Thought allows for data collection to reflect the lives of Black girls, while using their narrative as a form of formal knowledge. The focus groups and semi structured interviews worked to locate what it means to be a Black girl. These methods also helped explore the relationship between their racialized gender, and how Black girls understand ideals of femininity, sexual identity development. Focus groups are understood as the gathering of participants that meet a specific criteria of demographics- the purpose of focus groups are to gain feedback or understanding about a

particular product, issue, or in this case a social phenomena. Although there were some structured questions for the focus groups, many questions were created on the spot to honor the context of the conversation. Some structured questions asked in the focus groups were “How does being a Black female make you feel about yourself? Does it influence how you live your life?”

All participants from focus groups were presented with the opportunity to further participate in in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews were used to gain a personal understanding of each Black girls experience at home, in social spaces and in school, as it all related to how they understand femininity and their sexual identity. Many of the in-depth interview questions were developed from questions or concerns that arose from the focus group, but the preliminary in-depth interview questions are separated by how Black girls experience their identity at home, in social settings, and at school (*see Appendix B*). Some questions that were asked were “How would you define what it means to be a Black girl? How would you define the expressions of femininity? What does being feminine mean to you?” and “What have you learned about sexuality?”

Mixed data collection methods is referred to as using more than one procedure with the intent to receive nuanced and additional data. For example, some participants were too shy to respond or interact in the focus groups, yet those same participants offered their narrative in a personal setting where were one-on-one with the researcher. At the same time, these mixed procedures of focus groups and in-depth interviews allowed for the participants to elaborate and discuss their experiences either collectively and/ or privately. The in-depth interviews took place in the months of January, February

and March. In the month of April, follow-up interviews took place for accuracy, and corrections with some participants who needed more time. This time was used to clarify any statements.

No real names or identities were used in any published reports or in the research or in researcher's notes. Participants were assigned a pseudonym to add further anonymity to your interview. The research data was kept in a secure location and only the researcher and the instructor had access to the data. All research data will be stored in an encrypted document on a password-protected computer. All recordings were stored in a locked room at San Francisco State University in the Ethnic Studies Building. All de-identified data will be kept indefinitely.

There were potential risks of discomfort because of topics like racism, sexism, gender-based prejudice and violence that both shape and negatively influence girlhood. Participants only answered the questions they chose to answer, and stopped participating at any time they chose. Potential risk for participants were prevented with the availability of social services within the school (counselors, etc.) to support them through any potential anxiety, stress, and/ or any other emotional challenges that may arise. Due to focus groups including discussions of personal opinions, extra measures were taken to protect each participant's privacy. All focus groups began with me asking the participants to agree to the importance of keeping information discussed in the focus group confidential. I also reminded the participants at the end of the research period not to discuss the material outside. Only my instructor and I have access to the data collected. All de-identified recordings and transcripts will be kept indefinitely.

Procedure:

Focus Groups:

To provide comfort for all participants, each focus group started with an open-ended question such as “Why do you think I’m doing research on Black girls and sexuality” to provide understanding within the space. To create and maintain a safe-space, school rules were reviewed as well as the expectations of respect, community encouragement, and privacy. In Appendix B model lesson plans of each focus group are provided.

To answer the main research question “how do Black girls experience their femininity and sexual identity development” this focus group session focused on answering questions that were specific to Black girls and their understanding of identity politics, sexuality and femininity. The first focus group was centered on how Black girls experience Black girlhood; not specifically focusing on their identity, but more so how they navigate perceptions and stereotypes that are connected to their identity. The lesson plan for this session was altered due to the limitations in material that was needed. Listed below are the questions that were asked:

- What does it mean to be a girl? How are girls supposed to act? Is it different for Black girls? Why or why not?
- Are there any topics you wish you could talk about?
- What makes you feel powerful as a Black girl?
- How do you believe society views Black girls?
- How would you say others define and describe Black girls?
- Have you ever been discriminated against?
- What do you think sexuality means?
- Is it important for Black girls to know about sexuality? Why or why not?

All questions were individually copied on small notecards. Participants voluntarily selected a notecard from the box and answered the question that they

randomly chose. In efforts to promote collective and diverse answers, it was encouraged for students to respond if/ when other participants felt uncomfortable answering questions. Each focus group was intended to have a proper closing if time permitted. Session 1, focus group closing statement offered all participants the opportunity to speak their truth in connection to who they are, and how they want to be seen.

The objective of the second focus group was to see how Black girls define and understand their identity. This session incorporated writing, and the making of a collage by every present participant. The opening statement for this session was, “I feel free when I can...” in which participants were offered a chance to explore ideas of freedom as a Black girl. Following, a quote by June Jordan was analyzed by students. “I am a feminist, and what that means to me is much the same as the meaning of the fact that I am Black: ... I must everlastingly seek to cleanse myself of the hatred and the contempt that surrounds and permeates (spread through) my identity, as a woman, as a Black human being, in this particular world of ours”- June Jordan in “Where is the Love?” 1978. This quote led participants to discuss race and gender politics, and how it relates to Black women and girls.

Participants such as Monica felt that “she basically saying she loves who she is, but people show hatred towards Black women”. The main activity consisted of students choosing 5 ways in which they describe their identity. This step was in preparation for the identity map; for this mini project students were provided with art supplies such as paper, markers, scissors and pictures from offline. Based on the previous focus groups (from the first focus groups) I Googled terms that I heard them use or reference; or I googled terms

that aligned with themes previously discussed such as “independent women”, Black girl/ women, Black love, relationships, etc. Participants were provided with over 50 images and words, which was used to create their collage. During the creation of their collage Group A discussed a song “16 at War” by Karina Pasian because a student requested to listen to this specific song.

Participants in Group B asked each other intense and complex questions such as “why do we call ourselves Black and not African American” and “why do girls call each other bitches but if a dude calls you a bitch you guys get mad”? They discussed and discovered their own racial politics (whether they preferred the term Black or African American) and they embraced each other with compassion. This focus group brought students together as they discussed their collages, which described their identity on their terms. Themes that manifested from focus groups were (but not limited to) self-definitions, ideas of (self) love, relationships, sex and more. In the room where focus groups and interviews took place hung signs created by the researcher and used for this closing activity. The closing portion of this focus group asked students to stand under a sign that they most align with. An option to create their own sign was also provided. Signs such as “Black Girl Magic”, “Your Girlhood Matters”, “Why is it important to define yourself” were statements or questions student felt comfortable elaborating on.

The last focus group centered the relationship between Black girlhood, femininity, and the development of their sexual identity. The opening activity session started by the reading of Jessica Robinson quote: “If we do not believe that Black girls can make their own decisions if given the proper tools, such as education and resources,

then we cannot say that we are invested in them... However, if we are truly invested in Black girls and their well-being, then we must believe that they can have the power and agency over their own bodies, decision, and health". In this quote participants were asked "how does being a Black female make you feel about yourself" and "Does it influence how you live your life". Responses ranged from "it makes me feel good....and it impacts my life because I feel like I'm being watched" to "...being a Black female, it didn't really make a difference, but it did... and for me.... I feel powerful and strong because....I'm living not the situation.... Like I'm not living what people would think." To further investigate Black girls' ideas of sexual identity, an independent film created by Stefani Saintonge titled "Seventh Grade". This film used to discuss Black girl sexuality created dialogue which included (but was not limited to):

- Ideas about when it's appropriate to have sex
- Sex shaming
- Sexual liberation
- Sexual curiosity
- Who they talked to about sex
- Sexual decision making
- Sexual decision making while being a Black female

To better understand the context of certain conversation, the reader must understand the film, and the subtle messages that were presented. This film tells the story of a friendship between two Black female seventh-grade best friends. They are both experiencing social pressures that may arise in middle and high school such as gossip, sexual peer pressure, and in this story sisterhood. The movie starts off with the main character Patrice playing with Barbie dolls and creating a sexual scenario between a male and female Barbie. After her sister shames her for playing with Barbie dolls in the 7th

grade, Patrice quickly hides them in a box. Her sisters continues with her night by instructing her sister to keep her secret of sneaking out with her high school boyfriend. When Patrice was on her way to school the next day, a young male student Chad harassed her with sexual comments and she embarrassedly attempted to ignore him.

When Patrice gets to school she learns through gossip and later social media that her best friend Laura engages in oral sex in the school bathroom. As they navigate the day together she witnessed Laura being harassed by people laughing in her face, making oral sex gestures, and calling her names such as “slut”. Patrice eventually gets fed up and chooses to create a distraction to stop the gossip about her best friend Laura. Although Patrice seemed to be bothered with Chad’s previous sexual gestures, she walks up to him and kisses him during lunch hour. As the kids “oooowwww” in reaction to her public sexual act, Laura watches in amazement and shock. The end of the movie concludes with Patrice taking her box of Barbie’s outside to symbolize her transition into adolescents. The rich discussion that followed the viewing of the movie allowed for students to discuss taboo topics such as sex, sexuality, sexual stereotypes, and much more. Although there was an intended proper closing, time did not permit.

In-depth Interviews:

To answer the main research question “How do Black girls understand their sexual identity and ideals of femininity” three dimensions separate the interview questions. The three dimensions that guide these interviews were (1) *Being a Black girl in Social Spaces*, (2) *Being a Black Girl at Home* and (3) *Being a Black Girl within School*. Students who chose to participate in the in-depth interviews had the option of

meeting during lunch or afterschool in a private setting at the high school. Because I wanted the students to feel comfortable, the conversations would usually start with me asking about their day, and how they're feeling. Many of the participants willingly expressed how they do talk about sex with their parents, but not always in a direct way. Providing participants with a one-on-one space to discuss Black girlhood allowed for personal narratives and stories that explained their understanding of sexual identity development and femininity.

Dissemination Plan

This empirical data can be useful for sex education courses; educators/ teachers in K-12 who work with Black girls (and girls of color); and counselors who are interested in culturally relevant material. Further detail about how this thesis can provide these social services with curriculum and culturally relevant data will be explained in the implication and recommendations sub-section within the discussion section. This following section will provide the reader with responses that are from participants about their experiences as Black girls. These responses guided my reasoning for this dissemination plan.

Results Sections

Black girls at this high school informed my research through their stories. Their willingness and excitement about creating sisterhood within focus groups broke many harmful stereotypes about teenage girls. This research study explores the ways in which Black girls understand sexuality and femininity as it relates to their childhood. This empirical study consists of 6 focus groups (with 20 participants) and 15 in-depth interviews. Due to the mass amount of questions asked in focus groups and semi-structured interviews, themes were identified from the overall study. Separate themes were developed through focus groups and interviews. Themes developed from the focus groups are:

1. "I wish people knew Black girls were..." Collective and Individual Definitions of Black Girlhood
2. "I'm not the girl you save": Ideas of Black Girl/Womanhood
3. "I feel like its yo kitty cat and you can take it... you do what you gotta do": Sexual Decision Making on Black Girl Terms

Theme's developed from the semi structured interviews are identified as:

1. The Social Understanding of "feminine" as "feminist"
2. What Constitutes Black Girlhood? : Navigating Truth and Stereotypes
3. Black Girls Take on Sex, Sexuality and Romantic Relationships

Focus Group Themes:

"I wish people knew Black girls were..." Collective and Individual Definitions of Black Girlhood

In this theme Black girls discuss their definition of identity and ways in which they wish others would view and treat them. The bell rang for advisory class, which is the same time the participants were to come to focus groups. As I opened the side door hidden behind the art class, the girls started to walk in, laughing and talking. Immediately students noticed the signs on the wall that read “Black Girl Magic” and “Your Girlhood Matters” etc. When they were asked why they think I would be researching Black girls they stated that I was trying to “understand us as young Black women” and “because you’re a Black girl... and you’ve struggled.” Group B also responded that:

Honey: “Because...if like you can help them it could be helpful while their young and not like older where they can make their own choices.... And cuz were still like young and we don’t know as much as we think we do.”

Alize: “Uh maybe it could be because you once were a girl and maybe the things that you experienced... you wonder if other females experienced the same thing. So you research it!”

The alliance of our race and gender and my position at the school allowed for the participants to feel safe and answer freely. This introduction to the study allowed for all participants to question and understand why this topic is important to both parties and safe to explore in this space. In the first focus group the opening quote by Audre Lorde states “If I didn’t define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people’s fantasies for me and eaten alive.” Some responses from Group A focused on self- esteem and self- worth, such as:

Brianna: “this poem means we should be ourselves because if we keep tryna be someone we are not, we are gonna forget our real self.”

Monica: “I basically wrote that... If I cared about what people said and thought about me, I probably wouldn’t care about myself.”

Participants such as Staci and Rashana expressed their opinion on “titles”, Staci states “...um, If I didn’t give titles for who I am, then others would.” The 7 other participants clapped and snapped in agreement with Staci. Rashana excitedly shouted, “I tried to say that—and I couldn’t.” Another participant mentioned the importance of voice, which in this thesis is essential. She states, “I think this quote means that if we don’t speak up for ourselves then we won’t be heard.” Group B responses highly emphasize the need to “define” one’s self prior to being defined by others. Comments such as:

Alize: “...um, I think it means that if she wasn’t strong enough to create... create a definition of yourself that the world would define herself for her.”

Honey: “...if you don’t... if you’re not staying true to yourself then you’re not gonna believe...other people... and their gonna have their own opinion.”

Venus: “If she doesn’t define who she was she would fall into a false reality of other peoples proposal of who she is and she would be lost in other people’s judgments.”

Another student Daja connected this to being a Black girl by stating “if she didn’t feel or show her confidence of being a Black girl then she’d be living up to society and she wouldn’t be happy.” But Tiera spoke on self-worth by responding that, “if you don’t know yourself then your worth is meaningless and others will define that and substantiate their perspective.” Participant ideas of self-definition are used in this section to further understand how they see themselves. Although all responses do not explicitly discuss how their race and gender are apart of their self-definition, the context of the conversation was shaped around being a Black girl and/ or woman.

For the main activity, both Group A and B were asked to select random questions. Although both groups were offered the same questions, the same questions were not selected for both groups. Seven selected a question and asked, “are there any topics that you think aren’t talked about enough in the Black community?” Danielle immediately responded with “self-love...I feel like.... Alotta.... Black women... don’t really...get to talk about self-love towards themselves because of what society has built for them already... so its kinda pushed in the shadows.” As Danielle hesitated through her answer, her peers responded by snapping in agreement. Tiera mentioned the importance of “Black unity” which she believed “ (it) could really like overpower everybody.” She concluded by stating “I just feel like the way that everything is created and the way society like looks at us, we’re always gonna be separated.” Venus agreed, but suggested unity amongst Black women:

“I think um, unity between Black women... but their so separated cuz the way society labels us... We have to come together as one in order to move forward so we can teach our children like... regardless of your skin color and your hair texture you have to love who you are and like... its like unity between women its not there basically”.

Participants from Group B mentioned the importance of seeing unity amongst Black people, especially women. An additional question that allowed for participants to define their racial and gendered experiences is when Monica from Group A asked, “what makes you feel powerful as a Black girl?” She began her response expressing her frustration with people assuming she’s mixed due to her lighter skin tone, and “like I appreciate being a Black girls even through it’s a

struggle sometimes.... But yeah.” Bianca continued “I think we get the most attention ... like other races always got something to say about Black people.” Rashana explained how being underestimated by teachers made her feel powerful. “I think what makes us powerful is...I had a teacher right. He use to always tell us like—‘yeah yall not gonna get no where. I think like us being successful and stuff like (it) makes us like strong and powerful. Nobody, Nobody wanna see us be great.”

Group B had more extensive and diverse answers to this question (What makes you powerful as a Black girl?). After reading the question, Ashley responded with “my vagina” while others responded differently. These responses discussed the importance of education, breaking stereotypes, and the development of their bodies.

Tiera: “I feel like what makes me powerful, and in being a Black girl is the levels of education... comparing Black women to white women like we’re looked at differently like we’re ghetto, we’re stupid, we’re ratchet. And I feel like when... you’re able to show the world differently and being a Black woman and you’re very educational.”

Chanel: “What makes me powerful to be a Black girl is... I don’t know, everything, I guess. Just in this room also alotta high educated individuals.... Like we work so hard to meet our goals and to meet the standards that we hold for our self.”

Danielle: “... What makes me proud is my history... knowing my history and like the truth and.... Not really going off what they just told me in school.”

Participants seemed to define their Black girlhood as collective and see their experiences as tied to other Black females. Comments such as the following exhibit how some participants may find it hard to be proud of their race and gender because of stereotypes and low expectations. Alize who is a senior discusses her frustration with people telling her “oh, you’re doing good for a Black person”. Her response to that was:

“I’m just doing good for a Black person? Which means I’m doing bad or something like that?... So its kinda hard to be proud but at the same time that’s a reason to be proud cuz even though the whole world is basically thinking against you and thinking that you’re not gonna do well, you’re just gonna be some trap queen or something like that so you know, its like it makes you even more proud and powerful to say ‘even though you think Ima just be somebody that stays in the projects for the rest of my life I’m gonna be your boss one day like, you know?’”

Instead of Alize answering “what makes you powerful as a Black girl”, she challenged the assumption within the question and reflected on the difficulties of navigating and understanding power as a Black girl. Other participants such as Chanel, Ashley and Tiera agreed with Alize. Chanel responded with a smile and added, “like our skin is graced in gold and I think that’s just a blessing.” The collective worshiping of our race in a space with all young women was empowering and at times emotionally overwhelming.

The title of this section “I wish people knew Black girls were/are...” was also used as a closing activity. This activity was intended for Black girls to reflect and explicitly state how they want to be viewed, see themselves. Participants from Group A stated:

Monica: “I wish people knew that Black girls were ummmm.... Like um good people once you get to know them.”

Takeya: "ummm. I wish people knew that Black people were really...really nice."

Kayla: "I wish people knew that Black girls were very kind once you get to know them."

Brianna: "I wish people knew that Black girls are not thieves."

Staci: "I wish people knew that Black girls are smart."

Marissa: "I wish that people knew Black girls umm..... can be like others...its ...not like be like others... Man, forget that. I wish that people knew that Black people are just having fun and not being ghetto."

Rashana: "like all the rest. Like every Black person aint the same. Um. I wish people knew that like Black girls like ..have a purpose for everything they do."

Responses from Group A consisted of Black girls wanting to be seen as "good", "nice", "kind" people. Their need to reinforce their innocence as children will be further assessed in the discussion section. Group B's responses consisted of the following:

Alize: "I wish people knew Black girls were not just a underdog female and that we're just as important as any other female that walks this earth- white, Asian, Filipino... I don't care what you are, we all females, we should all be stickin together. We're not less then you, we're not just some sex toy – we're not just....an underdog, we're just as much women as anybody else."

Venus: "uhh. I wish people knew Black girls were very dauntless. Um and I wish they knew were, actually I wish they saw how highly educated we are and how any, like how any other female – like Alize said, we are strong and powerful like... we're very powerful and I feel like once we all come together then we'll all be able to see that and I wish people just all just-we're strong as... a unit."

Larae: "umm. I want people to know that all Black girls are not ratchet."

Daja: “okay. I wish people knew that Black girls were more then their hair or more then their body and that they were just like... whoever they decide to be and who they are – did I take your answer doll?”

Honey: “yess haha- but I can still say I wish um people knew that Black girls were more then just their skin Tone.”

Channel: “ummmmm. I wish people knew Black girls are more then just their body.”

Danielle: “umm.. I wish people knew Black girls were more then just what they see on the outside.”

Group B’s responses discussed how Black girls are seen as “underdogs”, “dauntless”, yet are still “powerful” and more then their body (shape), hair, and skin tone. In this section Black girls from San Francisco define who they are, and whom they want to be seen as. These narratives are a reflection of how they have experienced being Black, and a girl. With these responses, Black girls were able to define themselves and define how they want others to see them.

“I’m not the girl you save”: Ideas of Black Girl/Womanhood

In this theme terms such as “strong/ strength” and “independence” were commonly used to explain a Black woman or girls social experience. The quote “I’m not the girl you save” as seen in this sections title was referenced in a activity and will be further explored as to why participants used this saying to describe their Black girlhood. Conversations from focus groups commonly consisted of laughter, participants talking over one another, the building of trust, and the sacred practice of sisterhood. Out of 20 participants there were only 3 students who didn’t actively engage in conversations, others created and expanded on ideas of Black girlhood. When

participants were asked, “what does it mean to be a girl?” the following conversation occurred.

Daja: “what does it mean to be a girl?”

Ashley: a girl

Honey: to have a vajaja

Chanel: right...I mean, to have a vajaja..

Alize: not even

Daja: I mean you cant do that tho cuz some guys who want to be girls but then again they don’t wanna (makes a circular motion around her lower body with her hands)...I don’t know I feel like sometimes they don’t wanna change all that...but..

Chanel: but you know you have those girl features. You got your hair. You have your chest. You have like.... ‘oh I wanna go get my nails done’ like...like some girls don’t, guys can do that too

Venus: that’s a stereotype...cuz like...when you go to a baby shower you’re like ‘what is it’. If everything’s pink at a baby shower you know it’s a girl. And I feel like there’s so many things in society that influence you like you just said like ‘oh you know you’re a girl cuz you wanna get your hair done, your nails done’ but its like boys can do that too. And I feel like society influences so young at such a very little age like ‘girls are suppose to play with dolls, boys are suppose to play with monster trucks; girls you suppose to be this way, dress this way and carry yourself that way or be a house wife or do this and do that. A soccer mom’..”

Participants in this conversation disagreed and agreed on what it means to be a girl. While Chanel and Honey referred to biological and stereotypical ideas of girlhood, Alize, Daja and Venus disagreed. Daja’s response referred to a trans man that doesn’t want to change his gentiles to align with social understandings of what it means to be a boy/ man; while Venus critiqued how girls are often labeled and told how to act. They continued this conversation by adding in race:

Venus: "... its very difficult to be a girl and at that be a girl of color. You have so many other things to live up to and you have twice as much the stereotypes then someone who is a girl and not of color.

Daja: I agree because its like when you like if it was to come to dating or something or getting into a relationship you have sex with this person and this person they automatically try to call you a hoe but when it comes to a guy its okay for them to do that.

Students: snapping in agreement.

Daja: its okay for them to treat girls wrong. Its okay for them to pretty much dog girls out but if a girl does it too she's a hoe cuz she's talkin to this this and this person. But when the boys talking to this this and this person he's a player.

Honey: um I wanna agree with her but kinda like disagree with Venus a little bit because I feel like sometimes its not how society is its how like your parents raise you cuz I was raised around brothers so I didn't have – I wasn't playin with dolls...I was playin with dolls but I was mostly playing with what they did. Or like my dad he wasn't like telling me like or like... i wasn't like forced to get my nails done. It was something I seen and I liked or whatever cuz I bite my nails so I get my nails done. Or just anything like getting my hair done, just cuz I want to its not cuz like society kinda like pushed me to do its like I need my hair done. So you know? Cuz like I can see how society does influence us to do alotta stuff but also its how you're raised or what your opinion is sometimes. If you know yourself and stuff like that like you know its for you and its not for other people then it comes like cuz you wanna do it not cuz society says.

Channel: yeah I feel it but um... I wanna agree with Venus like, its like...also what society does is like yesterday I walk into my house and my hair was down and I had just blow dried it and my aunty goes 'whats wrong with your hair, you need to be a woman! You need to dress like this and look like this.' And its just like okay, you want me to do this but im not comfortable doing all that. Like...its more so like... like being a girl is hard especially of color cuz you know like weee...it takes us twice as long to press our hair and get it flat and get it straight to the way we want it to. And its just like okay we already have all this stuff to deal with and all these stereotypes is that we loud and ratchet but ... You love to listen to our music and get hyphy to it."

This conversation transitioned when Venus discussed how being a girl of color as “difficult”, and Daja further explored that comment. Daja talked about the complications of Black girls dating due to sexualized stereotypes such as being labeled a “hoe”, were as she mentions sex being socially acceptable for boys. Honey explained that her experiences and influences as a girl are from how her parents raising her- not how society conditions girls. She concluded with stating “Cuz like I can see how society does influence us to do alotta stuff but also its how you’re raised or what your opinion is sometimes. If you know yourself and stuff like that like you know its for you and its not for other people then it comes like cuz you wanna do it not cuz society says.” Chanel ended the conversation by agreeing with Venus and “what society does”. Chanel’s perceived frustration of not being able to wear her hair freely or live freely as a Black girls is also a reflection of Venus’s comment on Black girlhood being more “difficult” to navigate.

As this discussion continued, the participants discussed the similarities and differences between how Black and white girls are raised and treated. Honey believed that girls were held to the same standard and explained, “...it’s like you’re suppose to present yourself, kinda in a classy way like...well mannered and stuff. But for Black girls I don’t really believe its any different because...its I just don’t see it, I feel like everyone in here like a girl and you wanna be defined as a girl...” Alize admittedly disagreed and explained how Black girls have to adjust to social standards such as pressing their hair, where as white girls can just “wake up and leave it”. Although

differences of opinions arose, participants were able to discuss their own ideas confidently. In this discussion participants agreed and disagreed about the ideas of Black girlhood and how Black girls are raised. In the following discussion, participants expanded on their ideas of Black girlhood, while terms such as “independence”, “strength” and “I am not the girl you save” emerged.

When the second focus group session came, participants walked into the class noticing colorful paper, glue, markers, and random pictures from the Internet. As previously discussed in the methods section, students were asked to create collages that reflected how they seen themselves. The purpose of the collage was to see how Black girls would physically represent themselves, as well as how they defined their experiences. The use of pictures and quotes gave the girls ideas of how they would represent where they come from; who they are; and how they want others to perceive them. This artistic method of Black girls expressing themselves allowed for individual and collective ideas of what it means to be Black and a girl. In the quotes previously used, Black girls talk about what it means to be a girl, and the differences that arise when being a girl of color. Although Honey mentioned that all girls are treated and held to the same standards, Venus and Alize explored how race plays a factor into how they’re treated and seen as girls. The following statements also allows for the reader to see how Black girls are their own savior. In their words, they talk about why they are “not the girls you save”. Tiera started the conversation off by explaining her collage:

“ so on mines I put um ‘woman are powerful and dangerous’. Um another picture I put was ‘beauty from the top of her fro to the tip of her toe’ and I used 2 words ‘warrior’ and ‘intelligent’ and then I used this other

picture and it says 'I am not the girl you saved'. And I used that because it relates- to me, it relates to like being independent and...yeah."

Alize continued:

"I put Black girl cuz... yeah. And I also put 'I'm not the girl you save' because I feel like sometimes to other races being a Black girls is like a sob story kinda. Like 'awe poor thing' like you know?"

Seven pointed to pictures that explained how she was currently experiencing girlhood.

"For me, college is gonna be my escape from everything, that's why I have the girl here who's free and tryna run to college and then, this is before I leave to college."

Seven's collage discussed what she was dealing with emotionally, the isolation she felt from her family, and how she has always been her only source of hope.

"And then I put her and she's saying 'I'm not the girl you save' because...I'm not! and then I put 'I think I'm afraid to be happy because whenever I do get to happy something bad always happens'- that's related to me pretty much everyday... think that's true about me and how I actually feel."

Participants from both Group A and B used terms "strength", "independence" and "power" to describe themselves. Angelina who was only able to participate in this focus group said:

"I have this because I'm a super big feminist like... and so I put 'feminist is for everybody' because even men can be feminist, and like, a lot of men don't get. But, I made my boyfriend a feminist, so... Hahahaha. Um, I put the woman because she's a Black girl but she's like...beautiful...so I like, just cuz she's colored doesn't mean some things wrong with her... like, she should still feel good about herself. And I put like the words of 'oppression and

sexist exploitation, and sexism' because like this is all things women experience. Whether like it's men coming onto them or like treating them like they're not important or just oppression because they're Black or feminist or anything like that."

Angelina's collage is a reflection of a young Black female feminist, and as she discusses her reasoning, she also shares why it's important to encourage feminism as praxis. Her perspective on women of color allows for her to assess the racist, sexist world in which she navigates her Black girlhood. Evidence throughout this section demonstrates how Black girls are not waiting to be saved, yet saving themselves by actively engaging in their education and/ or their history.

"I feel like its yo kitty cat and you can take it... you do what you gotta do": Sexual Decision Making on Black Girl Terms

This section is supported by Black girls perspective of sex, sexuality, and as agents of their own sexual decision-making. As children, responses such as "I feel like its yo kitty cat and you can take it... you do what you gotta do" reference how Black girls are reclaiming their bodies and choice. On the last day of the focus group, "Seventh Grade" allowed for participants to have a rich and open conversation on sex; whether its appropriate or not for others to disclose ones sexual experiences; the "right" age to engage in sex; and how young people talk amongst each other about sex. When asked why the film maker chose to use middle school aged girls versus high school girls, participants from Group A answered by saying "that's where it starts... hormones and puberty... and when you start having a boyfriend." They collectively concluded that the 8th grade, or the first year of high school is when relationships start to develop. When

discussing sex, they talked about the dangers of rumors spreading and people exposing one's sexual experiences. When they were asked if there was an appropriate age to engage in sex, they discussed and debated until they agreed upon 16 being "an appropriate age". They further discussed how Laura (the main characters best friend) was too young to engage in sex. To gain more clarity, the below discussion took place:

Researcher: "so what are you actually saying about sex? When is it an appropriate time for a girl..."

Rashana and Takeya: 16

Rashana: I think yo body is telling you like 'you can be a hoe right now'.

Researcher: So when your hormones are speaking to you, that's when you should react?

Rashana: NO! But you know, when you got a loyal good boyfriend, y'all been together for a long time and stuff.... And he treatin you right and yall aint breaking up like...then that's the right time."

But Takeya felt otherwise, "I mean...I feel like its yo kitty cat and you can take it... you do what you gotta do." Participants from Group B were asked why they believed the director chose to use middle school aged Black girls:

Cindy: "Cuz middle school- Black girls are fast

Students: yeah!

Student: some, some, some!

Ashley: we're not fast! We're known—they—

Daja: we're known to be fast.

Ashley: they tell us.

Daja: society says.

Ashley: there you go!

Alize: umm, it could connect to like....we was talkin –I don't know if that was last week or the week before, but we was talkin about how, uh.... You commonly see African American girls develop faster...and it may have been showing that even in middle school that these young ladies are being....you know...I don't know if she was pushed – I don't know if she was pushed to do what she did, but like you know, even at a young age, not just at high school, but it comes before that. That what's she tryna show."

While Cindy immediately responded to the question with "Black girls are fast", her friends Daja and Ashley disagreed and blamed the representation of Black girls on society. In addition, Alize believed the director used middle school Black girls because they develop earlier. She proclaimed that maybe the director wanted to show how the conversation, and act of sex is happening before high school. The conversation ventured into the participants discussing how they believe Black girl bodies develop faster compared to non- Black girls.

Due to Laura (the main character's best friend from the movie) having oral sex in the school bathroom, the participants from Group B believed she shouldn't have done it at school. Honey from Group B talked about the "expectation" of high school students "experimenting" with sex. As Honey transitioned her opinion into talking about choice, she ended her statement by saying "that's really much all—just having power over what you do, when you're younger ...like you gotta like make sure that you're making the right decision." Honey interjected again expressing how girls like Laura should know the power of saying no:

“You have to have the power to know like—to say no. yeah like, power over your body ... like if she really didn’t wanna do that, she needs the power to say ‘no I’m not ready, like no that’s not cool, no- go find some other girl’. You know? Or like decision, like she had to make that decision like ‘should I do this? Cuz he really like me and I like him’ quote on quote—or...should I be... innocent still?”

Another participant Daja responded with “she didn’t have the power to say no”. Their diverse conversation about when it’s appropriate to have sex, and ideas of consent transitioned into them discussing how relatable the film was. Participants from Group A and B agreed that students having sex (sometimes in the school bathroom) is normal, and not limited to Black girl experiences.

When discussing the potential consequences of having sex in school bathrooms, participants such as Chanel and Seven believed that one’s reputation would “forever” be ruined if their sexual business was exposed. Honey pushed back, “you make mistakes in life. You get knocked down, everyone does it...she just did it in the bathroom. If you gotta problem with that- hey, you know- hey- but you – your opinions not foreeeeevvaa.” Tiera agreed and explained how her mother’s best friend from high school was “prostituting and you know getting into drugs and stuff like that” but eventually ended up changing her life by going back to school, starting a family and “now everybody just look at her as like a totally different person.” Alize concluded that “inside of school is messy regardless... So I feel like yo respect for yo self kinda goes down a lil bit if you kinda just like a ‘quick’ hit in the bathroom.”

In this section Black girls talk about sexual-decision making on their own terms, and their ideas of agency over their own bodies. This section started with Group A openly talking about their body giving them signals to engage in sex, while Group B discussed ways in which girls should learn to gain power when engaging in sex. Although 3 participants within this study openly talk about being survivors of sexual assault, conversations of sexual empowerment were the center of this focus group. In this section we see Black girls being agents of their own bodies, and making their own sexual decisions.

Interview Themes

The Social Understanding of “feminine” as “feminist”

Apart of this research was to understand femininity and how Black girls perceive this word. When participants were asked “How would you define what it means to be feminine” or “what does being feminine mean to you” 6 participants answered with defining their interpretation of feminism; 3 of which are to follow:

Honey: “I wanna say standing up for girls rights kinda like you know... like backing up like- like girls have a say so or like, you know the whole girl power movement.”

Danielle: “To stand up for yourself- to like fight for what you believe in and for like equality and stuff.”

Alize: “I think that it means to believe in a woman just as much as you believe in a man... basically like men seem to be limitless, almost everything they can do and... when you define yourself as a feminist then I think you believe that women are limitless, we can do everything that we they want to.”

Participants such as Monica, Ashley and Cindy automatically responded, “I don’t know”; but due to the curious nature of the question Ashley decided to look up the word “feminine” herself. She read “Having qualities or appearances associated with women especially delicacy and prettiness.” When she was further asked “but what do you this it means?” she responded, “um being like your sex—or your gender.” Marissa mentioned that, “I think that means you’re a girl... you have different like body parts, you go through different things at different times of the month.” Venus and Tiera both argued that doing “girly” things such as getting one’s nails done did not define their femininity; while they both explored the term and how they understood it, Tiera also believed that “feminine is like acting in a classy manner. When she was asked what classy is, she responded:

“Like acting like high up—well classy to me is like hi upscale, having respect for yourself, ummmm, knowing your worth... over all being classy to me is just acting like lady like—like I said having respect for yourself, umm... not getting into you know, dudes business and stuff and not being all about drama and stuff like that.”

Venus chose to respond with her own set of questions while redefining what feminine means to her:

“I believe there is no real definition of being feminine. Why should feminine only be targeted towards women? Why should women have to live up to those standards to be feminine? As soon as you’re born a girl everyone thinks your gonna grow up and you wanna get your hair done, your nails done and do this and this and that.... But being feminine is not what I think lives up to societies standards, I have my own definition of feminine... and that’s taking care of me and taking care of myself and realizing this sis what I wanna be, who I am and

this is my list of being feminine... I'm not someone who's just a word out of a dictionary that you can just pick out of."

While the previous quotes talk about feminine and/ or feminist as a theory, 2 participants from Group A explained feminine to be more of a tangible asset.

Marisa: "Um, I think that means you're a girl... You have different like body parts, you go through different things at different times of the month, and um..."

Brianna: To be feminine like a girl and you're like really girly well not a lotta girly but you're a girl..."

Because there were only 5 participants from Group A that participated in interviews, there were less responses. 1 participant didn't know what feminine was, and the other 2 were not asked the question. 6 out of the twelve participants who were asked about femininity defined it as being a feminist. Although this will be further analyzed in the discussion section, it's important to note how relevant these responses are in reference to the research question that seeks to understand how Black girls understand femininity.

What Constitutes Black Girlhood?: Navigating Truth and Stereotypes

To understand what constitutes Black girlhood all participants were asked "how would you define what it means to be a Black girl" in which responses varied and included multiple aspects such as acknowledgment of race, gender/ sex, how Black women and girls are depicted throughout media, how Black "females" are raised and "struggle". Multiple quotes will be used to show how Black girls navigate their truth and stereotypes. The following participants mention how being a female is connected to "strength" and/or "work(ing) harder" than girls and/ or people of other ethnic/ racial backgrounds.

Tiera: “I would say ummm...being a Black girl you have to work harder then you know as compared to other races because we’re judged more highly and we’re portrayed in like a negative way so I feel like sometimes you have to like...take action, just to prove others wrong...you know?”

Alize: “Hmmm. I think it means to be stronger than the average girl.”

When asked what an average girl is, Alize responded:

“um like compared to other races stronger because you face more judgment—face more challenges throughout your education and throughout your working... more challenges then like quote on quote average kids should have.”

The following participants held affirming ideas of Black girlhood. Although 2 participants mention how Black girls “Struggle”, it seems to be rooted in positive ideas.

Monica: “Um...being a Black girl can be a struggle sometimes but I like being a Black girl.”

Danielle: “To be unique...but, to also go through a lot of struggle, to look down on society... yeah.”

Cindy: “A strong, independent, smart Black girl.”

Participants such as Takeya believed that Black girls are “judged by the color of your skin and you like ghetto and stuff.” Larea believed that “the women in your family...and how you’re raised and like the history...like you learned... you learning about your history from... your females role models in your family.” These nuanced answers allowed for the researcher to see how participants in both Group A and B seen Black girlhood. To further understand how participants may have been taught to navigate

their girlhood, they were asked “have any family members talked to you about what it means to be a lady.” While only one participant said no, the others discussed how they were taught that ladies are independent, “respect themselves”, do domestic duties, cater to men, and dress conservatively. Evidence to support these concepts are listed below:

Monica: “Like you not gonna be able to depend on people, you gotta do for yourself and you gotta grow up basically like you cant be thinking people gonna help you and stuff because they don’t.”

Tiera: “Um she always tell me like the main things in having respect for myself within myself as a person and my body.”

As Tiera continued, she disclosed how her mother taught her the importance of not being “easy” due to what it may do to ones reputation.

“You know and like that’s how you get labeled as a hoe, like when you start doin stuff you aint got not business—you get labeled as a hoe and this and that so she always tells me like your reputation and like your self respect is what’s most important.”

Alize discussed her family from the south having traditional ideas of what it means to be a lady:

“Not like a direct conversation... I just be kinda hangin all over and she (her grandmother) be (like) ‘a lady does like that, you know a lady must this, a lady must you know... leg tilted to the side, crossed over’... their very religious and very proper...and its like, their...I don’t know, its kinda like they teach you to cater to men and...they teach you like to cook. As a lady they say you gotta be able to cook.”

Larea talked about learning what it means to be a lady at church:

“Like um like at church that’s where like they mainly said it, um because I always wanted to sit up front in the front row and they say females are not supposed to sit in the front because like we have—we wear skirts and like some females don’t always cross their legs... and they don’t want like to have females just to have their legs open in the front so we tend to sit behind like the men and yeah...”

When Larea was asked how she felt about women sitting behind, she agreed and further explained that ladies shouldn’t “show too much” or “you’ll attract too much attention that you don’t want.”

To better understand what constitutes Black girlhood and how Black girls describe their own lived experiences, they were asked if being Black and a girl affected how they were treated at home. Participant’s answers varied from talking about parents and/ or family members treating them differently, their natural hair being shamed, and how their parents encouraged them to love who they are as Black girls. Larea being raised in a female dominated household with one young man discussed how both her and her sister are raised to cook and clean, but can’t take out the trash. When asked how that made her feel she stated “it makes me feel that I will be more successful around like living situations and living skilled because I was brought up always doing them and like training.... And for the male...he would be like so used to women doing it for him.” Ashley talked about her father assigning chores to her and her brother based off their gender, while reminding her that “no girl is suppose to have they clothes on the floor... you suppose to keep yo room clean.” Ashley further explains:

“Well my dad—he treat me differently like...like, we was having a conversation about something and he was like ‘your brother can have a girlfriend but can’t have no boyfriend.’”

Danielle discussed how her family in Alabama thinks she’s “kinda...fast” due to what she wears. But Danielle’s mother provides her with confidence at home “but like at home—home like with my mom and stuff um... she kinda like just laid back with me and stuff about being a Black girl she always try to tell me like, its not bad being Black... and I should just like love myself and stuff... like always trying to empower me.” Chanel discussed her difficulties of embracing her hair, while her family held different ideas about beauty.

Chanel: “I’ll wash my hair and I’ll blow dry it and I’ll leave it like that you know like natural beauty is the best thing that God gave us Black girls and my auntie will be like you’re supposed to be a lady and you’re not supposed to wear your hair like that. But this is what I wanna wear like this is my natural hair and I just blow dried it and that’s it... and I can’t embrace that? I can’t embrace that I’m Black and I have this hair that no one else has? Like no that’s not, I just, I don’t think that we should feel shy about our natural being.”

Chanel’s expression of her Blackness includes how she chooses to wear her hair. Although her family believes that a “lady” doesn’t wear their Black hair natural, she contends that “I don’t think we should feel shy about our natural being.” Alize’s original answer to the question (Does being a Black girl effect how you’re treated at home) was “I’ve never been white before so I don’t know” but when the question was further explained to her she stated:

“Yeah...okay because I’m a girl without a father in the household. My mother sends a lot of messages that’s ‘don’t be with the wrong dude’ because she strongly believe in the fact that like a girl looks to her father in her spouse. And then she’s like because you don’t really—you haven’t really seen a father... she’s scared that Ima end up with a fuck boy basically... so I feel like that’s more of a lesson for me that’s not gonna lead me there but that’s her message. Like don’t look for what you see in your father basically and she also sends messages like you gotta work harder. Like... you gotta present yo’self even better! Basically like at all times you can’t be slippin basically.”

Alize’s perspective on how she’s treated at home as a Black girl is reflective of her mother’s fears. Her mother’s fear of Alize choosing the wrong man is due to Alize’s father not being around. Although Alize did not seem to agree with her mother’s perspective, her response was shaped by her mother’s belief.

Participants that self-identified as mixed race Black girls, provided an additional perspective on colorism, and how that shapes intersectional experiences. Venus who is Black and Samoan discussed how her treatment varied based on which side of the family she was with. She talked about her Black mom dealing with “her own race issues” being a “light-skinned woman with such kinky curly hair.” But she also added that, “I would say it affects me more in my community and the people I surround myself with and I would say it affects my fathers side more...” Venus’s experience of being mixed led her to be confused about what constitutes beauty, and girlhood. Although her mother was Black, her father’s side of the family held negative ideas of Blackness. Because of Venus’s light skinned, her Samoan side of the family accepted her, but growing up aside

her dark-skin cousin made her witness the experience of racism. Venus mentioned being treated better because of her skin tone, and the separation it created between her and her Samoan family. Colorism, which was not originally apart of the conversation of what constitutes Black girlhood, arose throughout the research from other participants such as Kayla and Honey- but Venus was the only participant to discuss her own advantages of being a mixed, light skinned Black girl.

To further understand their experience as Black girls, participants were asked “does the fact that you’re a Black effect how people treat you in school?” Alize explained her experience at school being difficult due to some “compliments, but it could come off as disrespect(ful).” Saying phrases such as “Oh your such a strong person” made her question “why you only say that to Black people?” As she explained her experience with a Black male teacher, she talked about how it allowed for an “easier connection,” where as she felt non-Black students didn’t feel same. The following students referred to sometimes being perceived as “ratchet” and having a “bad attitude”. They further explained how these stereotypes made them feel about how people see Black girls.

Larea: “Um yeah. Because like always like something have to be related to being ratchet or to not having long hair or like just like when people talk about like slavery or like how women were treated is just like people look around at all the Black girls like that could’ve happened to you.”

Monica: “Um no, but I guess I got a reputation for having a bad attitude and being a mean girl. That’s why I have been good. I didn’t get a referral in 3 weeks.”

Danielle: “Cuz I feel like a lot of people think I’m just ratchet and stuff and like always loud and I’m not gon’

really....go far in life. So then... I don't feel like they really work with me to like how they work with other people, or like they treat me differently."

When Danielle was asked to elaborate on what she meant by being treated "differently" she went on to say, "I'm not that basic Black girl stereotype." She was further prompted with how that made her feel, in which she responded:

"...exhausted. Cuz you know you always try to work to be better... then its kinda like sad like...people don't really — people see you as colors, and not like as somebody that's equal as them."

While Daniel and other participants felt like they were treated differently at school because of their race and gender, participants such as Brianna, Ashley, Chanel and Honey responded "No", but their explanations varied. While Brianna answered with a brief "no", Chanel explained:

"Not at all, just because I am a Black girl so that makes me want to work harder and I've worked extremely hard and I don't think it affects my relationships with people because I'm not like... I don't know how to say its like, I feel like it depends on who you are and like as a Blac girl we just, we work a lot harder, so I feel like it doesn't affect how people treat us but it does just should that we're about our business."

Honey was reluctant, but answered "no" and further explained her stance:

"but...I feel like some people do think like 'oh she's Black, she must be like dumb or slow, I can like see a lotta people do that. Like even like towards me like when I'm in school and stuff but like...its not true so, I don't know how they think we are but that's how I think they think I guess... I don't know, but yeah."

These responses were very critical in understanding their experiences at school as Black girls. In this research it is essential too explore multiple ways in which Black girls can be socialized, perceived as well as how they live their truth and navigate stereotypes. The participants understanding of how they are treated because of their race and gender further explores an answer to “what constitutes Black girlhood?” To further understand their own role in school, they were asked, “does being a Black girl effect how you act at school?” Ashley, Marissa, Brianna all stated “no” while Honey responded “No, I act like me.” Tiera elaborated:

“No, cuz I still act the way I act. I don’t let nobody tell different or...or...or want me to change who I am like, I’m gonna be me. I feel like if you don’t like it then don’t be around me. Cuz I can’t be fake and I don’t wanna act like nobody else so...”

Danielle said “um, not really. I guess you can say, I’m probably always tryna make sure we all get the same opportunity as anybody else. Like we get the same amount of support. But other then that, no.” Tiera and Danielle explain that despite how people may view Black girls, they are comfortable with who they are. Further on, Alize and Chanel discuss perceptions that other people hold towards Black people and girls.

Alize: “Outside of school like in the store, in the mall and stuff like that you kinda gotta make yourself obviously not doing nothing bad so people don’t stare at you. Cuz I know I’ll go into like, the lil corner and stuff like them Asian people who be runnin the store, I swear to God they will stare at you the whole time in there like—I GOT MONEY, I AINT BOUT TO ROB YALL, like leave me alone! And it’s just stuff like that that, like that, like you gotta act innocent...even if you not

guilty!... Don't nobody—nobody will credit you like... for yo education or for like who you really are. They'll just look at you and just be like 'oh she must be somethin bad' and I feel like its connected to being Black cuz alotta people think that Black people are like... you know bad. Criminals and stuff like that."

Alize's frustration laid in the fact that regardless of who she is, others still see Black people as criminals. Her experience with being in public made her feel as if she had to "act innocent...even if you not guilty!" As mentioned in the literature review, if Black girls are not granted the privilege of being seen and treated as children, how does this shape their experience as children/young people? Chanel further explained her discomfort of being seen as "that ratchet person" which is synonymous with being seen as ghetto.

Chanel: "No, but then yes. Because sometimes you wanna react to it like you wanna just clap your hand hard and be like, 'look this is not happening right now' but you don't want people to perceive you as that ratchet person because that's not who you are, you know? And I just think that some people react like that because its how they grew up, what they grew up around."

Participants collectively expressed how they are treated at home and within school as Black girls. As they discuss what constitutes Black girlhood, they also discuss how they navigate being seen as a stereotype, or how they avoid being labeled. In this section Black girls define themselves individually through interview responses. However they have been raised, all participants were reflective of what it means to be a Black girl and navigate Black

girlhood. From living their truth, to navigating stereotypes Black girls discuss their method of being.

Black Girls Take on Sex, Sexuality and Romantic Relationships

To understand Black girls view on sexuality and how it's been shaped, participants were asked about their views on sex education (if they took a sex education class) and what they believe sexuality is. All participants (15) except for 1 said they took a sex education class. Half of the participants mentioned how they were taught about condoms and or the consequences of sex (STI/STD- no mention of pregnancy from this question). The following quotes provide how participants such as Tiera, Rashana, and Takeya discuss cleanliness in reference to cleaning the vagina:

Takeya: “how to keep your vagina clean”

Rashana: “...like you not suppose to wash inside the hole, just outside.”

Tiera: “And we learned about you know female parts. We learned about having periods, um, we learned about keeping ourselves clean as far as like um with periods and washing ourselves, and when it comes to sex we learned um... um like the way— there's different ways to protect yourself, like through using a condom, birth control, or all these different pills you can take.”

Other participants such as Chanel, Honey and Alize talked about terms that are used to identify people's sexuality.

Chanel: “okay. Well I've learned like what like umbrella terms and why things might be different for some people and why it's harder to be comfortable with your sexuality

whether you're gay or straight just because of the social norms that's going on around us."

Honey: "well yeah. How you think about yourself. Like if you wanna be gay, straight, bi, a girl, a boy, uh transgender. Anything you wanna be."

Alize: "MMMM... Nothing really! I mean nothing that stuck... like I learned what I had to learn in order to pass they lil quizzes ...overall it's kinda like the same basic stuff your mom tell "if you gone do something, put a condom on!" Them people they had this thing called "cuidaté" um take care of yourself and um it was about like 'beyond a condom'... I know it was about a girl and how you take care of yourself as a woman who wants sex basically and yeah...that's all I remember. I don't agree with what they said."

When she was asked why she didn't agree, she responded:

"um, I think you gotta be smart, I don't think you can't just do stuff in the moment...you gotta think about 'what if this person...what if they got something and not tellin me'... so I'm like you gotta take the steps, if you think this is somebody that's gone be yo sexual partners you need to get them checked out, get yoself checked out, make sure ya'll good... I think you just gotta take care of you and not be like a dumbie that get caught up basically."

Venus also had her own critique of how sex education was facilitated at this high school:

Venus: "... I wanna yes, our school provided it sophomore year for like a week. But my WLE (Work learning experience) actually i—we are tryna start a wellness center here so I had to actually do my own research on like, more into mental healthy and digging deeper and also um... sexual health... which was crazy because I didn't know all these things, it was like STD's. STI's,

the different ways of protection um, there's female condoms and condoms and birth control and all these things all these resources that are out there not only for adults, but for young people, yet no one knows about this."

The exploration of this thesis is about how Black girls navigate their girlhood, while considering how Black girls learn about sex and sexuality as children. The above discussion reveals their lessons from their sex education courses were centered on female cleanliness or negative consequences of sex. They were also asked if, and how their families discussed romantic relationships, and also, what they believed romantic relationships are. The following participants discuss their mother/father being open about the discussion of sex, while others felt more comfortable talking to their cousins, siblings and grandparents.

Brianna: "My mom just said to tell her if I plan on being sexually active."

Rashana: "yeah because my dad—like he don't like it's like, I don't have a choice. He be like, he be like, I don't have a choice! He be like, 'NO LISTEN' I'm tryna tell you! Cuz if a nigga fuck up, Ima kill him!' He just be talking on and on and I be 'like dad, I really don't care because I'm not havin sex right now. You ain't gotta worry about it for another few years'. He be like "NO! You just need to know! Just incase you never know! You can just go have sex tomorrow.' I said 'well I'm not gonna have sex tomorrow."

Ashley: "Yeah! And that's my mom's mom and I'd rather talk to her about some dude then my mom. Cuz I feel like she's more understanding then my mom is like...she'll be like...like I'll be like 'oh yeah grandma I got a boyfriend'—I can just say it and she won't be like 'uh

uh like don't do that.' You know? She'll be like 'okay, I understand... like I understand you gone like boys so im not finna be like no you cant be havin boyfriend cuz its'-- plus she's not my parent! So she's not gone be like 'oh no you gotta break up with him .' and then she doesn't go back and tell my parents or nothing that I tell her—like she keep it between us.”

While participants like Brianna and Rashana may be able to talk to their parents about sex, Ashley felt more comfortable having relationship related conversations with her grandmother. When participants were asked what they believe romantic relationships are, some held ideas about marriage; while others discussed the value of trust, and loyalty. Monica's response was “...like husband and wife. The type of relationship where like you get married and y'all are in love with each other and you trust each other, do for each other...” She was also a participant in the focus group who openly expressed how young people don't know what love is. When she was asked to elaborate she responded:

“Like, love is for like...I think adults make love or people that's in like you know like a long relationship... like I don't think teenagers in high school make love... like they could like each other, they probably do it to each other and stuff, but they not making love to each other.”

Although Monica's perception of making love is not directly connected to this study, (which questions the social experience of Black girls and their sexual identity) it does bring into question- what are Black girls learning about

love and sex? Monica's peer and friend, Marissa talked about her understanding of romantic relationships:

"It's like, its y'all two, he ain't cheating, he got you. Like he buy you stuff this and there but other than that you on your, not on your own but you make money for yourself."

While Marissa's understanding of romantic relationships covered the basics of loyalty, faithfulness, and independence- Chanel's response seems to align and expands on Marissa's opinion:

"Um a romantic relationship is basically like you being comfortable with the opposite sex and you guys are dating or you guys are intimately close. And like...I don't see relationships as gender roles, like we both split the bill, we both buy each other stuff. And that's just you being able to feel no worry in the world with that person. They should just make you feel comfortable and like you guys just share stories together about your childhood and about things that made you the way you are today."

Chanel's understanding of romantic relationships was a heterosexual couple that both had equal responsibilities within the partnership. Although its unclear on what Chanel meant about a couple being "intimately close", Tiera openly talked about her body transitioning, hence her "hormones and stuff...be enraging." The following discussion disclosed how Tiera and her mother talk about romantic relationship and sex:

"...like because I'm talkin to a boy right now and like we been talkin for months and so like you know, I told

her like...I really like him but yeah... you know. But my—I be having these feelings and you know my hormones and stuff they be enraging so I be telling her all of that she be telling me like ‘well don’t let yo feelings over like, yo actions...also I’m still a virgin so... she tells me that ‘you wanna make sure that you do that with someone that you’ve been talkin to for a long time ...someone that you trust, someone that you love and not just anybody that you been talkin for a couple months or nothing like that.”

Tiera wasn’t the only participant that was able to talk to her mother about sex. Danielle also talked about the advice her mother gives her on sex and relationships:

“She tells me to be careful with who I’m with if I’m gonna have sex go to the clinic, we both get checked out and stuff annnnd...make sure I don’t have any babies and like she just try to tell me what happened to her in her past life and stuff with like, her boyfriends and stuff... and like try to help me out and like pave the road for me and stuff...”

Danielle also discussed how her mother feared for her to run into the wrong men, or have multiple children by different men. Similar to the mother of Alize, both parents fear their daughters choosing toxic men due to both girls being raised without fathers. Unlike the other participant experiences, Venus discussed the lack of options Samoan girls are provided when it comes to dating.

“So when it come to relationships, it was more of ‘we will find you someone, or you will marry a Samoan man and you guys will grow up, you won’t go to school, you’ll have kids’...that was my relationship

advice... 'your gonna grow up, you're a housewife, you feed the elders first, you feed the kids first and you eat last and you sit behind your husband.' That's how I was brought up on my dad's side."

However, Venus's Black mother and aunts projected opposing ideas and opinions.

"My mom side-- my aunts would tell me 'screw whoever you want, be protective though, but have fun girl, go crazy!' My mom actually sat me down, we had the whole birds and the bees talk... my mom started preschool, she would say 'don't you ever let no one touch your kitty cat'. But I wanna say it was around the 4th grade then we had talked about it in the 8th grade...and then when I got my first real boyfriend in like the 9th grade she sat me down and broke it down to me and she said I know I'm not the best parent from the people I've chose to be with, she was like 'I want you to learn from that' she was like 'choose someone who actually respects you' she was like 'who treats you right and loves you for all of you'. She was like 'if someone is trying to change you or someone tells you something that they don't like in you, she was like 'they're not the one for you hon.' She's like 'remember that she was like' put no man or woman before yourself.' So I have to say the best relationship advice I got was from my mother."

Venus was the only participant that talked about their parents discussing multiple sexual interactions that include non-consensual sex, and how to identify the warning signs. But similar to other participants such as Danielle and Tierra, Venus's mother talks to her about the importance of self-love and choosing a person who respects and loves her.

In the final question participants were asked how they interact with a person whom they have a crush on and/or dating. They were further asked to provide a story if applicable. Participants mentioned “feeling butterflies”, “smiling so much”, “laughing”, and a participant also mentioned “I be like ... damn, I bet his dick is big.” Rashana talked about getting butterflies from her “Lil Juke”. A “Lil Juke” is used to describe someone you like and are building a relationship with (but you may not be committed to this person). Marissa said her “eyes light up...I think I be smiling.” Brianna giggled while responding:

“It’s like you smile hecka much and stuff and it be funny. Its funny to see--when you see somebody that you are attracted to because you know it’s like good memories and stuff? Well not memories but good thoughts. Haha.”

Ashley and Danielle both mentioned “smiling hecka/ so much” when either approaching, or dating a boy they found attractive. Honey told a story about meeting a boy at her job when she worked at a local grocery store. She also mentioned, “smiling a lot” when seeing a boy she liked. Monica, and Tiera made comments that opposed what other participants mentioned. Monica talked about withholding emotions to prevent boys from thinking she’s attached.

“Like, I never really show a boy like I really, if I really like you because then you know? They gonna be like this girl attached to me or something.. like no!”

Tiera talked about interacting with a young man, but not really taking the relationship serious due to the lack of trust:

“Like, but I think I just get to the point you know... I be getting lonely and I just need somebody to talk to. So like I think I’m just using him to just talk to him...but I’m not doing anything with him... like I’m not gonna be in no relationship with him.”

Even in Tiera’s loneliest moments, she doesn’t feel the need to rush a relationship with a person whom she doesn’t trust. Within this section, Black girls individually responded to how they navigate intimate relationships. The conversation started with their understanding of sex and sexuality based on what they learned in sex education courses, and from their parents/ family members. All participants are certainly talking about sex, and some are talking about it with their moms, or their dads are enforcing the conversation. In some cases participants only feel comfortable talking to their grandmother, sister or cousins. Later in the discussion, participants revealed how they come to learn about romantic relationships and how parents (particularly Black mothers) encourage agency, independence, and self-love. These diverse responses explored ways in which Black girls may understand themselves as children, while coming into their sexual identity. The following chapter will connect these participant responses to similar research (within the literature review) which may either support or challenge previous claims.

Discussion Section

Within this section there are attempts to make meaning of themes identified from the results section as it relates to the literature and research methodology. Black Feminist Thought as the framework amplifies the stories of Black girls to explore, and better understand their racialized girlhood, femininity and sexual identity. To follow is the limitations of this study and how the imperfections within this research are acknowledged. The last section includes implications and recommendations for future studies on Black girlhood, femininity and sexual identity. This empirical study was manifested through love, passion and intention. The hope is that we all better understand how to support and sustain Black girlhood. Within this empirical study, 20 participants in focus groups, and 15 participants in interviews offered their views and opinions. With their responses on how they navigate Black girlhood, femininity and sexuality, 6 themes emerged.

Theory Section

Patricia Hill Collins wrote the book and coined the term *Black Feminist Thought* (2002). In her work she outlines specific themes that shape the experiences of Black women in the United States. The following themes used in her book will be explored and analyzed to better understand how these theories can assist in understanding Black girl sexuality, while expanding the possibilities of this theoretical framework. Additionally, themes that emerged from the focus groups and interviews will be connected to the previously mentioned theories in the following order. (a) *Represents themes from focus groups and (b) Represents themes from interviews.*

1. The Power of Self-Definition
 - a. “I wish people knew Black girls were...”: Collective and Self-Definition of Black Girlhood
 - b. What Constitutes Black Girlhood?: Navigating Truth and Stereotypes
2. The Sexual Politics of Black Womanhood
 - a. “I feel like its yo kitty cat and you can take it...you do what you gotta do”: Sexual Decision Making on Black Girl Terms
 - b. Black Girls Take on Sex, Sexuality and Romantic Relationship
3. Black Feminist Epistemology
 - a. “I’m not the girl you save”: Ideas of Black Girl/Womanhood
 - b. The Social Understanding of “feminine” as “feminist”

(1) The Power of Self Definition

Collins (2002) section on “The Power of Self-Definition” taps into how Black women have always resisted controlling images; fought against injustices and how we teach other Black girls/ women to speak up. Questions were constructed for Black girls to discuss how they see themselves; with that these following themes emerged: *“I wish people knew Black girls were...”: Collective and Self-Definition of Black Girlhood* and *What Constitutes Black Girlhood?: Navigating Truth and Stereotypes*. As examined within Tamara R. Buckley and Robert T Carter (2005) research on gender roles, racial identity and self-esteem, they found that Black girls embraced their racial identity with high self-esteem. Within these 2 themes, there were similar findings as participants talked about resisting stereotypes. Despite Black girls knowing about other people stereotypical perceptions, they define themselves with the encouragement of their loved ones.

Empirical evidence in this thesis showed that participants did struggle with navigating sexualized and racialized stereotypes at school such as being “ratchet, hoe, dumb” etc., but they also expose those stereotypes as “dumb and slow”. Responses, which reflected how it feels to navigate stereotypes within school- usually ended with the

participants affirming themselves. They discussed why stereotypes such as Black women being referred to as “angry and ratchet and loud” are harmful, but how “unity between Black women” could shift the discourse. Participants were confident with their responses, while asserting their own beliefs of socialization amongst Black girls and women. Participants and their mothers also talked about the importance of self-love, especially for Black women. It was clear throughout many of the discussions that Black girls were raised to be unapologetic about whom they define themselves as.

Within this research participants were aware of their history, they knew how people perceived them; they knew the actions of sexism and racism; and still they were unafraid to push back and push against pre-conceived ideas of Black girls. Collins briefly discusses how Black girls have been taught how to survive by knowing the stories of their foremothers while exploring the power in defining yourself. Collins (2002, p. 120) goes to say, “self- definition is the quest to move from silence to language to individual and group action. In this quest, persistence is a fundamental requirement for this journey”.

As seen in the results section, Black girls are creating their own world, owning who they are, navigating ideas of who they are, and the woman they want to become. Their reflective responses within this thesis show how they challenge their own ideas, as well as their peers. Focus groups allowed for a sense of sisterhood in which these girls defined and refined what it means to be “African American”, “Black”, “lady” and “real woman.” They were unafraid to challenge each other, and also held space for folks who felt shy or afraid. As Collins discusses in her chapter “The Power of Self Definition”,

Black sisterhood, which was encouraged through focus groups, helped define Black girlhood.

(2) The Sexual Politics of Black Womanhood

Collins in-depth review of sexual politics covers Black women specifically as she also explores sub-topics such as “Black women, Intersecting Oppressions and Sexual Politics; Regulating Black Women’s Bodies and; Prostitution and the Exploitation of Black Women’s Bodies” (2002). *Black Feminist Thought* as a framework could also explore Black girl sexual politics. As proven throughout this study, from previous research, and relatable themes, Black girls are experiencing a particular type of girlhood. Questions were centered to understand Black girls experiences as it related to sexual identity development. The construction of those conversations allowed for the following themes to surface: *“I feel like its yo kitty cat and you can take it....you do what you gotta do”*: *Sexual Decision Making on Black Girl Terms* (focus group theme); *Black Girls Take on Sex, Sexuality and Romantic Relationship* (interview theme).

As briefly discussed in the literature review Goff. P etc. (2014) investigated the ways in which Black boys are dehumanized, and lack the privilege of being seen as innocent (children) because of how their racialized. Due to sexualized and animalistic concepts being connected to Blackness, we must also question how gender and age can play a role into how Black girls are socialized and develop (Collins, 2002; Goff. P, 2014). Similar to Collins (2002) theory, both researchers fail to explore how being Black, female, and child could affect how Black girls are seen. With sex being connected to

religious beliefs that encourage marriage before sexual intercourse, and females being described as property, shapes this idea that girls can't and/or don't voluntarily engage in sex. In this specific study 10 out of 20 participants disclosed their experiences with sex, or their decision to not engage in sex. Participants who did engage in sex still identified themselves as "girls" or "a child".

Although there were participants who disclosed their experience with sexual assault (within, and outside this study) an overwhelming amount of conversations on sex were consenting Black girls who believed in their sexual agency. These participants discussed ways in which they see their bodies, and have agency over their own ideas. The girls having their own understanding of body politics, while knowing how others may see their bodies as objects, explores how they are resisting stereotypes. Despite their sexuality and/or sexual decision-making, these Black girls talk about ownership over their bodies as a sense of power, self-love, and self-respect. As seen in Aimee Cox (2015) empirical study, Black girls being, is an act of resistance.

Collins (2002) theory could also be explained by creating space for Black girls to talk about their experiences with sexual decision-making, and sexual identity development. Whether Black girls are having sex or not, a majority of them will or have experienced some form of hyper-sexualization. Because of that, Black girls are not afforded the same privileges of being "innocent" as they feel their white female counterparts are. With this theory exploring Black girl sexual politics, we could learn more on Black female sexual identity development; while also including what it means to be a lesbian/queer/ or trans

Black girl. As the visibility of Black girls expands, we must also expand our ideas of Black girlhood, femininity and sexuality.

(3) Black Feminist Epistemology

Black feminism as a praxis considers Black girl/ women's stories as truth and a way of knowing. Collins (2002, p. 120) mentioned that "living life as a Black woman requires wisdom because knowledge about dynamics of intersecting oppressions have been essential to U.S. Black women's survival". Black girls within this study shared their narratives through mediums such as picking songs (within focus groups) that define their mood, creating collages, explaining their examples through stories, and sharing what was told to them from their elders. The themes that emerged from these activities were: *"I'm not the girl you save": Ideas of Black Girl/ Womanhood* and *The Social Understanding of "feminine" as "feminist"*. Black girls are using their stories, and their mothers and grandmothers stories as a foundation for their survival is Black Feminist Epistemology.

In this study Black girls are using social media as a way to be seen and heard but they also mention how this medium perpetuates racial and gendered stereotypes. Nonetheless, social media has allowed for Black girls to create and share their own stories. As a millennial myself, I emerged in this era of technology that created a sense of instant gratification with fast responses through text, exposure into people's personal life through sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat. Because social media is in many teens' day-to-day lives, the visual images and popular music they consume can be considered a factor in how they share their stories. Although this was mentioned

within the data, it is not particularly highlighted in the results section. Other ways in which Black girls have learned to survive and navigate may lie in how they understand the concept of femininity.

As noted in the results section, 6 participants understood femininity as being a feminist. One reason can be due to academics such as myself using outdated language that young people may not use. However, participants such as La'Shay express how the first time she heard the term feminine/ feminist was through Beyoncé's music videos, and performances. Black female representation such as Beyoncé and the platform she creates, allowed for young people like La'Shay to engage in certain conversation. Yet, participants defining feminine as "to stand up for yourself; it means to believe in a woman as much as you believe in a man; being a woman and not letting a man control that" reveals that their understanding of what it means to be feminine, is to resist.

Other participants such as Tiera explore the possibilities of what feminists can represent. Although Tiera explained it as "respecting, yourself and knowing your worth:", in a world that neglects the safety and femininity of Black girls, this statement stands strong. This statement can be seen as victim blaming, and a way to reclaim agency. Agency over their Black female bodies; Agency that they have been historically denied, but still fight for. Through multiple discussions with participants like Tiera, she mentions how her mother passed down certain principles. She, as other Black girls learn to navigate Black girlhood with stories (through different mediums) which can either be reinforced through visual media or from elderly testimonies that are passed down.

Although Tiara (and Venus) were the only participants in the individual interviews to defy traditional ideas of femininity, this same sentiment was also found in conversations that took place in focus groups (see Appendix for transcripts).

Participants such as Venus, and Seven who both openly talk about being survivors of sexual assaults, use their past traumatic stories as a reason to want more. Venus explains in detail how she would provide services to young people who have had similar experiences. In contrast, Seven isolates herself from her peers and comes alive when documenting local artist or when being the photographer for the school yearbook. Even if they don't feel safe within their bodies, their interests and hobbies provide a sense of resistance and control over their being. They are creating stability for themselves, and mediums to transfer stories for others. This in itself is an extension of what Black Feminist Epistemology can include; the different ways in which Black girls engage in story telling for survival. Their willingness to share how they survived sexual terror reminded me of why I chose this topic. Black Feminist Epistemology in this study looked like Black girls using visual or social media as a way to exchange or learn information- as well as the stories of survival that they may learn from their parents and family members.

The main research question "how do Black girls experience and understand their femininity and sexual identity development" was rooted in my personal experiences. Collins points out that "many Black women scholars invoke our own lived experiences and those of other African-American women in selecting topics for investigation and methodologies used" (200, p. 258). In this study, I wanted to be intentional about not regarding Black girls through a deficit or pathological lens. Having worked 5-years in

educational spaces with Black girls, I knew there was more to our stories. This research also allowed for the data to represent how these participants are growing, valuing sisterhood, critically thinking, exploring sex and sexual decision making; and lastly navigating Black girlhood. As all this is happening, they are also eager to see more positive representation of Black women and Black unity.

Limitations to this Study

A limitation that may be reflected in this study is the specific demographic of Black girls and their experiences in shaping their sexual identity. Due to this study using subjects from the urban areas of San Francisco, their experiences should not shape the discourse around Black girl identity yet expand the complexity of Black girls living in such areas. Future studies might also include Black girls from different economic and/or social backgrounds such as rural communities, middle or upper class backgrounds. If research on Black girls continues to be limited to participants in poor/urban environments, empirical data will continue to fail and neglect Black girls from alternative social and/or economic backgrounds.

Implications and Recommendations Section

Empirical studies like this could be helpful for sex education curriculum/ courses, educators/ teachers and counselors. This study found that most of the participating students have a general understanding of what sex is and have received very little information on pleasurable sex; yet they have learned of the many negative consequences associated with sex. Comments such as learning about “condoms” and “STD’s/ STI’s”

were made in response to them being asked what they learned in sex education. If k-12 education continues to only focus on the acts of sex, and not the fluidity of sexuality and how race plays a factor into young people socialization, then we are essentially failing students. hyper- sexualized images of Black female bodies that are paraded throughout media should be discussed in sex education course. These discussions can help Black girls separate stereotypes from sexual identity politics. While Black girls are receiving many one-sided representations of their identity, a safe space to deconstruct those images and reimagine their Black girlhood could be provided through sex education courses. Culturally relevant sex education courses can offer Black girls a space to heal and bond from the acts of sisterhood and storytelling.

Educators, teachers, and administrators were brought up in this study, and many of the responses from participants reflected negative interactions with school staff. Participants mention of being the Black token, or feeling like their being seen as “dumb” or “ratchet” within school should be considered a social and academic dilemma. Although most of the Black female participants didn’t feel like they needed to change in school to feel socially accepted, they did feel like they were treated differently because of their race, gender and age by school staff, and non-Black peers. This thesis could benefit educational professionals who are interested and invested in creating safe- spaces for Black girls.

Lastly, counselors/ therapist within schools, or in private practice who are working with Black young females can better serve this population when studying their social context. Culturally responsive social services such as counseling can assist with

Black girls navigating girlhood, the politics of femininity and sexuality. Although it is not mentioned within the data, 7 out of the 20 participants do go to counseling either inside or outside of school. Some participants have openly expressed their comfort in knowing they have a space to discuss and reflect their experiences, while others (such as Seven) have had difficult relationships with counselors. This research offers a further exploration into how Black girls are experiencing their social identity as they explore sex, sexuality, and romantic relationships.

The evidence in the research showed how Black girls may know about the consequences of sex, and may engage in the act, yet their sexual decision making is not always connected to their race and gender. However, the ways in Black girls are raised to act like “ladies” or “respect themselves”, is directly connected to how they learn about romantic relationships from parents and family members. Some are taught to take traditional routes when engaging in sex to prevent them from being identified as a stereotype, while others are perusing their own path and making their own decisions about sex. Black girls in this study hardly talked about themselves as women, yet they do see themselves as directly connected to Black female struggles. Their experiences as Black girls navigating sexualized stereotypes reveals how they do know about racist/sexist perceptions, but don’t see them as connect to their self-definition.

Conclusion

Because of my own experiences, this study originally set out to explore if Black girls understood sexualized stereotypes as a part of shaping their sexual identity. As the

study developed, Black girl sexual identity development became more about their childhood, and how they navigate this stage while coming into their sexuality. Femininity as a function within this thesis worked to locate how Black girls were socialized to understand their racialized girlhood. Although aspects of femininity such as acting like a “lady” or being “classy” came up within this study, many participants discussed the ways in which they are taught to be independent, and self-sufficient. Their understanding of femininity meant to resist, and to invest in principles and practices that would provide them with equitable social rights. Black girls in this study discussed ways in which they see, and maintain definitions of Black female body politics. Despite their sexuality and/or sexual decision-making, Black girls discussed ownership over their bodies as a sense of power, self-love, and self-respect. As stated earlier, this research is a call to deconstruct and reimagine what Black girlhood looks like as they develop a sexual identity and understand femininity.

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Appendix A: Assent/ Parent and Guardian/ Informed Consent Forms

San Francisco State University

Assent to Participate in Research

Purpose of Research

My name is Jewell Bachelor. I am a graduate student at San Francisco State University and I am conducting a research study that explores what Black girls think about sexuality and femininity. I am inviting you to participate in this research study because you are a (Black/African American) girl at City Arts and Technology High School.

Research Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be a part of 3 focus groups with the option to partake in in-depth interviews. Focus groups are understood as gatherings of participants that meet specific criteria of a population- the purpose of focus groups are to gain feedback or understanding about a social experience. I will ask 20-30 questions about your experience as a Black/African American girl, which you will answer verbally or through writing. Focus groups will be video-recorded and interviews will be audio-recorded and the Researcher may also take hand-written notes throughout some sessions. Focus groups are projected to last 65 minutes, and in-depth interviews are projected to last 60 minutes. Follow up interviews for clarity on statements will last not longer than 30 minutes. Your total time commitment will be approximately 4.5-5 hours.

Risks

There is a risk of loss of privacy. You will only answer the questions you choose to answer, and may stop participating at any time. There are also social services within the school (counselors, etc.) to support you through to minimize any potential anxiety, stress, and/ or any other emotional challenges that may arise.

The only risk to you is a possible loss of privacy. To protect your privacy, I will keep the video-recordings of focus groups and audio-recordings of in-depth interview in a locked cabinet in a secure location to ensure the confidentiality of the data. I will not use your name or any other identifying information in the research reports.

Confidentiality

Your identifying information will be stored in an encrypted document on a password-protected computer. Within the research data, your real name will not be stored; rather, a pseudonym will be assigned to you. All information including audio-recordings of interviews and video-recordings of focus groups will be stored in a locked room at San Francisco State University in Professor McDougal's office 401 in the Ethnic Studies

Building. Professor McDougal and I are the only people who will have access to the research data. All de-identified data will be kept indefinitely.

Benefits

There is no direct benefit to you for taking part in this research study. However, There is a potential benefit of experiencing empowering ideas about the history of Black American Culture, as well as learning about the impact that Black women and girls have had in many of our day-to-day lives. This space will be designed to support, encourage and talk about girlhood, racial understandings, and the importance of both identities.

Costs and Compensation

The credit you would have received from in class, you will still receive by joining the research study. There will be no costs to you other than your participation. You will not be paid for participation. If you have any further questions about the study, you may contact me by email at jbachelor@es-cat.org or you may contact the researcher's advisor, Professor Serie McDougal at mcdougal@sfsu.edu. or Human and Animal Protections at protocol@sfsu.edu or 415-338-1093.

Please note that participation in research is voluntary. You may answer only those questions you want to answer, and you may stop participating at any point in the process with no penalty. Whether you choose to participate or not will not affect you present or current statue at City Arts and Technology High School or at San Francisco State University.

Your Name _____

Your Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

Video Release Form

As part of this project, I will be making video recordings of you during your participation in this research study. Please indicate **what** uses of these video recordings you are willing to permit, **by putting your initials next to the uses you agree to, and signing the form at the end.** This choice is completely up to you. I will only use the video recordings in ways that you agree to. In any use of the recordings, you will not be identified by name.

1. _____ The video recordings can be studied by the research team for use in the research project.

2. _____ The video recordings can be used for scientific publications.

I have read the above descriptions and give my consent for the use of the video recordings as indicated by my initials above.

Your Printed Name _____

Date _____

Your
Signature _____ Date _____

Researchers Signature _____

Date _____

Parent/ Guardian Permission Form

San Francisco State University

Parent/ Guardian Permission Form

Reclaiming Black Girlhood: Exploration into Sexual Identity and Femininity

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The purpose of this research is to learn more about Black girlhood and how they understand femininity and sexual identity.

My name is Jewell Bachelor and I am a graduate student at San Francisco State University conducting a research study for a master's degree thesis within the College of Ethnic Studies. Your child is being asked to participate in this study because they are a student who identifies as a (Black/African American) girl at City Arts and Technology High School in San Francisco.

B. PROCEDURES If you consent to your child's participation in this research, the following will occur:

- With your signed consent, your child will be a part of 3 focus groups with the option to partake in-depth interviews. Focus groups are understood as gatherings of participants that meet specific criteria of a population- the purpose of focus groups are to gain feedback or understanding about a particular social experience.
- I will ask 20-30 questions about your child's experience as a Black/African American girl, which they will answer verbally or through writing.

- If your child is interested in the study they will receive a consent form (**on January 4, 5, 6, 2016**). After they return a consent form signed by you they will receive an assent form.
- Consent forms must be turned in no later than **January 11, 2016**. Your child cannot participate until the researcher has both consent and assent forms signed.
- Your child will receive a copy of the forms.
- All focus groups will be video-recorded, and all interviews will be audio-recorded for transcription.
- **Focus groups will be held during Advisory** in room 213. (*If your child chooses to participate in this study the credit they would have received from in class, they will still receive by partaking in this research study*). Group A (9th and 10th graders) will meet on Tuesdays **January 12, 19, 26, 2016** and Group B (11th and 12 graders) will meet Thursdays **January 14, 21, 28, 2016**.
- **All interviews will take place between the dates of February-March 2016 after school.** All in-depth interviews will take place after school at 3:50-4:50 pm in room 213.
- Any potential follow up interviews will take place in the month of April 2016 for approximately 30 minutes.
- Total time commitment will be approximately 4.5-5 hours.

C. RISKS

The only risk to your child is a possible loss of privacy. Your child will only answer the questions they choose to answer, and may stop participating at any time. There are social services at the school to further address any anxiety, stress, and/ or any other emotional challenges that may arise.

The only risk to your child is a possible loss of privacy. To protect your child's privacy, I will keep the video-recordings of focus groups and audio-recordings of in-depth interview in a locked cabinet in a secure location to ensure the confidentiality of the data. I will not use your child's name or any other identifying information in the research reports. All de-identified data will be kept indefinitely.

Due to focus groups including discussions of personal opinions, extra measures will be taken to protect your child's privacy. I will begin the focus group by asking your child to agree to the importance of keeping information discussed in the focus group confidential. I will also remind your child at the end of the research period not to discuss the material outside.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

Your child's identifying information will be stored in an encrypted document on a password protected computer. Within the research data, real names will not be stored; rather, a pseudonym will be assigned to each participant. All information including audio-recordings of interviews and video-recordings of focus groups will be stored in a

locked room at San Francisco State University in Professor McDougal's office 401 in the Ethnic Studies Building. Professor McDougal and I are the only people who will have access to the research data. Furthermore, all de-identified data will be kept indefinitely.

E. DIRECT BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefits to your child.

F. COSTS

There will be no cost to your child for participating in this research.

G. COMPENSATION

There will be no compensation for your child participating in this research.

H. ALTERNATIVES

The alternative is for your child to not participate in this research study.

I. QUESTIONS

You have spoken with Jewell Bachelor about this study and have had your questions answered. If you have any further questions about the study, you may contact me by email at jbachelor@es-cat.org or you may contact the researcher's advisor, Professor Serie McDougal at mcdougal@sfsu.edu.

Questions about your rights as a study participant, or comments or complaints about the study, may also be addressed to Human and Animal Protections at 415: 338-1093 or protocol@sfsu.edu.

J. CONSENT

You have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You and your child are free to decline participation in this research, or to withdraw their participation at any point, without penalty. Your child's decision whether or not to participate in this research will have no influence on their present or future status at City Arts and Technology High School and San Francisco State University.

Your Child's Signature _____ Date: _____

Your Child's Signature _____ Date: _____

Parents/Guardians Name _____ Date _____

Parents/ Guardians Signature _____ Date _____

Video Release Form

As a part of this project, I will be making video recordings of your child during their participation in this research study. Please indicate **what** uses of these video recordings you are willing to permit, **by putting your initials next to the uses you agree to, and signing the form at the end.** This choice is completely up to you and your child. I will only use the video recordings in ways that you agree to. In any use of the recordings, your child will not be identified by name.

1. _____ The video recordings can be studied by the research team for use in the research project.

2. _____ The video recordings can be used for scientific publications.

I have read the above descriptions and give my consent for the use of the video recordings as indicated by my initials above.

Your Child Name _____ Date _____

Your Child Signature _____ Date _____

Researchers Signature _____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian Name _____ Date _____

Parent/ Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Informed Consent to Participant in Study

San Francisco State University

Informed Consent to Participate in Study

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The purpose of this research is to learn more about Black girlhood and how they understand femininity and sexual identity.

My name is Jewell Bachelor and I am a graduate student at San Francisco State University conducting research for a master's degree thesis within the College of Ethnic Studies. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a student who identifies as a (Black/ African American) girl at City Arts and Technology High School in San Francisco.

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this research, the following will occur:

- If you agree to participate, you will be a part of 3 focus groups with the option to join in-depth interviews. Focus groups are understood as gatherings of participants that meet specific criteria of a population- the purpose of focus groups are to gain feedback or understanding about a particular social experience.
- The Researcher will ask you 20-30 questions about your experience as a Black/African American girl, which you will answer verbally or through writing.
- If you are interested in the study will receive informed consent documents (**on January 4, 5, 6, 2016**)
- Informed consent forms must be returned in no later than **January 11, 2016**. You cannot participate until I have an informed consent form signed by you.
- You will receive a copy of the forms.
- All focus groups will be video-recorded and all interviews will be audio-recorded for transcription.
- **Focus groups will be held during Advisory** in room 213. (*If you choose to participate in this study the credit you would have received from in class, you will still receive by partaking in this research study*). Group A (9th and 10th graders) will meet on Tuesdays **January 12, 19, 26, 2016** and Group B (11th and 12 graders) will meet Thursdays **January 14, 21, 28, 2016**.
- **All interviews will take place between the dates of February-March 2016 after school.** All in-depth interviews will take place after school at 3:50-4:50 pm in room 213.
- Any potential follow up interviews will take place in the month of April 2016 for approximately 30 minutes
- Total time commitment will be approximately 4.5-5 hours.

C. RISKS

You will only answer the questions you choose to answer, and you may stop participating at any time. There are social services at the school to further address any anxiety, stress, and/ or any other emotional challenges that may arise.

The only risk to you is a possible loss of privacy. To protect your privacy, I will keep the video-recordings of focus groups and audio-recordings of in-depth interview in a locked cabinet in a secure location to ensure the confidentiality of the data. I will not use your name or any other identifying information in the research reports.

Due to focus groups including discussions of personal opinions, extra measures will be taken to protect your privacy as a participant. I will begin the focus groups by asking you to agree to the importance of keeping information discussed in the focus group confidential. I will remind you at the end of the research period not to discuss the material outside.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

Your identifying information will be stored in an encrypted document on a password-protected computer. Within the research data, real names will not be stored; rather, a pseudonym will be assigned to each participant. All information including audio-recordings of interviews and video-recordings of focus groups will be stored in a locked room at San Francisco State University in Professor McDougal's office 401 in the Ethnic Studies Building. Professor McDougal and I are the only people who will have access to the research data. All de-identified data will be kept indefinitely.

E. DIRECT BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefits to you.

F. COSTS

There will be no cost to you for participating in this research.

G. COMPENSATION

There will be no compensation for your participation in this research.

H. ALTERNATIVES

The alternative is not to participate in this research study.

I. QUESTIONS

You have spoken with Jewell Bachelor about this study and have had your questions answered. If you have any further questions about the study, you may contact me by email at jbachelor@es-cat.org or you may contact the researcher's advisor, Professor Serie McDougal at mcdougal@sfsu.edu.

Questions about your rights as study participants, or comments or complaints about the study, may also be addressed to Human and Animal Protections at 415: 338-1093 or protocol@sfsu.edu.

J. CONSENT

You have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to participate in this research, or to withdraw your participation at any point, without penalty. Your decision whether or not to participate in this research will have no influence on your present or future status at City Arts and Technology High School and San Francisco State University.

Your Name _____ Date _____

Your Signature _____ Date: ____

Researchers Signature _____ Date: _____

Video Release Form

As part of this project, I will be making video recordings of you during your participation in the research. Please indicate **what** uses of these video recordings you are willing to permit, **by putting your initials next to the uses you agree to**, and signing the form at the end. This choice is completely up to you. I will only use the video recordings in ways that you agree to. In any use of the tapes, you will not be identified by name.

1. _____ The video recordings can be studied by the research team for use in the research project.
2. _____ The video recordings can be used for scientific publications.

I have read the above descriptions and give my consent for the use of the video recordings as indicated by my initials above.

Your Name _____ Date _____

Your Signature _____ Date _____

Researchers Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix G : Script for Principal and Teachers

Hello! My name is Ms. Jewell and I am a graduate student at San Francisco State University in the College of Ethnic Studies. I am working on a Master's thesis project entitled, *Reclaiming Black Girlhood: Exploration into Sexual Identity and Femininity*. I am looking for girls who identify as Black and are interested in participating in my study. I would like to request permission from the school and its administrators to recruit Black female students for my study.

My data collection methods include focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and observation. For Black female students participating in this research, they will be a part of a focus group that will work as if it is an all Black girls group that allows for them to talk and express their emotions. The focus group will take place at City Arts and

Technology High School in room 213, at 11:24-12:11 on Tuesdays and Thursdays from December 1-17 2015. Each focus group session will last for 65 minutes. During these meetings, I will ask specific questions about how they experience Black girlhood. Participants will also be interviewed for 60 minutes each afterschool in order for me to understand individual and self-defined dimensions of Black girlhood that may not be articulated in a group settings.

Although focus groups will take place during school hours, the participants will only be pulled out during advisory. If they choose to be apart of this study they will miss 3 days of advisory (3 days in January 2016) with the understanding and permission that will not lose class credit. Before participating in this study I will explain all the benefits and risks and the information will also be in the assent and (informed) consent forms for your convenience. Students can only participate in this study with signed assent and (informed) consent forms by themselves and parents/ guardians.

If you have any questions or would like to participate in this research study, I can be reached at 510-301-2518; or my email jbachelor@es-cat.org.

Appendix B: Lesson Plan for Focus Groups and In-depth Interview Schedule

Focus Group Agenda:

Due to focus groups including discussions of personal opinions, extra measures will be taken to protect each participant's privacy. The researcher will begin the focus group by asking the participants to agree to the importance of keeping information discussed in the focus group confidential. The researcher will remind participants at the end of the research period not to discuss the material outside. Only the researcher and her instructor will have access to the data collected. All recordings and transcripts of the focus group and interviews will be destroyed after one year or at the end of the study.

To provide comfort for all participants, the facilitator will start each focus group with a open-ended question such as "tell me one word that describes how you feel" to gain a sense of understanding and to provide them with time to relax and become secure within the space. To create and maintain a safe-space, the facilitator will go over the school rules outlining the expectations of respect, community encouragement, and privacy. The following examples outline a model of how each focus group will be conducted. All opening activities will follow after the daily check-ins. The daily starter questions are estimated to last 3 minutes.

Focus Group Session 1: Who are you?

Day: 1 (*Group A will meet on Tuesday January 12 at 11:25am-12:30pm; Group B will meet on Thursday January 14, 2016 at 11:25am- 12:30; All focus groups will take place at City Arts and Technology High School in San Francisco room 213*)

Objective: To understand how Black girls describe femininity.

Material: sticky notes, pencils/ pen, poster paper, computer, paper

Starter Question: Tell me one word that describes how you feel today? Approximately 3 *minutes*

Opening Activity: The opening activity will consist of a quote. This quote will be deconstructed and analyzed based off participant understanding. This will also allow for the researcher to use discourse analysis, by using the information provided for data collection.

1. Instructions to student: on the board, please read the quote and write down or draw on a sticky note about how it makes your feel, and/or what it makes you think of. You will be given 4 *minutes* to respond on a sticky note, and 2 *minutes* to discuss with your peers (*approximately 6 minutes*). After you are told the time is up, you will put your sticky notes on the whiteboard in front and we will discuss further.

Quote: “If I didn’t define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people’s fantasies for me and eaten alive.” —Audre Lorde

- a. Questions to think about when responding (questions will be posted onto the classroom white board):
 - i. What does this quote mean to you?
 - ii. As a Black girl, have people labeled or defined by other people? If so, how does that make you feel?
3. Following, a discussion will take place amongst the facilitator and participants discussing the previous topic for approximately 16 minutes.

Main Activity:

Participants will be given computers individually to fulfill the following task. In this activity, they will be instructed to find images, representations or quotes of/ by Black/African American girls that they connect to. They will print out the picture, quote, etc., and write 3 sentences responding to why this image or quote connects to who they are. (*approximately 30 minutes*)

Closure: Each focus group will end with affirmations. For day 1, all participants (and facilitator) will stand in a circle and we will tell the person to our right why we are thankful for their opinion today, or why they matter (*the remainder of the time*).

Focus Group Session 2: Being Black, female, and a child

Day 2: (Group A will meet on Tuesday January 19, 2016 at 11:25am-12:30pm; Group B will meet on Thursday January at 11:25am- 12:30; All focus groups will take place at City Arts and Technology High School in San Francisco room 213)

Objective: The objective of this focus group is to see how Black girls understand and define their identity through art.

Materials: pencils, paper, color pencils, markers, glue, scissors, computer, sticky notes, poster paper

Starter Question: Participants will be instructed to finish the following: *I feel free when I can....* approximately 3 minutes

Opening Activity: The opening activity will consist of a quote. This quote will be deconstructed and analyzed based off participant understanding.

1. Instructions to student: on the board, please read the quote and write down or draw on a sticky note how it makes your feel, and/or what it makes you think of. You will be given 3 minutes to respond on a sticky note, and 2 minutes to discuss with your peers (*approximately 5 minutes*). After you are told the time is up, you will put your sticky notes on the whiteboard in front and we will discuss further.

Quote: "I am a feminist, and what that means to me is much the same as the meaning of the fact that I am Black: ... I must everlastingly seek to cleanse myself of the hatred and the contempt that surrounds and permeates (spread through) my identity, as a woman, as a Black human being, in this particular world of ours"- June Jordan in "Where is the Love?" 1978.

a. Questions to think about when responding (questions will be posted onto the classroom white board):

- How does the author talk about identity?
- b. Following, a discussion will take place among the facilitator, and participants discussing the previous topics (*approximately 10 minutes*).

2. Before moving on to the main activity, participants will be told to write or draw on a blank sheet of paper 5 things that come up when describing their identity (physically, emotionally, socially, etc.). (*approximately 5-7 minutes*)

Main Activity: For the main activity, participants will be instructed to create an identity map. There will be multiple examples provided for the participants, including a person one created by the facilitator. Starting with the 5 words they came up with that shape who they are, they will expand using the models as a guide to create a colorful, detailed, identity map (*approximately 30-35 minutes*).

The following questions will be provided to assist with identity maps:

- (1) What do you want to be known as?
- (2) Where are you from? Why is that important?
- (3) What motivates you?

Closing: Affirmation circle will consist of each participant sharing how they relate to another participant (*approximately 3-5 minutes*).

Focus Group Session 3: Black Girlhood and Sexual Identity Development

Day 3: (*Group A will meet on Tuesday January 26, 2016 at 11:25am-12:30pm; Group B will meet on Thursday January 28, 2016 at 11:25am- 12:30; All focus groups will take place at City Arts and Technology High School in San Francisco room 213*)

Objective: The objective for the final focus group is to understand how Black girls describe sexual identity with using a quote and visual media that is connected to this topic.

Materials: sticky notes, pencils/ pen, poster paper

Starter Question: Participants will be instructed to finish the following: *I am powerful because....* (*Approximately 4 minutes*)

Opening Activity: The opening activity will consist of a quote. This quote will be deconstructed and analyzed based off of the participant understanding.

1. Instructions to students: on the board, please read the quote and write down or draw on a sticky note how it makes your feel, and/ or what it makes you think of. You will be given 3 minutes to respond on a sticky note, and 2 minutes to discuss with your peers. After you are told the time is up, you will put your sticky notes on the whiteboard in the front of the class and we will discuss the topic further (*approximately 6 minutes*).
2.
 1. **Quote:** "If we do not believe that Black girls can make their own decisions if given the proper tools, such as education and

resources, then we cannot say that we are invested in them... However, if we are truly invested in Black girls and their well-being, then we must believe that they can have the power and agency over their own bodies, decision, and health”- Jessica Robinson. Following, a discussion will take place among the facilitator and participants discussing the previous topic (*approximately 15 minutes*).

2. Questions to think about when responding (questions will be posted onto the classroom white board):

1. How does being a Black female make you feel about yourself?
2. Does it influence how you live your life?

Main Activity: Participants will watch a 10-minute film called “Seventh Grade” by Stefani Saintonge which tells the story of friendship between two Black female seventh graders who are experiencing social transitions as well as attempts to understand the development of sexual identity as girls (*approximately 10 minutes*).

Following the film, participants will be asked to verbally respond to the following questions (*approximately 20 minutes*):

1. What happened in the film?
2. Why do you think they used girls in middle school as opposed to high school?
3. What are some connections between the film and the quote?

Closing: Closing: (If there is time... *approximately 4-6 minutes*) each focus group will end with affirmations. For day 3, all participants (and facilitator) will stand in a circle and each person will complete the statement “I am....”.

Semi-Structured, In-depth Interview Questions

Being a Black girl in social spaces:

- A. How would you define what it means to be a Black girl?
 - a. How would you define the expressions of femininity? What does being feminine mean to you?
- B. What have you learned about sexuality?
 1. Did you take a sex-education class?
 2. If yes, what did you learn?
 3. If not, tell me what you think sexuality is.

Being a Black Girl at Home:

- A. Does being a Black girl effect how you’re treated at home?

- i) If yes, in what ways?
- B. Have any family members talked to you about what it means to be a lady?
 - ii) If yes, in what ways?
- C. Have your family members talked to you about romantic relationships?
 - i) If yes, what have they told you?
 - ii) If not, tell me what you think romantic relationships are.

Being a Black girl at school:

- A. Does the fact that you're a Black girl effect how people treat you in school?
- B. Does being a Black girl effect how you act at school?
- C. How have you reacted in the past when you see someone you were attracted to at school? Can you provide a story?

Appendix C: Matrix for A and B Focus Groups

Matrix for Focus Group A

	Responses from Quote and Opening/ Closing (Group A)	Responses from main activity (Group A)
<p>Session 1: Who are you?</p> <p>Quote: "If I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive." — Audre Lorde</p> <p>Main Activity: Researcher: alright, so this next part is..ima pass around this box. There are random questions and some of the questions have 2 parts. Now, you have to answer them- but the idea is that we come up with collective answers. So say if you get a question and you don't feel comfortable or confident enough in answering the question someone else in this circle- Aniyah, put away your phone before I take it and you don't get it— (</p> <p>(RQ: How do Black girls experience their femininity and</p>	<p>Brianna: I said that 'this poem means we should be ourselves because if we keep tryna be someone we are not we are gonna forget our real self'</p> <p>Takeya: I said um—I said Stick Up!</p> <p>Monica: okay! I said- I wrote basically that if I didn't care for myself I would end up basically by what other people sayin and not sayin. If I cared about what people said and thought about me I probably wouldn't care about myself.</p> <p>Staci: um, I think that what the quote means is if I didn't give titles for who I am then others would</p> <p>Students (multiple): ohhhh- I like that (clapping)</p> <p>Rashana: I tried to say that—and I couldn't!</p> <p>Staci: like if I didn't give myself a title for like who I am- like how I act then others would cuz id probably agree like if they say—</p> <p>Student: like oh you could do better, you could do better</p> <p>Staci: yeah. Then I probably wouldn't give myself a title</p> <p>Keyla: I said if you don't stand up for yourself then you're going to be put in other peoples labels and takin advantage of.</p> <p>Marissa: I said 'I think this quote means that if we don't speak up for ourselves then we wont be heard</p> <p>Closing: Researcher: okay, last question... everybody in the circle will just simple answer 'I wish people knew that Black girls were.....'</p> <p>Janiyah: I wish people knew Black girls were.....not what they think they was ...</p> <p>Reshana: like how they think we are</p> <p>Bianca: yeahhh</p> <p>Monica: I wish people knew that Black girls were ummmm.... Like um good people once you get to know them</p>	<p>Bianca: what does it mean to be a girl? I think-</p> <p>Student: period</p> <p>Bianca : --yeah</p> <p>Researcher: okay --shhh</p> <p>Bianca : I think that girls go through periods. You have a vagina.</p> <p>Rashana: yo titties grow. They always with you.</p> <p>Bianca : all of dat- you –</p> <p>Students: laughing</p> <p>Researcher: you can add your comments once the person is done- ladies!</p> <p>Bianca : we have the worst attitudes like..</p> <p>Bianca : okay, how are girls expected to act? Is it different for Black girls? Why or why not? I think...</p> <p>Researcher: focus on the first (part of the) question. How are girls expected to act?</p> <p>Bianca: uh- like ladies. Haha</p> <p>Researcher: whats a lady?</p> <p>Marissa: I think a woman is you have more responsibilities, but a lady is like --</p> <p>Monica: I think a lady is like Jewells. Like you know? Like a lady, like... take care</p> <p>Student: clean house (not sure if that's what she said- can not hear clearly)</p> <p>Monica: I think a lady and a woman is same thing.</p> <p>16:48</p> <p>Rashana: but I think a lady is someone who is like-</p> <p>Monica: independent</p> <p>Rashana: like dress professional</p> <p>Monica: basically independent</p> <p>Rashana: how are girls expected to act?</p> <p>Student: girls, not ladies</p> <p>Monica: oh, girls? Well yall-</p> <p>Researcher: well you guys said like ladies</p>

<p>sexual identity development?)</p>	<p>Takeya: ummm. I wish people knew that Black people were really</p> <p>Students: laughing</p> <p>Takeya: ummm..really nice</p> <p>Kayla: I wish people knew that Black girls were very kind once you get to know them</p> <p>Jazmine: I wish people knew that Black girls are not thieves</p> <p>Staci: I wish people knew that Black girls are smart</p> <p>Marissa: I wish that people knew Black girls umm..... can be like others..its ... not like be like others... Man, forget that. I wish that people knew that Black people are just having fun and not being ghetto</p> <p>Rashana: like all the rest. Like every Black person aint the same. Um. I wish people knew that like Black girls like have a purpose for everything they do.</p>	<p>Marissa: age appropriate. Age appropriate.</p> <p>Researcher: so what does that mean? What does that mean age appropriate?</p> <p>Marissa: like don't do nothing that you no is not- what you suppose to be doing</p> <p>Bianca: like if your 15 but you act 21</p> <p>Student: ohhhh got it</p> <p>Bianca: like keep your goodies in your bag</p> <p>Students: laughing</p> <p>Researcher: so the first question is, how are girls expected to act. Is it different for Black girls? Why or why not?</p> <p>Bianca: yeah, because people always got something to say about Black girls</p> <p>Rashana: we could be like in the same clothes as a white girl and they be like oh you look ratchet- but she got on the same outfit like....</p> <p>Kayla: are there any topics you wish that you could talk about openly?</p> <p>Rashana: yeah I think like -I don't want yall laughing to what ima say - I think like sex, like sex talk need to be like more open.</p> <p>Researcher: shhhh</p> <p>Rashana: No like. you know like yo parents be like-like when you tryna talk to yo mom and she be like WHAT and you tryna-</p> <p>Students: YEAAAAH (in agreement)</p> <p>Student: not my mom</p> <p>Students: still agreeing and talking among one another</p> <p>Rashana: I think like when you ask her about it she need to be like 'ohhhh okay, now you bout to be- you know, sexually active---</p> <p>Students: talking (hearing students talk about their mom and how their mom would approve or disapprove of sex- cant hear anything clearly)</p> <p>Rashana: but, pshhh, my mom be tryna just tryna whoop me.</p> <p>Students: talking over one another</p> <p>Researcher: wait wait, can we listen to the response</p> <p>Rashana: Like, I try, like I would probably get a whoopin like 'oh mom, lets go buy some condoms' like I would be on punishment and I think that's like not fair because</p> <p>Student: you not tryna have sex- you just</p> <p>Brianna: yeah. Like sex is a big one. like the terms they use. Like throw is back.</p> <p>Students: laughing</p> <p>Brianna: like ..i don't like that term or you know like-like other terms like you know like neck- I don't like that either</p> <p>Students: laughing</p> <p>Student: toppy sloppy</p> <p>Jazmine: yeah like I don't like that</p> <p>Rashana: like oohh she gonna give me some ... some slob</p> <p>Student: some noocky</p> <p>Monica: wait so would you rather a boy be like 'can you suck my dick'</p> <p>Jazmine: no but you know like its proper language</p> <p>Monica: alright alright alright. What makes you feel powerful as a Black girl?</p> <p>Monica: but im light skinned I just I..i like being... like I appreciate being a Black girl even tho it's a struggle sometimes but yeah. I hate when people ask me if im</p>
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mixed like is your mom mixed? Like ooohhh but—
 Bianca: I think we get the most attention. Like other races always got something to say about Black people.
 Rashana: okay like, I think what makes us powerful is like- when they like- mmmk! I had a teacher right. He use to always be like – you never gonna’ he use to always tell use like ‘ like yeah yall not gonna get no where’. I think like us being successful and stuff like makes us like strong and powerful. Nobody, nobody wanna see us be great.

Researcher: okay I just want one person to answer this next question for me and then we’re gonna pick another card. So how do you feel like society sees you as a Black girl?

Students: oooweee ohhh!

Student: when they think we come to steal

Student: yess!

Rashana: especially in Claires. Like downtown, like I, like I went in there and then soon as I went in there I seen security and im like I don’t know what you called her for. Like I have money. Like I don’t need to steal like, that’s what my mama for. You know?

Student: laughing

Rashana: no forreal. Like I hate when people do that to me. Like that make me-

Student: so mad

Rashana: like all this stuff. Like this is how you want me to act- then ima act this way. Like ulgh! Just irritate me!

Staci: how would you say other define and describe Black girls. Please use specific

Jazmine: like you saw that post? and it was like by Lequisha like that’s a ghetto- so we just gonna assume it’s a Black girl right. And Lequisha and it was fried chicken

Students: yaaaah

Jazmine (change): yeceaaah

Student: I didn’t see it

Monica: and it had like Kim as the Chinese girls so they put Chinese-

Students: food

Monica: like they put Maria and put Mexican food

Bianca: thieves

Student: strippers

Bianca: me and my mom went into victoria secrets yesterday- im telling you yesterday- mind you she had money she had just got paid right? Im luckin up. This lady gone call the security cuz I came in, I already had a few bags and I came in and she thought I was finna steal..so she called the police, I mean the security on us talkin bout ‘oh I think their tryna steal from my store’ (pause). So den my mom was like “GIRL aint nobody tryna steal from yo sto- I got money right here’ and then she pulled out her gift card cuz you know I had a six hunnid dollas or 500 hunnit whatever it was on it and then she was like ‘ well you walked in here like you were trying to do something so I had to just defend myself.

Researcher: said by the woman? The person?

Bianca: so my mama was like ‘bop bop’ (swinging her hands around)

Student: you lien

Bianca: so all the stuff was on the floor

Rashana: how do you think others define and describe

	<p>Black girls?</p> <p>Janiyah: umm..ghetto</p> <p>Researcher: okay, do you have an, do you have a situation?</p> <p>Janiyah: cuz they names, like they names. You know how like somebody- on yo ID it can say yo name Starkisha</p> <p>Students: laughing</p> <p>Rashana: you can be the classiest person</p> <p>Janiyah: like they haven't seen before and dey assume that you ghetto cuz of yo skin color and yo name.</p> <p>Students: (in the background) why, why would you think that</p> <p>Rashana: and I think oh. And I think like, our way of like turning, like "having fun" is like -opps shit (a pencil swung out her hand as her hand moved) oh im sorry</p> <p>Researcher: so based on you guysus first answer to the first question- how is it similar or different to the way you define Black girls. How do- when you look at Black girls - when you see Black girls walkin down the street videotaping they selves on snapchat what do you automatically think?</p> <p>Rashana: aayyyyee</p> <p>Students: right</p> <p>Student: she winnin</p> <p>Student: make you wanna get in it</p> <p>Student: right</p> <p>Rashana: im like, Im like 'put me in yo snap'</p> <p>Student: follow me</p> <p>Researcher: so do you agree with any of the stereotypes that you guy mentioned?</p> <p>Students: no no no</p> <p>Rashana: I don't think like, I don't think like Black like, I seen like REAL ratchet you like, you know? But I don't think like that was like her real personality. Its just like, what person made her tick. Sorry, go head-</p> <p>Bianca: and plus theres some people up here that act like that</p> <p>Student: right</p> <p>Student: remember we was on the bus?? Oh my god! Let me tell you the story. So, I I think she was like Mexican or something. And Najah ... Najah had got the same phone and I was lookin - lookin at now that he got the same trap phone.</p> <p>Bianca: no I said—</p> <p>Reshana: Oh yeah Najah said 'he got the same trap phone'. And Jackie was like 'that's not a trap that's his real phone'.</p> <p>Student: and then they started laughing so apparently the girl got offended</p> <p>Rashana: and im like 'ohh look it , look it these kids hecka small to be out here'. And she like ' you think they on the bus by theyselv- they mom right there'. And im like 'oh'.... The lady pulled out her phone and started doing this (videotaping) us.</p> <p>Student: and then Jackie was looking over her shoulder like-</p> <p>Rashana: and then I was like ' why you recording us' and she was like '(silence- students are modeling how she started at them with her camera not saying anything)'. Im like 'why you recording us? Camera, Smacked the phone out her hand. She like ' thank you, thank you' (while showing how the woman put the camera to the girls faces). I'm Like, we didn't even do nothing. Like nobody wanna take them lil kids. I got a</p>
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		<p>bad ass sister at home. Like</p> <p>Janiyah: have you ever been discriminated against? What?</p> <p>Kayla: so sorry (laughs). Sometimes, people are like 'oh so...' — its not just you (looks at her friend) im just lettin you know like other people are like 'oh I see you picked your side, and oh, I see you're doing this its cuz your white' and they just like automatically assume that you do one thing because your white and one thing because your Black.</p> <p>Brianna: what do you think sexuality means? Does that mean if like a girl or a boy or okay-</p> <p>Researcher: what do you think sexuality means? Im asking you and you'll ask your classmates as well.</p> <p>Brianna: well sexuality means if your... oh! Like what do your define yourself like... if you know like some people like... you know how its just like girl boy and its like other—</p> <p>Brianna: I think sexuality means what you define yourself as cuz... its girl or boy but like you know like some people like other..</p> <p>Rashana: I think its like, I think its like who do you feel like you are. Cuz like you know how like gay people be like 'I don't feel like I was made to be a boy'... 'I don't feel like I was made to be a girl'</p> <p>Student: yeah like...</p> <p>Researcher: trans people</p> <p>Rashana: yeah so its like who you like... I don't know like, who you feel you are... inside.</p> <p>Student: how you feel comfortable...</p> <p>Student: like your body parts</p>
<p>Session 2: Being Black, female and a child</p> <p>Quote: "I am a feminist, and what that means to me is much the same as the meaning of the fact that I am Black: ... I must everlastingly seek to cleanse myself of the hatred and the contempt that surrounds and permeates (spread through) my identity, as a woman, as a Black human being, in this particular world of ours"- June Jordan in "Where is the Love?" 1978.</p> <p>Description of activity- change Researcher (transition): okay so as you can kinda tell today im really interested in understanding how you see your identity. So</p>	<p>Opening statement: Marissa: dance Monica: 'I feel free when I can... speak my truth Janiyah: I feel free when I can tell people how I feel Kayla: I feel free when I can do what I want... without like having parent permission Takeya: I feel free when I can dream Rashana: I feel free when I can twerk Monica: I feel free when I could... i aint telling yall</p> <p>Response to quote: question- How does the author talk about identity?</p> <p>Marissa: I said June Jordan talks about identity by saying that she must always... I mean she always has to prove herself because she is Black and a woman!</p> <p>Leyah (change): I said she talks like she knows her identity and knows what she wants</p> <p>Staci: she talks about her identity through her race and gender and how it affects her</p> <p>Janiyah: I said that... what... I don't know.... I don't want read what I said, that's why--- I didn't write this but ima say that- that she really cares about her culture and how she put it</p> <p>Takeya: I said she is proud to be Black</p> <p>Rashana: I said the same thing as her (Takeya)</p> <p>Monica: I said like people should... like she basically</p>	<p>Opening activity: identity description</p> <p>Rashana: I said my skin color, gender, the way my body looks and where I come from</p> <p>Monica: I said like... how im most hated, my skin tone, how I talk to people, um people I hang around and... the looks</p> <p>Marissa: okay, I said my skin color, that I'm a woman and a girl, independent, intelligent, and how I act in public.</p> <p>Takeya: I put smart, pretty, Black, getting thick and I'm nice</p> <p>Staci: I put funny, tall, smart, caring, um my skin tone</p> <p>Kayla: I put smart, slightly awkward, nice, funny, and independent</p> <p>Janiyah: I said the people I hang around, smart, my skin color, the way my body look and where I came from</p> <p>Main activity- description of collages</p> <p>Researcher: okay here are the questions. What do you want to be known as? Where are you from? Why is that important? What motivates you?</p> <p>1:29: okay so I would like if everyone could go and please explain to me why you put whatever you put on your identity map. So as you're explaining this to me just know that this is how, when I'm writing- the purpose for me, like I said this session is for me to understand how you understand yourself. So just be completely honest and just tell me why you put whatever you put on your identity map. And we'll do popcorn style, so who would like to start?</p>

today after this little activity were gonna do an identity map. So I printed out some pictures, I have color paper and I have these markers and I want you guys to create an identity map. There will be like 3 key questions that I want you to answer within there – your identity map. And then ima keep it, ima look at it for research purposes and then I'll give it back one of these days. So, the first thing I want you to do is write on the back of the card- I want you to write 5 things that describe your- how you feel about your identity. That can be physical, it can be emotional, it could be academic, but I want 5 things that will relate to your identity because this will relate to your identity map.)

(RQ: What constitutes Black girlhood? What are the features of Black girlhood and how do Black girls describe their own lived experiences?)

saying she loves who she is but people show hatred towards Black women like...

Closing:

Researcher: I want you to stand under a sign that you most identify with after talking about identity today. And then im just gonna come ask why you chose it, your just just explain and then bounce.

Takeya: I chose 'Black girl magic' because im a girl and um... magic is good

Monica: I chose 'Trust your mind' because I just feel like you should always have faith in yourself

Marissa: I put 'your girlhood matters' because

umm..today I learned that its okay, not – no. your girlhood matters because like being Black is a good thing like. You don't have to be like worried what people gonna say

Rashana: I chose 'your body belongs to you' because I feel like nobody should pressure you to do anything your body or your mind is not comfortable doing

Janiyah: I said that um 'your body belongs to you' cuz like when... like if you don't wanna do

something he might get mad at you but you don't have to like do it if you don't wanna do it

Kayla: I said 'trust your mind' because in my opinion its like say what you want, like because its what you think, and not what people want you to say

Staci: I put 'be the girl you desire to be' because it means to me to be myself, and what I see myself as in the future

Monica: I'm judged because... I was raised in the hood. I'm judged because I'm a Black female. I'm judged because I have fights. I'm judged because of my skin tone... im judged because I talk a certain kinda way and also cuz I dress a certain kinda way.

Janiyah: I'm judged because the kind of music I listen to-

Student: your thing don't say that

Janiyah: yes it do- the music right here. Im judged because people hate... like that I call myself cute and den... im judged because I get my way

Researcher: okay so explain to me what you put on your identity map- you have that little girl

Janiyah: exactly! That's the beauty, the music and den the pow- the girl power

Marissa: oh my god. Okay. I put college is just ahead because I'm going to college. I put career because ima have a great career. Watch me.... I put happy because I'm always happy. I put Black because I'm Black. I put music because some times they think the music we listen to is like—

Student: horrible

Marissa: yes.

Researcher: but you think, what?

Marissa: I think its good. I put movement because... we starting a movement.

Researcher: what kinda movement we startin?

Marissa: Black girl power!

Marissa: I put power cuz we all got power. I put we all have secrets because sometimes we just don't wanna share them.. and I put feminist because.... woman.... women are great

Staci: I put music because, I like the music I listen to. I put college because I wanna go to a really good college and... I gotta read the quotes too?

Staci: 'I hate when Black women say they are afraid to wear their hair in a afro because they look childish... what are you really saying? That straight hair is for grown ups and our hair is for little kids (quote by Janelle Monea)

Staci: like cuz sometimes its like, when my mom tells me like wear a different style with my hair, and then I'm like 'no'... cuz... people will judge or like how your hair is and what you wear

Kayla: its 'when I dare to be powerful, to use by strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid'.

Researcher: that's one of my favorite quotes... why'd you choose that quote for your identity map?

Kayla: because its like, if you say, like what you want and then someone is like- I don't know how to explain it- its like you say something and someone's gonna think your wrong and then your like- you feel like what you said isn't smart or isn't important, so you just... don't share... what you think

Takeya: ummm... I put I'm happy because I'm happy.

I put Black because im Black. I put college because I'm thinking about going to college... but, cuz I keep getting pressured to go and its making me not want to go. And I put this Black lady because she's going to college and I was thinking about it. And I have secrets, and hair, she has hair and this girl, she's a baby and she's really pretty and she has hair. And this one for music because I like listening to music

Student: what did you write on there?

Student: tell us what you wrote on there

Takeya: oh, graduation, Black Lives Matter, my

		<p>daughter, natural hair</p> <p>Rashana: its like me like... Princess, strong, Black girl, and then.... Hair ...hahahhaah. Hair! And i... some stuff I wrote, I said 'intelligent, I'm amazing, beauty is skin deep, im outgoing, and being Black is wonderful'</p>
<p>Session 3:</p> <p>Black Girlhood and Sexual Identity Development</p> <p>Quote: "If we do not believe that Black girls can make their own decisions if given the proper tools, such as education and resources, then we cannot say that we are invested in them... However, if we are truly invested in Black girls and their well-being, then we must believe that they can have the power and agency over their own bodies, decision, and health"- Jessica Robinson.</p> <p>(RQ: What is the relationship between Black girlhood, femininity, and sexual identity?)</p>	<p>Responses to Quote- Questions "how does being a Black female make you feel about yourself" jut based off the quote. And then the second question is 'does it influence how you live your life?'</p> <p>Brianna: it makes me feel good... and it impacts my life because I feel like I'm being watched.</p> <p>Researcher: that's real. Why- why'd you say that second part?</p> <p>Brianna: I don't know..... I feel like I'm being watched because.... Yeah cuz I went to Walgreens- Monica: hahaha... you went to Walgreens??</p> <p>Brianna: yeah I went to Walgreens and yeaaaah, they always watching</p> <p>Students: security huh?</p> <p>Monica: you saying like basically you be—</p> <p>Rashana: I'm think you saying watched like men...</p> <p>Student: or like by perverts</p> <p>Rashana: Monica... cuz every time we with her, the men always come after her...</p> <p>Monica: NO Fo-Real and I, I swear. like yeah that's why I'm like ..thats why I'm thinkin of what you finna say cuz im like...</p> <p>Rashana: okay I said 'I think being Black influences me like.... To push harder because like... everything is hard for us, like we have to struggle to get into what we want to do... because of our skin color and stuff... yeah... hmmmhm</p> <p>Takeya: I did number one. and I said um 'being a Black girl makes me feel good about myself cuz my life as a Black girl is not different from any other race'</p> <p>Tanika: My life is better then any other race cuz they don't get what we get, they don't have no shoes, they aint got no clothes, like-</p> <p>Staci: I put 'I like being a Black female but if I'm around other races, I feel like I have to be different'</p> <p>Monica: oh, no!- I don't, I act my normal self around ery'body</p> <p>Rashana: my other race friends, they feel the way I act. I don't gotta act like them for them to like me.</p>	<p>Responses from film:</p> <p>Researcher: so what'd you think of the film?</p> <p>Rashana: I thought she was gonna go in there and be like 'can I talk to you'</p> <p>Students talking</p> <p>2:46</p> <p>Rashana: 'like I really need to talk to you cuz this rumor is getting out of hand?'- and he was gonna be like 'I aint got time'</p> <p>Takeya: or at least like.... You shouldn't tell nobody!</p> <p>Students: rigggghht!! Mannnn!</p> <p>Takeya: like you my boyfriend!</p> <p>Rashana: that's why if I ever do something ima be like 'give me yo phone' - give me everything. Let me check up. Let me make sure-</p> <p>Researcher: alright, so why do you think that the creator of this film chose to use middle school girls and not high school girls?</p> <p>Student: cuz that's where it start at?</p> <p>Researcher: that's where what starts at?</p> <p>Seven (recording): curiosity</p> <p>Rashana: NASTY! Know you know that that's not true! Because...</p> <p>Researcher: is sexy nasty?</p> <p>Rashana: No! I'm sayin- YEAH it is if you in 7nth grade! SHoO! You, you—uh uh, in 7nth grade you need to be getting a whoopin. That's so triffalin! ...like ... you just know growing hair</p> <p>Students: laughing</p> <p>Rashana: you a lil A-cup, goin to B</p> <p>Researcher: do you wanna answer the question?</p> <p>Takeya: what?- whats the question again?</p> <p>Researcher: Why do you think they use middle school girls, not high school girl?</p> <p>Monica: cuz... cuz that's where it starts</p> <p>Researcher: that's where what starts tho?</p> <p>Student: like... puberty</p> <p>Takeya : Hormones</p> <p>Monica: yeah that!</p> <p>Takeya: yeah, hormones and puberty</p> <p>Researcher: what were you gonna say?</p> <p>Bianca: that's the easiest age to convince a girl to do something... that she....</p>

		<p>Rashana: cuz that's when she—when you start liking boys</p> <p>Takeya: NOT true!</p> <p>Monica that's what I was gonna say</p> <p>Rashana: yeah cuz some girls start liking boys –</p> <p>Monica: in middle school that's when girls start crushing on boys</p> <p>Takeya: that's when you start having a boyfriend! And stuff like...</p> <p>Monica: a “boy friend”</p> <p>Takeya: its not a real relationship until high school—</p> <p>Rashana: until you in 8th grade</p> <p>Takeya: not even 8th!</p> <p>Monica: high school!</p> <p>Takeya: yeah... that's what I think!</p> <p>Rashana: High school Monica? What boy you den met that you really really—</p> <p>Monica: I'm sayin, in high school that's when you should fall in love.... Like not fall in love but, at least have a boyfriend. Like – who- why are you at school doin that?</p> <p>Researcher: so is she wrong doing that? Should she not have done that.. or?</p> <p>Rashana: I don't think- she not wrong, but she shoulda waited</p> <p>Bianca: yeah cuz she too young</p> <p>Takeya: she shoulda waited</p> <p>Monica: I be like ' you betta'—</p> <p>Takeya: especially since—like how long they been talkin?</p> <p>Students: right, right, right!</p> <p>Takeya : like... I wanna know how long they was talkin too? You know?</p> <p>Student: yeah</p> <p>Takeya: like... just to do it? Like, Yall been talkin for a day, or a month? You know like...</p> <p>Rashana: a week... ?</p> <p>Researcher: so how would you have handled the situation if someone were to spread rumors about you like that?</p> <p>Monica: it wasn't a rumor!</p> <p>Researcher: it was true. It was true</p> <p>Rashana: it was true</p> <p>Student: but they didn't need to know!</p> <p>Researcher: people didn't need to know!</p> <p>Takeya: yeah</p> <p>Rashana: yeah- and that boy that did the hot dog- I would have went over there and shoved it down his throat- so he would know how it felt</p> <p>Monica: I though that girl was finna hit him</p> <p>Connection to the quote:</p> <p>Researcher: so how does this last sentence connect to the – or does this last sentence connect to the actual movie? To the show? “However. If we are truly invested in Black girls and their wellbeing, then we must believe that they can have the power and agency over their own bodies, decisions, and health”</p> <p>Rashana: OH! Basically she's saying –</p> <p>Student: she can do what she want!</p> <p>Students: YEAH!</p> <p>Rashana: its likewha—your choice. If you feel comfortable doin it then....do it!</p> <p>Student: do it!</p> <p>Researcher: so when do you feel- cuz you guys said that you didn't think it was appropriate because she was in 7th grade.</p>
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		nobody for nothin! you Pay that car note, every month, ON TIME! Student: pay that rent! Or that mortgage! Researcher: is being a woman only in reference to what you can make?
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Matrix for Focus Groups B

	Responses from Quote and opening/ closing (Group B)	Responses from main activity (Group B)
<p>Session 1: Who are you?</p> <p>Quote: “If I didn’t define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people’s fantasies for me and eaten alive.” — Audre Lorde</p> <p>Main Activity: Researcher: alright, so this next part is..ima pass around this box. There are random questions and some of the questions have 2 parts. Now, you have to answer them- but the idea is that we come up with collective answers. So say if you get a question and you don’t feel comfortable or confident enough in answering the question someone else in this circle- Aniyah, put away your phone before I take it and you don’t get it”</p> <p>(RQ: How do Black girls experience their femininity and sexual identity development?)</p>	<p>Alize: um I think it means that if she wasn’t strong enough to create... create a definition of herself that the world would define herself for her.</p> <p>Honey: I have basically the same thing I said ‘if you don’t... if you’re not stay true to yourself then you’re not gonna believe what you...like who you are the other people are gonna do that and their gonna have their own opinion. But if you know who you are then their opinion doesn’t matter.</p> <p>Danielle: I said ‘if you do not try to define yourself someone else will’</p> <p>Chanel: um... if I didn’t know myself other people would define me and I would live to fit... to fit them.... their standards and be what they want me to be</p> <p>Venus: I said if she doesn’t define who she was she would fall into a false reality of other peoples proposals of who she is and she would be lost in other peoples judgments.</p> <p>Daja: I said if she didn’t feel or show her confidence of being a Black girl then she’d be living up to society and she wouldn’t be as happy</p> <p>Tiera: you can call on me, you can all on me if you cant. I said I think this quote means if you don’t know yourself then your worth is meaningless and others will define that substantiate their perspective.</p> <p>Closing: Alize: I wish people knew Black girls were not just a underdog female and that were just as important as any other female that walks this earth- white, Asian, Filipino... I don’t care what you are, we all females, we should all be stickin together. We’re not less then you, we’re</p>	<p>Seven: I wanted something (else) but okay. Are there any topics that you think aren’t talked about enough in the Black community?</p> <p>Seven: are there any topics that you think aren’t talked about enough in the Black community?</p> <p>Danielle self love</p> <p>Danielle: umm..i feel like... alotta ... Black women... don’t really... get to talk about self love towards themselves because of what society has built for them already... so its kinda like pushed in shadows ... about like you know cuz some women have the perfect body and the perfect skin tone and stuff</p> <p>Students: snapping to her comment</p> <p>Researcher: thaaank you!- yes</p> <p>Tiera: I kinda.. i agree with what she said about like you know Black women not being able to... um talk about their tone and stuff. I think that’s why alotta Black women you know like... bleach they skin... like you know and do certain stuff like you know and other people have stereotypes on us like oh we really like we ball-headed and what not. like that so like.</p> <p>Tiera: I think another one that we really don’t talk about, as far as I know... I think the only time we do talk about it is like when police kill Black men. And then we get to talkin about ‘oh yeah yall get mad when the police kill us but yall not tryna stop from us killin eachother. Like cuz I feel like to be honest, like if Black people really just come together like and be a unity- like we could really like overpower everybody like... but I just feel like the way that everything is created and the way society like looks at us we’re always gonna be separated. Like as far as like a Black man he’a rather call somebody else his brother rather than call another Black man his brother. Like you really should...like you know?...so</p> <p>Venus: I think um, unity between Black women. I feel like Black women in todays society are soo like .. not disorganized, that’s not the right word. But their so separated cuz the way society labels us. For an example um something that I struggle with- people don’t see me as Black because I don’t have—my hair isn’t tender enough, or my skin color isn’t dark enough. Between how people say if you were a dark skinned Black women that you are not seen as beautiful yet when you see a light skinned women- people don’t look at her as Black they just call her, ‘oh light skinned’ so she’s more prettier so I feel like young women today- starting from a very young age I feel like it affects people who are very young like my sister. We have to come together as one in order to move</p>

	<p>not just some sex toy – we're not just... an underdog, we're just as much women as anybody else.</p> <p>Venus: uhh. I wish people knew Black girls were very dauntless. Um and I wish they knew were, actually I wish they saw how highly educated we are and how any, like how any other female – like Alize said, we are strong and powerful like... we're very powerful and I feel like once we all come together then we'll all be able to see that and I wish people just all just- we're strong as... a unit.</p> <p>Larae: umm. I want people to know that all Black girls are not ratchet.</p> <p>Daja: okay. I wish people knew that Black girls were more then their hair or more then their body and that they were just like... whoever they decide to be and who they are – did I take your answer doll?</p> <p>Honey: yess haha- but I can still say I wish um people knew that Black girls were more then just their skin Tone</p> <p>Chanel: ummmmm. I wish people knew Black girls are more then just their body</p> <p>Danielle: umm.. I wish people knew Black girls were more then just what they see on the outside</p>	<p>forward so we can teach our children like... regardless of your skin color and your hair texture you have to love who you are and like... its like unity between women it not there basically.</p> <p>Larae: What do you think sexuality is?</p> <p>Larae: how a person um... identifies their self as.</p> <p>Chanel: sexuality is like... basically how your attracted to theese opposite sex or same sex and how you identify with it.</p> <p>Ashley: could it be who you want to be?</p> <p>Researcher: okay.</p> <p>Daja: or who you identify yourself as?</p> <p>Researcher: okay</p> <p>Student: or like sex and stuff?</p> <p>Venus: it could be the person you carry yourself as...</p> <p>Venus: I think like when people think sexuality its more like 'oh im attracted to these kinda people or that person but no one really thinks sexuality as being a person you represent yourself to be. Like how do you put yourself on? How do people portray you to be?</p> <p>Larae: Do you think its important for Black girls to know about sexuality?</p> <p>Tiera: I feel like its important to. Especially you know at this age that were at you know like a lot of people have confusion and bewilderment when it comes to certain things like as far as like being gay and stuff like that. And you know perceiving their self to others so yeah like I feel like its important to know because if you don't know then somebody else is gonna figure it out for you.</p> <p>Daja: what does it mean to be a girl?</p> <p>Ashley: a girl</p> <p>Honey: to have a vajaja</p> <p>Chanel: right... I mean, to have a vajaja..</p> <p>Alize: not even</p> <p>Daja: I mean you cant do that tho cuz some guys who want to be girls but then again they don't wanna (makes a circular motion around her lower body with her hands)... I don't know I feel like sometimes they don't wanna change all that... but..</p> <p>Chanel: but you know you have those girl features. You got your hair. You have your chest. You have like.... 'oh I wanna go get my nails done' like... like some girls don't, guys can do that too</p> <p>Venus: that's a stereotype</p> <p>Alize: GIRL! You seen! And its so easy to put some pull up paper on you know. So I feel like being a girl is more like how you want people to perceive you. Because I can put on boys clothes</p> <p>Ashley: still be a girl</p> <p>Alize: and then I can still be a girl but people might not... you know? Perceive me as that. So they'll might perceive me as a boy. But if I dress like a girl they'll see me as a girl. So I fell like its more its more like how you want people to perceive you?</p> <p>Venus: cuz like... when you go to a baby shower you're like 'what is it'. If everything's pink at a baby shower you know it's a girl. And I feel like there's so many things in society that influence you like you just said like 'oh you now you're a girl cuz you wanna get your hair done, your nails done' but its like boys can do that too. And I feel like society influences so young at such a very little age like 'girls are suppose to play with dolls, boys are suppose to play with monster trucks; girls you suppose to be this way, dress this way and carry yourself that way or be a house wife or do this and do that. A soccer mom'</p> <p>Student: maaaaan</p>
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		<p>Venus: it is... its very difficult to be a girl and at that be a girl of color. You have so many other things to live up to and you have twice as much the stereotypes then someone who is a girl and not of color</p> <p>Daja: I agree because its like when you like if it was to come to dating or something or getting into a relationship you have sex with this person and this person they automatically try to call you a hoe but when it comes to a guy its okay for them to do that</p> <p>Students: snapping</p> <p>Daja: its okay for them to treat girls wrong. Its okay for them to pretty much dog girls out but if a girl does it too shes a hoe cuz shes talkin to this this and this person. But when the boys talking to this this and this person he's a player</p> <p>Researcher: mmmmhm</p> <p>Honey: um I wanna agree with her but kinda like disagree with Venus a little bit because I feel like sometimes its not how society is its how like your parents raise you cuz I was raised around brothers so I didn't have – I wasn't playin with dolls..i was playin with dolls but I was mostly playing with what they did. Or like my dad he wasn't like telling me like or like... i wasn't like forced to get my nails done. It was something I seen and I liked or whatever cuz I bite my nails so I get my nails done. Or just anything like getting my hair done, just cuz I want to its not cuz like society kinda like pushed me to do its like I need my hair done. So you know?</p> <p>Honey: cuz like I can see how society does influence us to do alotta stuff but also its how you're raised or what your opinion is sometimes. If you know yourself and stuff like that like you know its for you and its not for other people then it comes like cuz you wanna do it nto cuz society says</p> <p>Chanel: yeah I feel it but um... I wanna agree with Venus like, its like...also what society does is like yesterday I walk into my house and my hair was down and I had just blow dried it and my aunty goes 'whats wrong with your hair, you need to be a woman! You need to dress like this and look like this.' And its just like okay, you want me to do this but im not comfortable doing all that. Like...its more so like... like being a girl is hard especially of color cuz you know like weee...it takes us twice as long to press our hair and get it flat and get it straight to the way we want it to. And its just like okay we already have all this stuff to deal with and all these stereotypes is that we loud and ratchet but You love to listen to our music and get hyphy to it.</p> <p>Daja: how are girls expected to act? Is it different for Black girls why or why not?</p> <p>Danielle: I feel like... Black girls are suppose to like... girls period are suppose to be like classy and like kinda behind the scenes... like, like a boy or a man like... be in front of them and stuff and then Black girls you know... they're like steady like tryna... well most Black girls... kinda... try to fight the... like what other people see them as. Like as ratchet and like...and bad stuff people say about them. And others just try to... try to stay low and just try to stay out of people way and stuff I guess.</p> <p>Honey: you wanna go? I can say like were expected to like how we sits its closed legs. How like we go out its wear a dress or like you know.... Stuff like that.. its like how you're like suppose to present yourself. Kinda like in a classy way like..well mannered and stuff. But for Black girls I don't really believe its any different because its...I just don't see it like I feel like everyone in here like a girl and you wanna be defined as a girl you act like a girl..its not</p> <p>Alize: OH! I want to disagree with what Honey when she said that uh for Black girls its not different because...well I feel like its different but the same because like . For example like</p>
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		<p>...contrasting into like if it was like a young white woman umm I feel like on their behalf its like its okay if they wake up and like leave... like hair wise right. But for African American young lady, just because our hair is more curly or more bigger or whatever you wanna call it. If we just wake up and leave it how it is then people be like 'oh you didn't do yo hair like, what's wrong with that'... you know like so I feel like its but the same and like a sense to where instead of waking up we gotta flat iron pressin-</p> <p>Student: yess</p> <p>Alize: all this and etcetera to then get to the standard where they at basically. So I feel like it's the same in the sense that they hair is down and straight so ours will be nice down and straight but at the same time its different because that's their natural look but our natural look is not really excepted... its like 'why is her hair so nappy, why is it so big, why is it this, why is it that'. So I feel like yeah and then.... (snapping) what else was I gonna say? Okay yeah take that off me I forgot now</p> <p>Ashley: Alright. What makes you feel powerful as a Black girl? Okay. My vagina</p> <p>Tiera: um. I feel like what makes me powerful, and in being a Black girl is the level of education- like educational wise because like Black women like you know, comparing Black women to white women like were looked at differently like 'were ghetto, were stupid, were this, were ratchet, were this or were that.' And I feel like when you ummm... like when you show, like when you're able to show the world differently and being a Black woman and you're very educational and you know they just be like 'wow I didn't know' like you know? So... I feel like that as educational wise.</p> <p>Chanel: um, what makes me powerful to be a Black girl is... is pretty much um... I don't know, everything I guess. Cuz we can do so much stuff with our hair ummm... and um... no for real- we can do so much stuff, like, we can do whatever we want to our hair at any given moment. Ummm. I think uh, just in this room alone alotta high educated individuals and I know a few of is did get accepted into a few colleges and I think that with us being Black girls especially like we work so hard to meet our goals and to meet the standards that we hold for our self. And I think we all do deserve an applauded because we work really hard and not just at CAT but we also have jobs too and I've just seen a lot of people grow as independent so that make me proud and like we're the highest educated right now in college and the most enrolled. Yeah!</p> <p>Danielle: um what makes me proud is my history, and me knowing my history and like the truth and stuff not really going off what they just told me in school cuz most of the time we just hear about like kinda all the bad that happens like in Africa and in other places. You don't really hear like the good and the tradition of stuff, so that makes me proud to actually know my history and stuff and where I actually came from and again like what Channel said my hair and stuff cuz our hair makes us different from all the other cultures and stuff like..our features like our face features- you know how they be like 'Black don't crack'... so yeah</p> <p>Alize: yeah I wanna say that its um... its almost like... it's alotta things that make you not wanna be proud because of the way that society kinda looks down on Black women to me. Its seems like you know you do well in school and their like 'oh your doing good for a Black person' or like something like that. What makes it hard to like... be proud of yourself cuz their like 'ohhh you're doing good for a Black person'- oh so in a regual world I'm not doing good? Im just doing good for a Black person? Which means im doing bad or something like that? You know what im saying? So its kinda</p>
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hard to be proud but at the same time that's a reason to be proud cuz even tho the whole world is basically thinking against you and thinking that you're not gonna do well, you're just gonna be some trap queen or something like that so you know its like it makes you even more proud and powerful to say 'even tho you think ima just be somebody that stays in the projects for the rest of my like, im gonna be your boss one day like, you know?

Chanel: um... like Alize said 'you're doing good for like... a Black girl or whatever' like that, that sentence is so just like... it makes me think a lot like. I hate hearing comments like 'oh you're pretty for a Black girl' but what does that mean? Like all the other Black girls are ugly? Like how do you... how do you say that because that's just stupid, Black women are beautiful and like we ... our skin just do not crack im tellin you-

Ashley: it really don't

Chanel: we age, we age like beautiful watermelons that get just like so much ...

Students: hahah watermelons, im so done. Haha

Chanel: like like our skin is graced in gold and I think that just a blessing

Tiera: um I really strongly agree with what you said like as far as were looked as trap queens and stuff or quote on quote hoes or whatever you wanna call it- skanks. Like because and I feel like another thing as being powerful as Black woman is having self-respect for yourself as an individual and for your body. Like for example during slavery times like how alotta women was rapped and stuff and stuff like that and I can even share something a lil personal with yall- but like you know when I was young I got molested by my uncle so you know and that's why im really thankful and happy the way that I- the girl that I turned out to be today cuz you know I could have been just out here wild' in out just doin stuff but im not like that. I didn't let that over power me and overcome and like another example is how you see a majority of prostitutes are Black women so, I feel like a big one is having self respect.

Alize: um, mine is kinda back to what Tiera was saying. Wait. No. Okay so I just want to say that as a Black woman or a girl, its kinda hard because we seem to develop a little more... then other people may. And I feel like alotta times just Black females in general are kinda looked at... not as a woman. Kinda more what they have like.... 'More ass Black girls got big booties and that's what matters'. And... I aint got no booty (laughing), you feel me. But its kinda like and then that's like a key thing like 'oh so you don't have none so you're not really Black... like you're not Black enough. Like stuff like that and I feel like um... its kinda hard, that's uh one of the challenges being Black women because within the Black community there's then things that are Black and not Black. Or your- if you're Black you're suppose to do this, and you're not suppose to do that. And if you fall in between the lines then you're not Black enough, you know?

Venus: uh what are some challenges Black girls are facing?

Chanel: I have a challenge everyday. Um, im not flat chested at all, like at all. Like I was just like... I get it from my dads side, cant control it. And um that's the challenge for me because people think like 'oh well your chest sags or whatever' but its something I cant control... like you know. and like I feel like the challenges we face are more then just like 'oh well we got big breast and big boobs and dadadada' like we face challenges on the daily as being ... identified as ratchet.... And like, we're really not we challenges- we face the oppression and struggles in our life to become comfortable with ourselves and become comfortable with our natural hair

		<p>and be comfortable with just BEING – Being comfortable... BEING okay with being comfortable with yourself... as a Black girl... just because weee ah, we face alotta issues on our own and then like its just like how we react to it and some of us don't even react at all</p> <p>Alize: I feel like a challenge- a challenge within the Black community is secrets because I feel like a lot of Black parents like 'what happens in my house stays in my house, don't say nothing, don't do this, don't do that'</p>
<p>Session 2: Being Black, female and a child</p> <p>Quote: "I am a feminist, and what that means to me is much the same as the meaning of the fact that I am Black: ... I must everlastingly seek to cleanse myself of the hatred and the contempt that surrounds and permeates (spread through) my identity, as a woman, as a Black human being, in this particular world of ours"- June Jordan in "Where is the Love?" 1978.</p> <p>(RQ: What constitutes Black girlhood? What are the features of Black girlhood and how do Black girls describe their own lived experiences?)</p>	<p>Responses to quote:</p> <p>Honey: I wrote being a feminist is agreeing everyone is equal so if you identify as being Black you should still be counted as equal and as like a lil side one- cuz that was just for like the first sentence cuz I didn't really get the last part- I kinda just put like 'no hate' or anything just like self-love an like, cuz she said cleansing herself</p> <p>Alize: um uh I talked about the second sentence and I said that 'to stay true to herself and to her identity she has to like continue to cleanse herself and like, clear out what other people may say about being a woman or being Black and kinda stay true to herself and be proud of herself regardless – and like you know like, clean- clean out herself and her thoughts of negativity and stick to her positive</p> <p>Tiera: I put um, she's indicating that she's just a woman like any other woman on earth. And I think the last part it means to me that she maybe has to prove others wrong of what their perceived identity that they may think she seems to be.</p> <p>Chanel: um I said that for myself I must stay positive and make a change in this world and I am somebody!</p> <p>Cindy: um she's not taking in all the negativity that other people is saying about her</p> <p>Larae: um... that everyone should be treated equal no matter what gender or color they are... But, that's not the case so we have to be able to let go of the negative things that come our way</p> <p>Angelina: okay, I mean mines is really simple. I said to be a Black woman and a feminist is a hard thing to do as both of these identities are oppressed and looked down upon our society</p> <p>Closing Activity:</p> <p>Researcher: that last activity is um, all I want you to do- before you get up- is stand up underneath one of the signs that best aligns with your identity. The best- whatever represents you best. And then ...yeah- you can be more then one, you just can stand under more then one. um... stand under one –</p> <p>Alize: I was choosing the 'strength in sisterhood' because like I was saying earlier I feel like there's power in numbers and I feel</p>	<p>Researcher: Okay because we're talking about identity today, on the back of your note card I want you to write 5 things that reference your identity. Whatever you feel like makes up your identity, whether that's physical, whether that's emotional, whether that's mental- whatever you feel like makes up your identity</p> <p>Seven: I put um independent, female, African American and strong</p> <p>Cindy: okay, I put Black, um smart and intelligent and a female</p> <p>Chanel: I put being independent, being strong, my achievements, female, and Black</p> <p>Angelina: I'll go. Um I put feminist, a young woman, ethnicity is other, bisexual</p> <p>Honey: I put being mixed and light skinned, my hair, my name, my family, my beliefs slash view slash dreams</p> <p>Main Activity:</p> <p>Tiera: so on mines I put um 'woman are powerful and dangerous'. Um another picture I put was 'beauty from the top of her fro to the tip of her toe' and I used 2 words 'warrior' and 'intelligent' and then I used this other picture and it says 'I am not the girl you saved'. And I used that because it relates- to me it relates to like being independent and... yeah</p> <p>Tiera: and... maybe I can explain this one. I chose 'women are powerful and dangerous' because like even back then in times women didn't have a lot of like power and we couldn't really do a lot of stuff and like now like we..... inno the word I'm looking for? Like... we just, yeah</p> <p>Alize: uh oh so uh I put Black girl cuz.... Yeah. And I also put 'im not the girl you save' because I feel like sometimes to other races being a Black girl is like a sob story kinda. Like 'awe poor thing' like you know like, I don't know. Yeah. Um, I also put that women are powerful and dangerous because I think we are- I especially think I am. I feel like education, being smart helps me be powerful and dangerous to the world... um. I think conqueror, I put conqueror, because um its like things that you have to get over, past through and go through obstacles to get where you tryna go and ...yeah, keep going. That also connects to strength um and independence. And then I put this pictures cuz its kinda like, to me its kinda like saying behind closed doors you may have your problems but out in the light you can stand tall. So, yeah. And then I put there is power in numbers because I feel like if um.. Black women were to stand together it would sent more of a message that Black women are not weak and, yeah. um 'Nothing can stop us if we believe' kinda connected to what you guys was talking about earlier, about if you think that Black people can come together and um...do something I guess. And I guess if we believed in ourselves and believed we could put aside all the dumb stuff then, yeah. And music</p>

	<p>like if we believe that we can be better together then we can make it further... then alone</p> <p>Danielle: I said strength in power-hood because... ahahah. Sisterhood because you know, if we all come together then we a real life threat and Even though we already a threat, we gonna be bigger one</p> <p>Daja: its says 'be the girl you desire to be' and I pick that one because you shouldn't let nobody change your dreams or your goals in life, I think you should just live out what you wanna be.</p> <p>Chanel: Okay, I chose 'you are magical' because I don't think anybody like any other gender and like race has faced any... as as many obstacles as Black folks face and like we still come out on top... like there's so many of us that are powerful and strong and we are independent, so, can't nobody do all that.</p> <p>Chanel: Okay, I chose 'you are magical' because I don't think anybody like any other gender and like race has faced any... as as many obstacles as Black folks face and like we still come out on top... like there's so many of us that are powerful and strong and we are independent, so, can't nobody do all that.</p> <p>Apples: Me! I chose 'what makes you powerful' because I think my attitude makes me powerful cuz I just do what I want. I don't let what people say get to me. Im just... I don't know, in my own little world. Go girl! (talking to Honey)</p> <p>Honey: okay, I put 'love you first' because um... you gotta love you first. Honey: nah nah forreal, you gotta love yourself first before you know like ... what... like alotta other signs... like, before you know that your fly you gotta like have confidence and love yourself before - you know like your magical, alotta these just like connect back to love yourself first</p> <p>Angelina: I picked 'you are worthy' because um... I feel like it connects to 'your body belongs to you' I cant stand under 2 tho, but um it connects to me because I just been through a lot and its just like if you don't know that your worthy or that your body belongs to yourself, like, your gonna get in a bad situations and like... your suppoer worthy like, you gotta love yourself because you can't love someone else if you don't love yourself.</p> <p>La'Shay: I picked um... your body belongs to you um, I been judged about how I look about my body from family and other people so I just got to a point where I was like 'okay, I'm the only person who should care about how I look' you're not the one who's dealing with it so I mean, I don't really care about what other people think about how I look. I love myself, I'm in my own skin so I guess..yeah</p> <p>Larea: the one I picked is 'why is it important to define yourself'. It's important to define yourself so then no one can choose who you are... yeah, for you.</p>	<p>always help because It does and I feel like music connects alotta people and you just, just chill when you listen to music. So yeah</p> <p>Chanel: so I put I put the girl with the crown because... Black girls are queen like always. And I put magic because we we're just magical, look at us. All this unity here, look at us. that's why I put the fist cuz unity is what we are. And um alotta people say that Black love doesn't exist but I still think it does, I just think people need to start communicating. So yeah, I'm done.</p> <p>Ashley: sooo I put this one because, it says beauty from... 'beauty from the top of her fro to the tip of her toe' I put that because ya know, sometimes I put on my little, fro and I don't know, I don't like it personally but my mom is like a naturalist so... I just do it anyways. And then I put the music because um, personally I like music, I always listen to music and stuff.... And then I put Black cuz you know that's what I am. And then, just put a few words of stuff like... yeah... I don't know. But yeah</p> <p>Cindy: okay so I put girl power cuz um I feel like girls have power but its just like... ya know... boys. I don't know what this is? Is it strong?</p> <p>Cindy: Okay okay and I put- it says 'wife, mother, sister, leader, teacher, and warrior.' And then a Black woman, that's what we are. And then I put it's a quote 'I love Black girls.' I don't know I chose that. And this one says 'Black girl magic' and I don't know why I put that.</p> <p>Danielle: me? Okay, it says 'Black girl magic' because I believe I have a lot of magic stuff to bring and then I put Black love right here because I believe in Black love still. Its just that um people think that um you need to be outside your race to have a pretty baby but I want a all Black baby, like nothing else in there. So yeah, that's one of my goals in life... to marry a Black man. And then, to graduate from college... and finish school, get my degree so I can look at all these people and be like 'I did it'... hahaha</p> <p>Seven: um I guess I'll start down here. I did... college just ahead for me. For me, college is gonna be my escape from everything that's why I have the girl here who's free and tryna run to college and then, this is before I leave to college... anyways, Then I put... um, I put the Black woman and then the definition of it... I guess that this what its tryna say,... cuz I agreed with it and I felt if more people just start referring to this definition and not all the other ones. And then, I put her and she's saying 'I'm not the girl you save' because..... im not</p> <p>Seven: and then I put 'I think I'm afraid to be happy because whenever I do get too happy something bad always happens' ... that relates to me pretty much everyday. That's.... I think that's true about me and how I actually feel</p> <p>Honey: I'll go. Okay, this is mines. I got this because I think Black love is beautiful. Kay I got this kinda... its supoose to be going in shades, and so like different ones they all like are , the words around it like 'beautiful, kissed by the sun, a mother, afro' like they all just, they all have afros but they kinda look different and stuff but they're all Black and they're still all beautiful. And yeah, I put college, just like some stuff that represents us.</p> <p>Apples: um... I put the girl power, the word 'girl power' cuz me personally, I always wanna boss people around and ummmm... boys always think they got power so girls got power too. I put this with tha- with the um stuff coming out the girl mouth cuz most people think that when a Black person talkin its gone be something ignorant but me I put it cuz I'm out spoken. Ummm. I put the definition of Black woman cuz everybody got they own definition. Uhhh I put the girls in college - graduated from college cuz most people don't think</p>
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<p>Session 3: Black Girlhood and Sexual Identity Development</p> <p>Quote: "If we do not believe that Black girls can make their own decisions if given the proper tools, such as education and resources, then we cannot say that we are invested in them... However, if we are truly invested in Black girls and their well-being, then we must believe that they can have the power and agency over their own bodies, decision, and health"- Jessica Robinson.</p>	<p>Responses to quote: Questions they answered: 'how does being a Black female make you feel about yourself?' and 'does it influence how you live your life?'</p> <p>Seven: I don't even know if I answered the question correctly or not Researcher: there's no right or wrong Seven: I said um... I guess um... being a Black female, it didn't really make a difference, but it did... and for me... I feel powerful and strong because... I'm living not the situation—I don't know how to say it... like, I'm not livin what people would think. Seven: what they think. You know how they... we can't do anything or your not doing much ... but.... for me, its different. I don't know how to explain it. Nevermind Jewell's. I don't wanna talk. Cindy: I only answered the first part but I said 'smart, independent and strong'. Tiera: umm I put... well for the second one I put, 'being a Black girl does influence my life in certain aspects because I feel like in certain stuff I get like, closed opportunities on things due to misjudgment, misinterpretation, and discrimination. Tiera: like... as far as anything, like anything I try to get into, or like work opportunities, like</p>	<p>Responses to the movie: Researcher: what happened in the film? Cindy: she was inappropriate? Ashley: and den? Cindy: and den everybody started talkin about it? Ashley: and den? Cindy: and den her— Ashley: and then her friend was tried of it so she made herself the talk of the school Daja: she gave them somethin else to talk about Ashley: so they can forget what her friend did Student: what about the Barbie's? Cindy: she grewed up Seven: grewed up? Haha.. grew up?</p> <p>Researcher: what happened at the beginning of the movie when she was playing with Barbie's the end of the movie? What was like that symbolizing? Student: she grew up Researcher: into what? Ashley: she's getting maturity... or, I don't know</p> <p>Researcher: okay, why do you think the director chose to use middle school girls and not high school girls? --- and Black girls, cuz she coulda chose any girls to use as the main character Cindy: cuz middle school- Black girls are fast Student: yeah! Student: some, some, some! Ashley: we're not fast! We're known—they—</p>

<p>(RQ: What is the relationship between Black girlhood, femininity, and sexual identity?)</p>	<p>certain stuff, I just feel like its closed opportunities because of discrimination and stuff like that</p> <p>Daja: I said it makes me feel good because when I um, do good things it's a shock to others and it makes me feel accomplished and it does influence me because it makes me have to work harder for the things I want in life. Like Tiera said, its tough for a Black woman, its just something you gotta work hard for</p>	<p>Daja: we're known to be fast</p> <p>Ashley: they tell us...</p> <p>Daja: society says</p> <p>Ashley: there you go.</p> <p>Alize: umm, it could connect to like...we was talkin—I don't know if that was last week or the week before, but we was talkin about how, uh.... You commonly see African American girls develop faster...and it may have been showing that even in middle school that these young ladies are being... you know... I don't know if she was pushed—I don't know if she was pushed to do what she did, but like you know, even at a young age, not just at high school, but it comes before that. That what's she tryna show.</p> <p>Honey: okay, I don't know if anyone said this but maybe cuz you know when you're in high school, you're expected...not so much expected—</p> <p>Daja: its common.</p> <p>Honey: huh?</p> <p>Daja: its common.</p> <p>Honey: yeah</p> <p>Researcher: what's common?</p> <p>Honey: like...</p> <p>Daja: sex</p> <p>Honey: yeah, to be experimentin'...but like when your in that grade, it kinda more shocking... or like, you're not maybe, your not used to it, or its like something new to you. So like, you're still developing and stuff... in high school your still developed too, but in middle school you're startin to get like your period, you're startin to get into boys. I don't know it depends in elementary school. But you- you get my point.</p> <p>Honey: ummmm... I was tryna think... but, that really much all-- just having power over what you do, when you're younger ... and own bodies decisions and healthy, like you gotta like, make sure that you're making the right decision and it didn't seem like she was making the right decisions... I don't know I didn't watch it... from what I heard.</p> <p>Daja: you shouldn't be doing that in the bathroom</p> <p>Honey: if you wanna do that at yo house and you old and like you love that person or you wanna please that person at yo house- but at school is a lil awkward. Of course it's gonna get around. Of course people are gonna talk, he's gonna say something obviously because that's like the best moment of his life</p> <p>Honey: you have to have the power to know like—to say no. yeah like, power over your body ... like if she really didn't wanna do that, she needs the power to say 'no I'm not ready, like no that's not cool, no- go find some other girl'. You know? Or like decision, like she had to make that decision like 'should I do this? Cuz he really like me and I like him' quote on quote—or...should I be... innocent still?</p> <p>Daja: she didn't have the power to say no</p> <p>Researcher: why did they use Black girls?</p> <p>Daja: well before you came in we was talkin about it and some people said maybe because a lot of people say Black girls mature ummm... or they um grow, I guess</p> <p>Daja: yeah develop ...earlier then other people so they thought that that was the reason why... or because Black girls are judged more for- on certain things that happen</p> <p>Tiera: that has to do with sex</p> <p>Tiera: I put uh the girl, uh her friend, she was a true friend for the way she reacted to the situation and she handled it maturely. Because usually yeah... cuz usually you know, especially in middle school everybody is like, still kinda like childish. Like usually maybe sometimes she like in situation like that, she would like you know start, like, stop maybe like</p>
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		<p>being her friend or like- you know? Based on what she did and everybody not liking her and talkin about her so.... Yeah... that's truly a true friend</p> <p>Danielle: shooeee... my middle school years in the cafeteria. Nobody knew... well, the students, but not the teachers. But I feel like, most of the students, I knew them and I knew they background- most of them dealing with they moms or dads, and nobody really showed them stuff. So that's probably what it is.</p> <p>Researcher: so this short film is a common scenario?</p> <p>Alize: yeah but not so much Black girls. Cuz when I thinking about my middle school days—maybe its because of the school I went to, it was not predominately Black, it was predominately Latin. So those was predominately the people doing what they was doing. you know what im tryna say? But feel me, that was yeah... me seeing stuff, it was kinda like the Black girls kinda stuck together and didn't such things. And kinda looked at those other girls like 'what is yall doin'</p> <p>Tiera: I mean like I've seen stuff like that happen but its not so much at school I see it more like outside of school</p> <p>Daja: like being exposed.... like on Instagram</p> <p>Researcher: but okay so... what do you think that does to a Black girls reputation tho?</p> <p>Chanel: it kills it</p> <p>Tiera: it ruins it?</p> <p>Chanel: your reputation is over!</p> <p>Researcher: like done? like foreva?</p> <p>Chanel: forever</p> <p>Seven: forever be known as dot dot dot this</p> <p>Honey: you make mistakes in life. You get knocked down, everyone does it... she just did it in the bathroom. If you gotta problem with that hey you know hey- but you – your opinions not foreeeeevvaa</p> <p>Students: forevvvva evvva hahahaha</p> <p>Honey: it could be for a couple of months, maybe a year or</p> <p>some, they're gonna talk about it, they're gonna 'oh I remember you as the girl that did that' probably but your reputations not over. You could still like, you know, become something and get higher then that and stuff</p> <p>Daja: I mean..i feel like—</p> <p>Tiera: like, can I, can. I was gonna say something like an eliminate to this, like speaking of what Honey was saying as far as reputation. Like, my mom, her friend right, like they went to high school together or whatever and then like when they got older and they got outta high school they stopped talkin or whatever and like my mom ended up talkin back to her but at the time when she got outta high school like she start, like prostituting and you know like gettin into drugs and stuff like that. And then like as older she got she eventually stopped doing it and she had kids and stuff and like she went to school, she got her doctored degree and like, and now everybody just look at her as like a totally different person. Like she's like really like successful and everything now, like so. That was like in relation to what she said.</p> <p>Alize: mmmhm.. I feel like...everything that people in general do, its easier to point out they flaws then it is for somebody to praise you for what you've done well.</p> <p>like....even at school bruh Aaron (one of the vice principles) the first time he talked to me, freshmen year, the first time he talked to me was to get me in trouble. Feel me, he was hollin' at me when I was on that principles honor roll or nothin. But first time I get in trouble he was the first one, to you know, be there. Know what I'm sayin? So I feel like alotta people it's easier for you to say 'oh I know what you did' and have like</p>
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		<p>the T on them versus, 'you know what? Congratulations. I seen yo name on the wall the other day about you know....you know? Yeah!</p> <p>Alize: see but I feel like.. it's a difference if you like sexually active on yo own time and when you doin what you doin... like, outside of school. I feel like inside of school- inside of school is messy regardless. You know?</p> <p>Students: right</p> <p>Alize: so I feel like yo respect for yourself kinda goes down a lil bit if you kinda just like a quick hit in the bathroom. Know what I'm sayin. I feel like its... I feel like it's a difference if its just yall two somewhere private, not- I mean I guess the bathroom is private</p> <p>Chanel: just because, their too judgmental and its like I know like, I got morals and values that I stick to everyday that nobody can break cuz im like a well minded individual and I just feel like its sooo like irritating. And I don't like talkin to my mom like even like in general! So like talkin to my moms about like boys or nothing it go like out the window and I feel like, if I were to tell my mom, she would have something to say, and tell my aunty and then my aunty would always be like where I'm at and like and all that other stuff. so yeah, I don't really have anybody to talk to besides my friends because I feel like they relate more because they're around my age.</p>
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Appendix D: Matrix for Interview

Interview Matrix: Group A

Research Questions	Data Required to answer research question (Interview Questions)	Quotes and Results
How do Black girls experience their femininity and sexual identity development?	How would you define the expressions of femininity? What does being feminine mean to you?	<p>Researcher: okay so just tell me what you define a hoe as?</p> <p>Takeya: when you suck alotta dick and you take alotta dick and you just do it to do it. I think that's like, bein a hoe</p> <p>Marisa: Um like by your skin color and like your, yeah really your skin color because it's like nothing else that defines you -oh not the way you act because you could act any way and be any ethnicity so really your skin color.</p> <p>Researcher: Okay. And how, and how would define the expressions of femininity? What do you think it means to be feminine?</p> <p>Marisa: Um, I think that means you're a girl.</p> <p>Researcher: Mhmm.</p> <p>Marisa: You have different like body parts, you go through different things at different times of the month, and um...</p> <p>Brianna: To be feminine like a girl and you're like really girly well not a lotta girly but you're a girl.</p>

		<p>Brianna: And then they said what to wear outside and stuff. Like you know? Not to show alotta skin and stuff.</p> <p>Researcher: A lotta skin where? Is there any specific place you shouldn't?</p> <p>Brianna: Like our butts and like chest and stuff...</p> <p>Researcher: Mhmm.</p> <p>Brianna: That's It.</p> <p>Researcher: Mhmm and what you feel about that?</p> <p>Brianna: If it's hot outside then you can...</p> <p>Researcher: Laughs.</p> <p>Brianna: That's it.</p> <p>Researcher: If it's hot outside then what?</p> <p>Brianna: you can wear like some shorts and stuff</p>
What constitutes Black girlhood?	How would you define what it means to be a Black girl?	<p>Rashana: yeah like my mama don't do that, like she just be like, you know like... she be like 'did you do yo homework' I can say 'yeah' and she won't be like 'let me see it' like you know like you know. Its like.... Half of them stuff them kids like- I went through, alotta stuff in my years of growin up, like I den seen way more then a 16 year old is suppose to see and witness and go through.</p> <p>Brianna: You should be more confident since you are a Black girl.</p> <p>Brianna: Because you know it's like, a lot of stereotypes and stuff so you should be happy that you are a Black girl.</p>
	Have any family members talked to you about what it means to be a lady? 1.) If yes, in what ways?	<p>Marissa: She said ladies carry their selves in a way that you will be not noticed but that you will be like proud of. Like ladies don't do things that you know aren't right.</p> <p>Monica: Like you not gonna be able to depend on people, you gotta do for yourself and you gotta grow up basically like you can't be thinking people gonna help you and stuff because they not. So you need a job.</p> <p>Researcher: Laughs. Is that what being a lady is? Getting a job?</p> <p>Monica: Like taking care of yourself, being independent, not dependent on people, stuff like that.</p>
What are the features of Black girlhood and how do Black girls describe their own lived experiences?	Does being a Black girl effect how you're treated at home? 1.) If yes, in what ways?	<p>Researcher: since we have talked about family and stuff do you think being a Black girl at home effects how you're treated?</p> <p>Rashana: mmmmmmm yeah</p> <p>Researcher: Shhhhh. Um, does the fact that you're a Black girl effects how people treat you at school?</p> <p>Marisa: Yep because these Mexicans hard to say but these Mexicans be looking at me like I'm crazy when I um like I know the answer to the questions. Like when I do my work they just be staring at me. But I don't know why.</p>
	Have your family members talked to you about romantic relationships? 1.) If yes, what have they told you? 2.) Tell me what you think romantic relationships are.	<p>Rashana: yeah because my dad- like he don't like its like, I don't have a choice! He be like, he be like, he be like "NO LISTEN, I'm tryna tell you! Cuz if a nigga fuck up, ima kill him!". He just be talkin on an on and I be like 'like dad, I really don't care because I'm not havin sex right now. You aint gotta worry about it for another few years'. He be like 'NO! you just need to know! Just in case, you never know. You can just go have sex tomorrow'. I said 'well I'm not gonna have sex tomorrow'</p> <p>Researcher: well what does he want you to know?</p> <p>Rashana: He want me to know that niggas aint no good and that sex it not- not a thing to play with. Its serious, and he told me....what he told me? You know? He told me his sex stories.</p>

		<p>Takeya: my sisterssss... and we talk about- cuz I had this nigga in Oakland for hella long and we did somethin and then yeah like.... I'm not tellin my mommy and daddy. Uh uh. That's why sometimes my dad be like back then I be like 'oh forreal' and he be like- I be like 'I just wait till I get married' but I know what, I know wassup</p> <p>Takeya: I knooooow,... its like, like they so old and they don't expect people you to lose it like until you get out they house. My mom and dad like 'you bet not lose it till you git yo house' and I be like 'I'm not'. But knowing like....</p> <p>Takeya: yeah so like I just keep it to myself--- I just tell my sisters. I just my sister when I'm finna like.... You know? But I aint had sex in a long time so that's good.</p> <p>Rashana: she was like um well... what she say, she's like, shit I forgot what she said. Basically she apologized but yeah I think I get treated differently because like ummm, If I hada ... I feel like, I don't know. And she always comparing me to other people kids like on facebook and shit like. Like, I am not them, like you are not their parents like what you do in your household is totally different from what they do in theirs. Like you raised me different and they gettin raised different. So you can't. like, so you know how like- when you was younger did yo mom like come in, you do yo homework and she check it?</p> <p>Marisa: It's like, it's y'all two, he ain't cheating, he got you. Like he buy you stuff this and there but other than that you on your, not on your own but you make money for yourself.</p> <p>Researcher: And what do they say?</p> <p>Brianna: They said that girls should take more showers than boys and they say...</p> <p>Researcher: Why?</p> <p>Brianna: Yeah because our body is different. And they said that...</p> <p>Researcher: How is our body different?</p> <p>Brianna: Because we have different body parts.</p> <p>Researcher: Mhmm.</p> <p>Brianna: Yeah and they need to be cleaned more. And they said...</p> <p>Brianna: My mom just said to tell her if I plan on being sexually active.</p> <p>Brianna: Romantic relationships are like when y'all are happy and uh you don't have to like worry about cheating and stuff and y'all go out places like you know?</p>
	Does the fact that you're a Black girl effect how people treat you in school?	<p>Takeya: yeah I hit her! I smacked the shit out of her! She was like- a lil racist lil white girl... lady. She was like- cuz everybody went outside, like all the white kids and I'm the only one, the only Black person like in that classroom and I'm like why I'm not outside- she was like 'oh I forgot you in here'. I said you know what 'its cuz I'm Black- cuz I'm Black?' and then she was like 'listen here my mom is Black' so I slapped her like 'no she no! she white! Cuz you're white!' and then she sent me to the office and then I got home— her mom is white! She's white! She tried to – she wanted to be Black. I just slapped the clown- I was like 'NO, YOU'RE WHITE'!</p>
	Does being a Black girl effect how you act at school?	
What is the relationship	What have you learned about sexuality?	<p>Takeya: any type of people person- any type of sex you wanna be like if you wanna be a girl, be a girl! If you wanna be a dude, be a dude.</p> <p>Rashana: nothing! You are who you are, you are who you want to be.</p> <p>Marisa: Um I learned that, you have sex when you feel like it and that</p>

<p>between Black girlhood, femininity, and sexual identity?</p>		<p>you don't need to um like have anybody decide for you. Like you need to have sex when you're ready and when your body's ready. Researcher: Ooh that was good. Um, did you take a sex education class? Marisa: Um, yeah. I took it in fifth grade. Researcher: And what did you learn in there? Marisa: I learned that, you need to be in control over your own body and that you need—if you do have sex—you need to always use condoms, always.</p> <p>Monica: I don't like, some people do stay together for a long time but then like kids these days in our generation they just be, ya'll mess with each other for a little while then y'all break up and they be messing with somebody else and stuff like that so ya'll not making love. I don't believe it.</p>
	<p>1.) Did you take a sex-education class? 2.) If yes, what did you learn? 3.) If not, tell me what you think sexuality is.</p>	<p>Takeya: we had sex ed at Kipp. They gave us condoms. Rashana: I never see! I aint never got no condoms! Researcher: what else did they do besides give yall condoms? Takeya: and then they tell us how to um— Rashana: put it in the right way. Like put the penis through the vagina Takeya: but yeah we learned how um so we can put it in the right whole and about abortions, and like... you know, just like general. Like how girls like.... Like you know how girls like... squirt. we learned this in 8th grade and we learned sex ed in 5th and 6th. Not 7th though.</p> <p>Researcher: okay so you said you learned about orgasms, you learned about condoms, is there— Takeya: and how to keep your vagina clean</p> <p>Rashana: yeah like you not suppose to wash inside the whole just outside Takeya: cuz that makes it more stinky Rashana: yeah – yeah that make it have a lil infection in there, that makes it have a smell. You not suppose to use Summer's Eve. Takeya: I never use that</p> <p>Brianna: They taught us that um that uh I think they said that um you can, you can get um a STD through um like the juices, the wome- like I don't know those words like you know the words.</p> <p>Brianna: Girls, boys, and whatever you define yourself as that is your sexuality.</p> <p>Monica: Um, sexuality as in like, a girl, a boy, or like sex? Because I know sexuality could be like what you represent yourself as like a boy or a girl. Like I know sex is like sexual intercourse which you don't have to really be sexual, you know like until you're ready.</p> <p>Monica: Um, how to put on a condom. Umm what goes one like what you can get from sex or what should like, boys should wear condoms during sex, girl should um be on birth control if they like don't want protection, don't wanna use protection stud like that. Researcher: You felt it was like uh, like a good class that covered a lot? Monica: Yeah but it was kind of like, you know kids can be immature they was laughing but yeah it was a good class.</p>
	<p>How have you reacted in the past when you see someone you were attracted to at school? Can you provide a story?</p>	<p>Takeya: my sister be like you gotta keep these niggas in check like because if I wanted to have sex – IF I WANTED TO HAVE SEX, I coulda BEEN fuckin everybody but clearly I'm keepin my legs closed Rashana: hahahahahahaha Takeya: and not doin that. So- she tell me like just do it to a person you been together with for a long time because—and you be able to trust them and then like, like you know- and you able to trust them and you been like, say you was with him like 3 years and he aint did nothing</p>

		<p>like crazy and you already been doing it—</p> <p>Researcher: okay so you felt okay with saying no tho?</p> <p>Rashana: HELL YEAAAAH – like get yo ass off of me! Hahahahaha</p> <p>Rashana: I don't know but its like when we textin my mind be like 'yeah girl get it' haha and then when I be there I be like... hey..</p> <p>Researcher: what about leading up to it? Is that what makes you uncomfortable? The act of actual penetration?</p> <p>Rashana: you know what I'm scared of I think.... Like just stickin that thing inside of me like (deep breath) cuz its just soooo...hahahahahahaha</p> <p>Rashana: yes like how you gonna take somethin from ME and you aint even gonna give it to me the right way? Like what the hell is wrong with you?</p> <p>Researcher: ummm... How- how do you react when you see somebody you like. Or your dating, or yo boo thang like... what happens in yo mind, in yo body like—</p> <p>Rashana: my stomach like get like...butterflies like... I get shy like... its weird. Like now, I gotta- I gotta lil juke!</p> <p>Researcher: is that what they call it? A lil juke?</p> <p>Rashana: yeah a lil juke! Yeah I gotta lil juke and –</p> <p>Researcher: J-U-K-E?</p> <p>Rashana: yesssss! Juke! And um, I don't know. Like he weird like. Mmmk... I don't know. Like he just..... I don't know if its me or its him but its like- when we get around each other is just be like quiet. But then we text all the time- all the time so its like inno. But... when I be seein him, I be all happy and stuff and then we just be sittin there like, so the butterflies and everything go away. Like we just normal. I don't know. But its its... its weird. Complicated.</p> <p>Takeya: I be like- that I do- I be like 'damn, I bet his dick big' you know like that's the first thing I think of 'dick dick dick' like....how I'm finna take it hahaha...and then when I like get to know'm, like if I...if you still cute to me when I get to know you I be like sssss 'so like what you tryna do like?... or I be like 'mmmmmmmmmm no your not that attractive anymore'!</p> <p>Marissa: Um, I think that, I think my eyes light up. I'm not sure, I don't know I can't see myself from the outside. Laughs. I think I be smiling.</p> <p>Brianna: It's like you smile hecka much and stuff and it be funny. It's funny to see the, when you see somebody that you are attracted to because you know it's like good memories and stuff? Well not memories but good thoughts. Laughs.</p> <p>Researcher: Okay. And I do remember in the focus groups, you made a very interesting comment. You said, um because one student said that when you have sex you should be trying to make love and you had said, and then you had said, "love? We don't know nothing about love like it shouldn't be a quickie but we don't know nothing about love." What's that mean to you? I just want you to elaborate.</p> <p>Monica: Like, love is for like, I think adults make love or people that's in like, you know like a long relationship like I don't think like teenagers in high school make love.</p> <p>Researcher: So what you think they doing?</p> <p>Monica: Like they could like each other they probably do it to each other and stuff but they not making love to each other.</p> <p>Monica: Like you, love is like when you really love somebody you not gonna never leave them, like ya'll might break up for a little while but ya'll gonna be back together like ya'll you know help each other. Like rock with each other like what I said about a married couple and stuff. Kids don't really provide for each other. They still getting money from they parents so.</p>
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		Monica: Like I never really show a boy like I really if I really like you because then you know? They gonna be like "this girl attached to me or something?" Like no.
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Interview Matrix: Group B

Research Questions	Data Required to answer research question (Interview Questions)	Quotes and Results
How do Black girls experience their femininity and sexual identity development?	How would you define the expressions of femininity? What does being feminine mean to you?	<p>Chanel: Um, what it means to be feminine okay. Well basically, like i don't know just like being a female, recognizing that you're a woman, and that you can do anything a man can do if you really truly believe that you can and no one is stopping you but yourself.</p> <p>Honey: uhhh I don't know I guess like... I wanna say standing up for girl rights kinda like you know... like backing up like- like girls have a say so or like , you know the whole girl power movement.</p> <p>Tiera: that's kinda hard. When it comes to....um I mean like, I really don't know like being feminine to me is just like...like... you know having those... girl qualities like....</p> <p>Researcher: like what?</p> <p>Tiera: Like you know....and its really hard to say that cuz not every female is the same. Sooo, like certain females may like getting their nails done and stuff did, and some females may not like it. And like... being a girls doesn't necessarily mean you have to be... like getting your nails done, and keeping your hair done and stuff like that but, I feel like being a female is like, feminine is like acting in a classy manner.</p> <p>Tiera: like...like acting like high up- well classy to me is like high upscale, having respect for yourself, ummm, knowing your worth, ummmm...being ummm... whats the word I'm looking for.... Not being like, I don't wanna say ghetto or ratchet but like, just... I don't know like.... (deep breath), I'm tryna think of what to say.</p> <p>Researcher: I don't want you to make--- I just want you to say what comes to your heart- there is no right or wrong answer. How I'm doing my research is the answers that you guys give me, not what a dictionary gives me, not what a book gives me, but what you give me</p> <p>Tiera: well like, over all being classy to me is just acting like lady like- like I said having respect for yourself, um.... Not getting into you know, dudes business and stuff and not being all about drama and stuff like that.</p> <p>Danielle: to stand up for yourself- to like fight for what you believe in, and for like equality and stuff</p> <p>Researcher: what do you think they mean when they're saying feminine like what does feminine—</p> <p>Venus: I don't do my hair enough, my nails are never painted, or it's the way I talk, the way I dress. Like I can wear a sweater and baggy jeans and people are like 'that's not girly, that's not feminine'. I believe</p>

		<p>there is no real definition of being feminine. Why should feminine only be targeted towards women? Why should women have to live up to these standards to be feminine? As soon as you're born a girl everyone thinks your gonna grow up and you wanna get your hair done, your nails done and do this, this, and that. Yes it's a beautiful part of life, I love to get my nails done, and my hair done, when I have time for it. But being feminine is not what I think lives up to societies standards, I have my own definition of feminine...and that's taking care of me, and taking care of myself, and realizing 'this is what I wanna be, who I am' and this is my list of being feminine. Not living up to someone else's standard of what being feminine means, which would be the dictionary version, and that's just not who I am. I'm not someone who's just a word out of a dictionary that you can just pick out of</p>
What constitutes Black girlhood?	How would you define what it means to be a Black girl?	<p>Cindy: A strong, independent, smart black girl.</p> <p>Alize: hmmm... I think it means to be stronger than a average girl Researcher: What's a average girl? Alize: Um like compared to other races stronger because you face more judgment – face more challenges throughout your education and throughout your working- like throughout your career like. Even yo home life, I feel like you face more challenges then like quote on quote average kids should have.</p> <p>Chanel: Laughs. Um, what I define, how I would define it is as a, just showing the positive side of our race because there's so many negatives with the males that the Black girls really do work hard you know like</p> <p>Honey: Um, I would define it as being strong intelligent knowing your background a lot and just being yourself</p> <p>Danielle: to be unique... but, to also go through a lot of struggle, to look down on society... yeah</p>
	Have any family members talked to you about what it means to be a lady? 1.) If yes, in what ways?	<p>Cindy: Um, a strong, like I said, a strong, smart, independent, um, um yeah.</p> <p>Larea: Um. Well, like it starts for like the, the women in your family and then how you're raised and like the history that you um, like you're learned like, like basically the, you learning about your history from your, your female um, female role models in your family. Or like anything that will relate to you and like your color of being Black.</p> <p>Larea: Um well because there's one boy that lives in our house and the rest are females and I noticed that like something's like don't have to be done by the male but if it just comes to it then he'll do it but for females it's just like they can't take out the trash, they can do the dishes, they can cook and clean, and do stuff like that. Researcher: And how does that make you feel? Larea: Um, it makes me feel that I will be more successful around like living situation and living skills because I was brought up always doing them and like training and for the male, he would be like so used to women doing it for him.</p> <p>Alize: mmm. Not like a direct conversation. I have older southern women that are aunts and stuff like that so uh. So my this my favorite great auntie her name is Neeta- Neetta Jones! (said with so much pride!). um she um, she always, like if I'm chillin at my gramma house she got these chairs they like old fashion- they kinda big as stuff and you know I be chillin... I just be kinda hangin all over and she be 'a lady doesn't sit like that, you know a lady must this, a lady must you know leg tilt to the side, crossed over' you know she's- their very... religious and very.... proper. I would say you, feel me? and like my gramma's like that and all that whole generation is like that and then it goes down to my mom and them. And they like kinda and then when it comes to my generation we like chillin basically. And so</p>

		<p>the older ones cuz they at the top of the family by at this point... they... they kinda try to tell us like 'you shouldn't speak like that; you shouldn't act like that; you shouldn't dress like that'. Cuz like... my gramma and my aunties and them... they don't like- only one aunty you will ever catch her in like some jeans or something but like that's the youngest one. But like everybody else, you'll never catch them in some jeans And its like, their... I don't know, its kinda like they teach you to cater to a man and....they teach you like to cook. As a lady they say you gotta be able to cook</p> <p>Honey: no but I kinda grew up just around all girls for like the first like- well a long time in my life when I was like really young, and so I kinda seen by like example. Like from my mom, my aunt and my gramma and yeah...</p> <p>Researcher: so what's the examples- like what did they show a lady is supposed to be?</p> <p>Honey: Just like, how you present yourself, how you like—your manners like be polite, cross your legs when your wearing like a dress. Like you know simple stuff like that.</p> <p>Ashley: A lady is for like... classy...</p> <p>Researcher: a lady is like classy?</p> <p>Ashley: yeah, and a woman is just like... gender..... But ... nobody, I don't think my mom talked to me about what it is to be a lady. I don't.</p> <p>Tiera: I would say um... being a Black girl, you have to work harder then you know as compared to other races because we're judged more highly and we're portrayed in like a negative way so I feel like sometimes you have to like... take action just to prove others wrong... you know.</p> <p>Tiera: um she always tell me like the main things is having respect for myself within myself as a person and my body... And my mom tells me like all the time, like having respect for yourself when it comes to that like don't be easy! Like cuz if you're being easy and your just giving up anything to boy- that's not havin respect for yoself! And then that's what they don't have no respect for you and then that's when boys start disrespecting you. And also standing up like...like and setting boundaries like standing up you know for yourself, as far as like say no! and if you don't wanna do something you don't have to do it! Like, like I'd be different if you want to but not letting anybody peer pressure into me doing anything and like basically yeah like having respect for my name as an individual to cuz that's how you like get a bad reputation, you know and like that's how you get labeled as a hoe like when you start doin stuff you aint got no business- you get labled as a hoe and this and that so she always tells me like 'your reputation and like your self respect is what's most important'. Like- I feel like alotta stuff she always tells me to when it comes to self-respect is like self-dignity and my morals. Like you know... so</p> <p>Danielle: they always tell me like to be classy, do my hair, try to do my make-up sometimes, to like like try to....</p>
What are the features of Black girlhood and how do Black girls describe their	Does being a Black girl effect how you're treated at home? 1.) If yes, in what ways?	<p>Larea: Um well because there's one boy that lives in our house and the rest are females and I noticed that like something's like don't have to be done by the male but if it just comes to it then he'll do it but for females it's just like they can't take out the trash, they can do the dishes, they can cook and clean, and do stuff like that.</p> <p>Researcher: And how does that make you feel?</p> <p>Larea: Um, it makes me feel that I will be more successful around like living situation amd living skills because I was brought up always doing them and like training and for the male, he would be like so used to women doing it for him.</p> <p>Alize: I guess I kinda don't know, I've never been white before so I don't know how it feels to be inside of a white woman umm</p> <p>Researcher: do you think that maybe your parents or whoever raises</p>

<p>own lived experie nces?</p>		<p>you sends specific messages because you're Black and you're a girl. I guess that's more of the question</p> <p>Alize: okay yeah... Okay because I'm a girl without a father in the household my mother sends a lot of messages that's like 'don't be with the wrong dude' because she strongly believes in the fact that like a girl looks to her father in her spouse. And then she's like 'because you don't really - you haven't really seen a father. I feel like you're not gonna know what to see in a man' and so she's like', she's scared that ima end up with a fuck boy basically. Basically. That's what she's scared of. And she said as a youngin he (her father) was a in and out type of person and then now- and then he dipped and then now he tryna come back so feels like ima end up with somebody that like dips out on me and then comes back. and then I'm like I don't think so, I barely let him in and he's my father like the only reason why I'm allowing him to talk to me is because of my mama. So I feel like that's more of a lesson for me, that's not gonna lead me there but that's her message. Like don't look for what you see in your father basically and she also sends messages like you gotta work harder. Like... you gotta present yo self even better! Basically like at all times you can't be slippin basically!</p> <p>Chanel: Um for instance, I'll wash my hair and i'll blow dry it and i'll leave it like that you know like natural beauty is the best thing that God gave us Black girls and my auntie will be like you're supposed to be a lady and you're not supposed to wear your hair like that. But this is what I wanna wear like this is my natural hair and I just blow dried it and thats it.</p> <p>Researcher: Right.</p> <p>Chanel: And I can't embrace that? I can't embrace that I'm Black and I have this hair that no one else has? Like no that's not, I just, I don't think that we should feel shy about our natural being. Like that's no.</p> <p>Honey: like more delicate, like, its kinda different like. I don't wanna say like emotion- like you know how like they always say like 'watch cuz she has emotions' and stuff, and the guys are like more tough kinda. That's how it kinda like goes.</p> <p>Ashley: no! ooooohhh well my dad- he treat me different. Like like, We was having a conversation about something and he was like 'your brother can have a girlfriend but you cant have no boyfriend'...</p> <p>Researcher: (typing) keep goin</p> <p>Ashley: and he be like yo brother can take out the trash because that's for boys. and then ...and.... like I have to clean, like wash the dishes, clean the room, clean the bathroom. Like that. And he be like if my room get dirty he be like 'no girls is suppose to have they clothes on the floor- like shoes' stuff like that. He's like 'you suppose to keep yo room clean'. But I think that's just boy versus girl, not Black girl versus Black boy. Yeah, I don't know.</p> <p>Danielle: no not really. I mean with my family I got like q a mixed family and my family in Alabama they kinda think I'm fast because I live here in the city and stuff and like some of the stuff I wear they wouldn't like, approve of.</p> <p>Researcher: like what?</p> <p>Danielle: like if I wear like a tack top or like a dress that's too short, they'll kinda have something to say about it. But like at home home like with my mom and stuff um... she kinda like, just laid back with me and stuff. about being a Black girl, she always try to tell me like, its not bad being Black, and I should just like love myself and stuff. like always trying to empower me.</p>
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	<p>Have your family members talked to you about romantic relationships?</p> <p>1.) If yes, what have they told you?</p> <p>2.) Tell me what you think romantic relationships are.</p>	<p>Larea: Not really because mostly everyone in my family is like old school and they rather you date outside their house and not underneath their roof of theirs.</p> <p>Alize: mmhm. so they'll try to talk to me... about it but that's weird too. My cousin like, one of em is like super super super super religious like when I tell you God is only thing she breath, sleep, and eat! Hahahah LIKE I mean to tell you its sooo -its soo serious like and I'm not knockin her at all like you feel me, but, that's not me. And.... When she says it she's more of a 'you know you can only have sex when you're married right? You know that you're gonna go to hell if you don't' you know its more of a.... its more of a scary conversation even that I am a virgin its still of scary cuz its like why you comin at me like that? Like you know? And I gotta another cousin- her sister, she more coo. Like she's not as religious but she's still religious and so she kinda agrees with her sister but she says it in a nicer way. And then the gay boy cousin he's kinda of like, kinda of the coolest one! but not really, like he's like - the other boy cousins- I'm not tryna get at his sexuality or nothin, but their (her other boy cousins) are like more manly and scary and like I feel like if I was tell them something about something they'd probably like.... Beat my ass.. hahaha. Or like, you know? But like with that one, he be kinda be tellin me all his lil information and stuff. I aint never told him much ahahaha but like if I wanted to I feel like I could. You know? With the others- basically everybody else, I don't feel like I can. And like my great auntys- My grandmas sisters kids I don't know what that is to me, I guess cousins right? Yeah cousins. Yeah yeah yeah! So those cousins I don't - those cousins I don't- I don't fear... well the 2 girls I don't fear. There's 2 girls and a boy, the boy I fear with all my might like ...</p> <p>Alize: uhh, I think it is when two people are committed to each other and can make love with each other... hence on make love, not just fucking!</p> <p>Researcher: and what's the importance of making love to you versus just fuckin?</p> <p>Alize: I feel like it's a difference like I feel like love- makin love with somebody is like passionate, its like y'all both wanna be there for as much time y'all can be there and I feel like just fucking is like like 'okay im bout to fuck you, we bout to bust a nut, and we bought to dip' you know?</p> <p>Chanel: Um a romantic relationship is basically like you being comfortable with the opposite sex and you guys are dating or you guys are intimately close. And like, I don't like, I don't see relationships as gender roles, like we both split the bill, we both buy each other stuff. And that's just you being able to feel no worry in the world with that person. They should just make you feel comfortable and like you guys just share stories together about your childhood and about things that made you the way you are today.</p> <p>Researcher: when do you eventually move to that stage of sex?</p> <p>Honey: When you're ready, when you don't gotta lie about it.</p> <p>Researcher: lie about it to who?</p> <p>Honey: to your parents.</p> <p>Ashley: be careful like whatever you do like... she she like 'don't have sex' but then she know like it could be comin soon so she just be like 'here' or like, 'make right decisions' like whatever.</p> <p>Researcher: well how do you know what the right decision is if y'all don't talk about it? What do you believe the right decisions are?</p> <p>Ashley: uhh personally the right decisions I feel like.. personally I don't wanna have sex now... so the right decision for me is to not have sex. So that's the right decision, but everybody is different.</p> <p>Ashley: YEAH! And that's my moms mom and I'd rather talk to her about some stuff then my mom. Cuz I feel like she's more</p>
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		<p>yourself'. So I have to say the best relationship advice I got was from my mother.</p>
	<p>Does the fact that you're a Black girl effect how people treat you in school?</p>	<p>Larea: Um yeah. Because like always like something have to be related to being ratchet or to not having long hair or like just like when people talk about like the slavery or like how women were treated is just like people look around at all the Black girls like that could've happened to you.</p> <p>Alize: uhhhhh yeah. Yeah! I think so, okay so some teachers here will kinda making little smirky... smirky remarks kinda. Not necessarily-like not in they eyes disrespect, kinda like a compliment but it could come off as disrespect like they'll say 'oh your such a strong person' but like kinda like as 'your such a strong Black person- such a strong Black girl' and stuff like that and feel me... thank you I know I'm strong but like... sometimes it's like why you only say that to Black people? You know? Ummm... I feel like Black people in the school, like you, its kind of like a easier connection. Stuff like, like, I remember Mr. Free like all the lil Latin girls was like scared of him, it was like, kinda like- you remember Mr. Free?</p> <p>Chanel: Not at all just because I am a Black girl so that makes me want to work harder and I've worked extremely hard and I don't think it affects my relationships with people because I'm not like, I don't know how to say it like I feel like it depends on who you are and like as a Black girl we just, we work a lot harder, so I feel like it doesn't affect how people treat us but it does just show that we, we're about our business. I guess, yeah.</p> <p>Honey: ummm... not but. I feel like some people do think like 'oh she's Black she must be like dumb or slow' I can like see alotta people do that. Like even like towards me like when I'm in school and stuff but like... its not true so, I don't know how they think we are but that's how I think they think I guess. I don't know.. but yeah</p> <p>Tiera: like she wants me to act accordingly like... professional and like you know alla that- act like sometime basically that I am not!</p> <p>Tiera: like, like for an example. Like... like okay, if its like me and somebody else that's not Black like I feel like they more attention, like more help then I do, like I'm just the last resort. Like you know? I always have to just wait and like, I feel as awards too, you know when we have awards and stuff like it be times where I be really doin my best and I be on top of everything and I be very good and I still like I just don't get appreciated for it. And then also I feel like I'm always looked at everything bad I do but not the good stuff that I do so... yeah</p> <p>Danielle: cuz I feel like a lot of people think I'm just ratchet and stuff and like always loud, and I'm not gone really... go far in life. So then.... I don't feel like they really work with me to like how they work with other people, or like they treat me differently?</p> <p>Danielle: I feel like I always gotta go that extra mile to prove that I'm not a stereo—I'm not that basic Black girl stereotype</p> <p>Researcher: and how does that make you feel that you always have to prove that you're not the stereotype?</p> <p>Danielle: exhausted. Cuz you know you always try to work to be better. Then its kinda like sad like... people don't really- people see you as a color, and not like as somebody that's equal as them. So yeah</p>

	<p>Does being a Black girl effect how you act at school?</p>	<p>Alize: Out side of school like in the store, in the mall and stuff like that you kinda gotta make yourself obviously not doin nothing bad so people don't stare at you. Cuz I know I'll go into like, even like the lil corner stores and stuff like them Asian people who be runnin the store, I swear to God they will stare at you the whole time in there like- I GOT MONEY, I AINT BOUT TO ROB YALL, like, leave me alone! You know stuff like that, and you know I had went into one store with my friend and she a loud mouth like I'm not gone lie, like she really loud but so? Its other loud people, them Asian people, I swear then Asian people be talkin loud as MMMM! Okay, no! I'm not gone get into that! But they loud, they loud, they make a lot of noises but people don't trip off of them. But you know we went into the store and she talkin, we was laughin- when you laughin and its really funny like you get loud! YOU GET LOUD, you feel me? SOOO, we laughin we chopping it up on our break at work- feel me- talkin bout them people at work cuz you know how it be. SO, and these people just staring at us, like we doin somethin worng and you knoe we waitin in line and stuff and they just and they sayin codes and stuff and then everybody start lookin. We like, what the... is this? Like we just got off work, we tryna get somethin to eat real quick and y'all all trippin of us like... we bout to rob y'all or somethin. If we was gone rob y'all we woulda took everthing and left already- WE WOULDN'T BE STANDIN IN THIS LINE! And its just stuff like that, like you gotta act innocent...even if you not guilty! You feel me, and I don't like that- but that happens. And people, I feel like on the bus and stuff, when you're not sitting there like all dressed up or something, if I'm like this or something in plain clothes, they probably gone think like 'oh she did something bad, she got on all Black and stuff' but its like little do you know I just came from school, I have a 4.0... like you know. Don't nobody- nobody will credit you like... for yo education or for like who you really are. They'll just look at you and just be like 'oh she must be somethin bad' and I feel like its connected to being Black cuz alotta people think that Black people are like...you know, bad. Criminals and stuff like that. So... yeah</p> <p>Chanel: No but then yes. Because sometimes you wanna react to it like you wanna just clap your hands and be like, look this is not happening right now, but you don't want people to perceive you as that ratchet person because that's not who you are you know? And I just think that some people react like that because it's how they grew up, what they grew up around. So yeah.</p> <p>Tiera: no, cuz I still act the way I act. I don't let nobody tell me different or ...or...or want me to change who I am like, I'm gonna be me. I feel like if you don't like it then don't be around me. Cuz I can't be fake and I don't wanna act like nobody else so...</p>
<p>What is the relationship between Black girlhood, femininity, and sexual identity?</p>	<p>What have you learned about sexuality?</p>	<p>Alize: Um within the black community? Well family wise what you learn about it is straight is the only way that's right, um outside of family you learn that whatever happens, happens! For real like, whatever you like, that's who you like. Um yeah, that's like many the two. And like Honey said we had that one sex-ed class in like the 10th grade but that was kinda like stupid they teach you 'oh how do you put a condom on?'</p> <p>Chanel: It's who you are. Like basically sexuality is like you're, I don't know. How I define sexuality is either you're straight, you're gay, or bisexual, however you identify with what you like whether that's male or female and um basically being comfortable with the opposite sex or the same sex.</p> <p>Honey: uhh. How you like define yourself, uh like if you define yourself as like bi, gay, like that? Yeah, that's what I think it is.</p> <p>Tiera: um I have learned thatsexuality is something within the individual itself, like and everybody has a different preference on it, and..... I guess when it comes to sexuality, it comes to sexuality within</p>

		<p>yourself and then it can be sexuality like whatever gender you are attracted to. So yeah</p> <p>Danielle: I learn't that a lot of people view stuff differently about like Black girls and stuff- and like, girls of any race. And like alotta people, boys and girls go through like some of the same things but girls kinda have it just a lil bit harder. And sexuality can like range from like anything that you fine right or wrong with your body and stuff like who you are... yeah.</p> <p>Danielle: like, you den let this person inside you, you done got like on a whole other level with them, and like if that's yo first... First time having sex with somebody, you always gone remember them like... there's no going back.</p> <p>Venus: It's a big thing! Tts something that people are very closed minded on and I was one of them like when people were like 'what your sexuality' I never thought it was how I represent myself or how I carry myself, or how I view myself. I always thought like 'oh they want to know what my preference is'—'oh, I'm a pansexual female' I never thought about how like I carried myself and presented myself to be a strong, and then like also putting my race into it because that's something that I do struggle with because of my skin color, despite that... but sexuality is something I feel that needs to be brought up in schools a lot more cuz everyone's like 'oh sexuality is you're either gay or you're a lesbian'. Its not like 'honey that's not the only thing that's about your sexuality, its about how you represent yourself, how you carry yourself, and are you willing to actually have that confidence within yourself. Not that where you have to like 'fake it till you make it' but that confidence where like you can actually walk through a group of people, and stand strong and actually be like 'yes, this is who I am and I'm proud to be me and I'm strong'. Like you have to have that confidence to actually open your mind up more, to actually view what sexuality means. Cuz I didn't understand it until I wanna say my senior year</p>
1.) Did you take a sex-education class? 2.) If yes, what did you learn? 3.) If not, tell me what you think sexuality is.		<p>Cindy: I mean we learned, like you know condoms and stuff like that. Larea: Like anything related to anyone in a sexual way like from sex to um like your appearance and how you come off to other people stuff like that.</p> <p>Alize: Mmmm Nothing really! I mean nothing that stuck. Nothing that- nothing that really passed outside of that class. Like I learned what I had to learn in order to pass they lil quizzes that they would give us and stuff like that but... overall its kinda like the same basic stuff your mom tell you 'if you gone do something, put a condom one!' Like I think I got that part down! I think that's the part I understand but... kinda like that same- that's the only thing that stuck like the same basic thing... Them people they had this thing called "Cuidaté" um take care of yoself and um it was about like "beyond a condom" but I don't really remember I know I went because I worked for them people. So I had to go. But I don't really recall But I know it was about a girl and how you take care of yourself as a woman who wants sex basically and yeah... that's all I remember. I don't agree with what they said</p> <p>(sexual decision making perspective) Alize: um I think you gotta be smart I don't think you can't just do stuff in the moment you can just... you know? Go out there and start fuckin everybody... You gotta think about what's best for you – you gotta think about 'what if this person what I thought they was- what if they got something and not tellin me' cuz you know my cousin is a gay man right! And he slipped up and got H.I.V. from a dude that claimed like 'Ima be with you forever, I love you, dadadada' same things that girls may do too. You know like you here them (boys) say I love you and ima be with you forever and they like 'oh okay' haha! He did that and got H.I.V. and dude was out! He knew he had it! He just aint tell my cousin you know. So I'm like you</p>

		<p>gotta take the steps, if you think this is somebody that's gone be yo' sexual partner you need to go get them checked out, get yoself checked out, make sure yall good. And then if yall not feel me have the conversation like 'are you willing to still take the risk, is it...' you know? I think you just gotta take care of you and not be like a dumbie that get caught up basically. You know.</p> <p>Alize: I think It is like who you wanna be and you wanna be with</p> <p>Chanel: Okay. Well I've learned like what like umbrella terms and why things might be different for some people and why it's harder to be comfortable with your sexuality whether you're gay or straight just because of the social norms that's going on around us.</p> <p>Honey: well yeah. How you think about yourself. Like if you wanna be gay, straight, bi, a girl, a boy, uh transgender. Anything you wanna be.</p> <p>Tiera: and we learned about you know female parts. We learned about having periods, um, we learned about keeping ourselves clean as far as like um with periods and washing ourselves, and when it comes to sex we learned um...um like the way- there's different ways to protect yourself, like through using a condom, birth control, or all these different pills you can take. And like um... what else, I learned that you can still contract and STD—you can still um... get an STD through using using a condom, and um... what else did we learn. Once you start having a period your more susceptible to getting pregnant</p> <p>Tiera: like I said I think sexuality is yourself as and individual, how you define yourself, and what your attracted to as far as gender. So that's really basically it</p> <p>Danielle: I learned about protecting yourself and having sex, and I learned about different diseases annnnd.....yeah</p> <p>Danielle: its like... who you define yourself as and how you carry yourself and like your beliefs and stuff</p> <p>Venus: Weeeee... I wanna say yes, our school provided it sophomore year for like a week. But my WLE (work learning experience) actually I- we are tryna start a Wellness Center her so I had to actually do my own research on like, more into mental health and digging deeper and also um... sexual health... which was crazy because I didn't know all these things, it was like STD's, STI's, the different ways of protection um, there's female condoms and condoms and birth control and all these things, all these resources that are out there not only for adults but for young people, yet no one knows about this</p>
	<p>How have you reacted in the past when you see someone you were attracted to at school? Can you provide a story?</p>	<p>Chanel: Oh my God. Okay so, first thing I say, sometimes I even say it out loud and my friends will be like shut up. But like I be like ooh he cute.</p> <p>Both Laugh.</p> <p>Chanel: Ooh he cute. And then I be like okay okay and then I kind of stare at them and then like you ever look and then you look back and y'all both looking like that just be like okay and then like if they approach me, my stomach like I feel butterflies in my stomach. I kind of start panting because I have anxiety and um I don't know. I don't know like I kinda am shy it depends on how like comfortable I feel at the time and I'll be like hmm he was speaking but he wasn't speaking to me.</p> <p>Ashley: oh just the other day- yesterday, like I went to go see my boyfriend and like we was on the phone until I got to him. And then I was like oh I see you, I go up to him and its just like, I just be like, just wanna smile so much. Ahaha. And like I don't know like - its, I don't know, I just feel happy. Like mmmmmhm</p>

		<p>Researcher: so what should a healthy relationship look like in your eyes</p> <p>Ashley: trust! Cuz I feel like, like I be tellin him 'I don't trust you like, its just not there' but like ... I don't know, I feel like trust is a big thing for me. Annnnd like you know, being honest and stuff about everything and....</p> <p>Danielle: ummm. I mean... If I see somebody I like, I'm probably gone start smilin like hecka much... like if their cute or somethin.... But, it has never like affected me, like in a big way. Other then smillin or like cheezin hecka hard, there's nothing else that happens to me.</p>
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