Supporting 5th-12th Grade Black Girls in Community-Based Educational Spaces

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Supporting 5th-12th Grade Black Girls in Community-Based Educational Spaces

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Research shows that young people can benefit from participating in community-based educational spaces (CBES; i.e., activities outside of classroom time). These settings can be particularly positive for Black girls, providing benefits like sanctuary (a safe, protected space), a space for identity discovery, and opportunities for critical consciousness development. However, without an intersectional approach, instead of places of sanctuary, CBES run the risk of being places where Black girls experience gendered racism (e.g., microaggressions). With a strong approach, CBES can help Black girls (1) process gendered racial socialization messages (e.g., unpacking and healing from the gendered racism they experience), (2) explore their gendered racial identity ideologies, and (3) outwardly display their authentic selves. For this dissertation, I developed and empirically tested a conceptual model for staff in CBES to use to explore gendered racial socialization messages and 5th-12th grade Black girls’ interpretation of messages, gendered racial identity ideologies, and outward display of sense of self in CBES. To test the conceptual model, I conducted a three-part exploratory critical narrative study. Based on the study, I identified techniques that likely help staff support Black girls. These include: be intentional about the gendered racial socialization messages communicated, support Black girls as they interpret gendered racial socialization messages and explore gendered racial identity ideologies, and create an environment where Black girls can be their authentic selves (i.e., freely express themselves without judgment).
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This dissertation and the work I do with Black women and girls is dedicated to the memory of my mom and granny.

I did it! Thank God!
1.0 Introduction

During the summer of 2010, I was a residential camp counselor for girls aged 6-19. My journey of exploring the impacts of community-based educational spaces (CBES) on Black girls\(^1\) started when I was the counselor for a cabin of primarily Black girls. CBES\(^2\) are activities and programs operated outside of class time – whether in the school building during the school day or outside the building independent of the school day – that support the holistic health (e.g., emotional/mental, intellectual, physical, spiritual, social including social identities, vocational) of young people (Akiva et al., 2022; Baldridge, 2020; Baldridge et al., 2017). Also, I include activities and programs led by community organizations that occur during the school day in the school building (e.g., a social-emotional skills group facilitated by a community organization during lunchtime) and those that are sponsored by schools but do not happen during class time (e.g., a Black girls’ group held in the library during study hall by the school librarian). Throughout this dissertation, I use CBES as a broad term to include after school, before school, summer, art, weekend, youth activism, workforce, and mentoring programs, libraries, religious institutions, museums, scouts, and city departments.

As a directed study final project in my Master of Social Work (MSW) program, I wrote a literature review for staff in CBES about the needs of Black adolescent girls (e.g., trauma and stress). I studied trauma-informed care including how stress and trauma impact brain development, and thus how an individual acts and responds in situations (American Institutes for Research, 2019;  

\(^{1}\) In this dissertation, Black girls are self-identified girls, no matter sex assigned at birth, who are 18 years old or younger, and are a part of the African diaspora.  
\(^{2}\) Other similar terms include out-of-school time programs, informal education programs, expanded learning, and youth-serving organizations.
Forum for Youth Investment, 2021; Ginwright, 2016; Morris, 2016a, 2022). Consequently, staff in CBES must work to address the root causes of behaviors they see in CBES (e.g., trauma, gendered racism, difficulty verbalizing emotions, threats to safety, unmet needs) and even if the root cause is out of the scope of the CBES, it’s still critical to acknowledge there is a root cause to behaviors to decrease punitively punishing and pathologizing Black girls (Baldridge, 2020; Cantor et al., 2021; Ginwright, 2016; Morris, 2016a).

After my MSW program, I incorporated aspects of youth-led participatory action research (YPAR) into the programming I did with several groups of Black adolescents. Even though the overall project for each group was different, each one was inquiry-based, participatory, and transformative (Rodriquez & Brown, 2009). Generally, the young people selected a topic of importance to their lives as teens, interviewed individuals about the problem, designed a solution to address the problem, asked for feedback on their solution, and presented what they learned. Through these experiences, I became interested in learning more about how to integrate YPAR in CBES even if the focus of the CBES is not advocacy or activism.

Early in my PhD in education program, I expanded the work I do with Black girls to include healing (i.e., “involves reconciling the past to change the present while imagining a new future”; Ginwright, 2010, p. 86) and liberation (i.e., “a praxis: the action and reflection of people upon their world in order to transform it”; Freire, 2000, p. 79). I describe the combination of healing and liberation as radical healing (French et al., 2020; Ginwright, 2010, 2016, 2018). Ginwright (2010, 2016) explains radical healing as the idea that young people have opportunities to imagine what they want to see in their communities – it is about hope and wellness on the individual, community, and social levels. Building on Ginwright’s (2016) work, French et al. (2020) introduced a
psychological framework for radical healing and describes it as “acknowledg[ing] the pain of oppression while fostering hope for justice and freedom” (p. 36).

The radical healing framework presented by French et al. (2020) includes critical consciousness, radical hope and envisioning possibilities, strength and resistance, cultural authenticity and self-knowledge, and collectivism. Critical consciousness is comprised of critical reflection, critical motivation or political efficacy, and critical action (Diemer et al., 2020; Freire 2000; French et al., 2020; Gonzalez et al., 2020; Kokka, 2020). In this context, critical reflection is defined as Black girls analyzing how systems of power create and sustain gendered racism. Critical motivation is described as the perceived agency of Black girls to work toward dismantling gendered racism on their own and/or collectively. Finally, critical action is the act of Black girls participating in individual and/or collective activities that challenge and work towards dismantling gendered racism (Diemer et al., 2020; Freire 2000; French et al., 2020; Gonzalez et al., 2020; Kokka, 2020). The concept of radical hope and envisioning possibilities is about imagining what is possible and freedom dreaming (French et al., 2020; Love, 2019). Expanding the definition from French et al. (2020), I identify strength and resistance as, Black girls “living joy-filled lives despite a critical awareness of [gendered] racial trauma and oppression” specifically gendered racism (p. 27). When Black girls push back on colonized ways of knowing and honor their ancestor’s ways of knowing, they are exhibiting the cultural authenticity and self-knowledge component of the radical healing framework. Finally, collectivism can be expressed as Black girls connecting to social support from Black women and girls and “a counter-space for radical healing where authenticity and comradery can flourish” (French et al., 2020, p. 28).
1.1 Dissertation Background

We cannot fully understand Black girls’ intersectional experiences in CBES without an overview of holistic health. Using previous literature (see American Institutes for Research, 2019; CASEL, 2020; Forum for Youth Investment, 2021; Ginwright, 2010, 2016; Inniss-Thompson et al., 2022; Love, 2019; Morris, 2022; Nagaoka et al., 2015; National Equity Project, n.d.; National Museum of African American History & Culture, n.d.; Osai et al., 2024; The Ohio State University Office of Student Life Student Wellness Center, n.d.) as the basis, I define holistic health as thriving in all dimensions of wellness (e.g., emotional/mental, intellectual, physical, spiritual, social including social identities, vocational) at every level (i.e., intrapersonal or within self, interpersonal or between individuals, institutional/organizational level or laws, policies, procedures, routines, and curriculum). Given the complexity of holistic health, for this dissertation, I focus on the social dimension specifically related to gendered racial identity in CBES with the intention to continue to expand to other aspects of holistic health in the future.

I have worked with K-12th grade Black girls with a range of developmental levels in both direct service and administrative roles and with different types of CBES (e.g., science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM), entrepreneurship, career-college prep). I’ve worked in organizations where there were only a couple of Black girls, places where Black girls were about half the population or majority of the population, and other spaces that only had Black girls or specific Black girl spaces inside a larger space. What I noticed across all these types of spaces, regardless of the focus of the CBES, is that although Black girls are a diverse group of individuals (e.g., they have different ethnicities, sexual orientations, classes, nationalities, religious beliefs, and abilities), they have shared strengths and needs in part because they experience sexism and racism as one (i.e., gendered racism; Collins, 2022; Essed, 1991; Lindsey, 2018; Porter et al., 2020;
Settles, 2006). CBES can provide environments where Black girls heal from and advocate against
gendered racism in community (Baldridge, 2020; Ginwright, 2010, 2016; Inniss-Thompson et al.,
2024; Kelly, 2020b; Morris, 2022; Osai et al., 2024).

When I reflect on my time growing up as a Black girl, the work I did with Black girls, and the research I’ve done, I recognize how critical it is for Black girls to have places where they can safely explore their gendered racial identity ideologies (i.e., how Black girls consciously and unconsciously think and feel about and perceive their intertwined gender and race memberships; Collins, 2022; Sellers et al., 1997; Williams & Lewis, 2021) and outwardly display their authentic selves (i.e., comfortable and safe to express themselves in the way they want) and CBES can serve as those places (Baldridge, 2020; Emdin, 2021; Inniss-Thompson et al., 2022, 2024; Rogers & Butler-Barnes, 2021).

1.1.1 Dissertation Structure

For this dissertation, I developed and empirically tested a conceptual model for staff in CBES to use to explore gendered racial socialization messages and 5th-12th grade Black girls’ interpretation of messages, gendered racial identity ideologies, and outward display of sense of self in CBES. I developed a conceptual model to visually organize and describe the relationships of these components. In Chapter 2, I introduce the conceptual model developed based on a literature review. The questions that guided the literature review are:

- What are the gendered racial socialization messages communicated to Black girls in community-based educational spaces?

- How do Black girls internally interpret gendered racial socialization messages?
• What are Black girls’ personal gendered racial identity ideologies based on how they interpret gendered racial socialization messages?

• In what ways do Black girls outwardly display their sense of self in community-based educational spaces?

Chapter 2 is an edited version, for this dissertation, of a co-authored manuscript submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. In Chapter 3, I present the results from a three-part study where I empirically tested the conceptual model with the overall research questions:

• Related to gendered racial socialization messages, how can staff in community-based educational spaces support Black girls?

• What can staff in community-based educational spaces do to support Black girls’ internal interpretation of gendered racial socialization messages and exploration of their gendered racial identity ideologies?

• How do Black girls outwardly display their authentic self in community-based educational spaces? What are barriers to Black girls’ outwardly displaying their authentic selves in community-based educational spaces?

• What can staff in community-based educational spaces do to encourage Black girls to be their authentic selves?

In this three-part study, I first used secondary data with Black adolescent girls describing how they reimagine afterschool. Part 1 addresses three research sub-questions: (1) what needs did Black adolescent girl Generator Z participants identify as critical in afterschool programs, (2) what gendered racial identity ideologies did Black adolescent girl Generator Z participants draw on, and (3) how did Black adolescent girl Generator Z participants express themselves? I then expanded on that in the second part to highlight the experiences of 5th-8th Black girls in CBES and their
descriptions of the perfect afterschool program based on data from focus groups I co-facilitated. I also interviewed a program manager of the afterschool program who works with a group of Black girls who participated in the focus groups for this part of the study. Part 2 addresses the following research sub-questions: (1) what did focus group participants want in an afterschool program, (2) how did staff in community-based educational spaces communicate uplifting gendered racial socialization messages to the participants, (3) what characteristics helped Black girls feel comfortable in community-based educational spaces, and (4) how did focus group participants describe wanting to express themselves in community-based educational spaces? The third part centered staff in CBES that work with 5th-12th grade Black girls. Part 3 addressed two sub-questions: (1) what gendered racial socialization messages were communicated to Black girls in community-based educational spaces and (2) what did interview participants want for Black girls in community-based educational spaces? See Figure 1.1 for a visual overview of the study with the overall research questions mapped to the components of the conceptual model. Chapter 3 is written for a practitioner audience with a focus on helping staff in CBES support Black girls. Finally, in Chapter 4, I summarize the dissertation and identify limitations and future directions. Through this dissertation, I hope to (1) encourage researchers to further explore Black girls’ intersectional experiences in CBES and (2) help staff in CBES better support the Black girls in their spaces.
Overview of Three-Part Exploratory Critical Narrative Study

Related to gendered racial socialization messages, how can staff in community-based educational spaces support Black girls?

What can staff in community-based educational spaces do to support Black girls’ internal interpretation of gendered racial socialization messages and exploration of their gendered racial identity ideologies?

How do Black girls outwardly display their authentic selves in community-based educational spaces? What are barriers to Black girls’ outwardly displaying their authentic selves in community-based educational spaces?

What can staff in community-based educational spaces do to encourage Black girls to be their authentic selves?

Figure 1.1 Overview of Three-Part Exploratory Critical Narrative Study
Chapter 2: Toward a Conceptual Model to Explore Gendered Racial Socialization

Messages and 5th-12th Grade Black Girls’ Interpretation of Messages, Gendered Racial Identity Ideologies, and Outward Display of Sense of Self in CBES

Black girls’ authentic and holistic lived experiences are often hidden in research and practice (Collins & Bilge, 2020; Crenshaw, 1989; Nunn, 2018; Rogers & Bulter-Barnes, 2021). Although Black girls’ experiences are not monolithic – they have varied ethnicities, sexual orientations, classes, nationalities, religious beliefs, and abilities – in the United States they tend to have common experiences partly because of gendered racism (i.e., intersection of sexism and racism; Collins, 2022; Essed, 1991; Lindsey, 2018; Porter et al., 2020; Settles, 2006). Additionally, Black girls have a gendered racial identity or a unique identity (Thomas et al., 2011; Williams & Lewis, 2021) that is the intersection of gender identity (Downing & Roush, 1985) and racial identity (Cross, 1971; Phinney, 1989). In fact, previous studies have shown Black girls and women’s gendered racial identity is generally more salient than their gender identity or racial identity separately (Settles, 2006; Thomas et al., 2011).

Black girls can find safety or sanctuary in community-based educational spaces or CBES (Akiva et al., 2017; American Institutes for Research, 2019; CASEL, 2020; Forum for Youth

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3 This chapter is an edited version of a co-authored manuscript submitted to a peer-reviewed journal. Citation: Woodberry-Shaw, D., Freeman, C., Lewis, S. S., & Akiva, T. (2023). Conceptual model to explore 5th-12th grade Black girls’ gendered racial identity ideologies and gendered racial socialization messages in community-based educational spaces. [Manuscript submitted for publication].

4 We use Black as a broad category to encompass all those in the African diaspora (Yates, 2021). Additionally, girl includes any person 18 years or younger who identifies as a girl regardless of sex assigned at birth.

5 CBES encompasses after school, before school, summer, art, weekend, youth activism, workforce, and mentoring programs, programs during the school day led by community organizations, extracurricular programs sponsored by the school, libraries, religious institutions, museums, scouts, and city departments. Other terms include out-of-school time programs, informal education programs, expanded learning, and youth-serving organizations.
Investment, 2021; Morris, 2016a). CBES are defined as programs and activities operated outside of classroom time (including those facilitated by community organizations) and/or places outside of the school building that center some aspect or aspects of holistic health (e.g., emotional/mental, intellectual, physical, spiritual, social including social identities, vocational) of young people (Akiva et al., 2022; Baldridge, 2020; Baldridge et al., 2017). However, when CBES fail to acknowledge and incorporate Black girls’ intertwined experiences, they can mimic the physical and emotional harm Black girls experience in other contexts – schools, media, healthcare, and the juvenile justice systems (e.g., policies that criminalize Black girls’ hair and behaviors; Baldridge et al., 2017; Carey et al., 2022; Crenshaw et al., 2015; Ginwright, 2016; Kaler-Jones, 2021; Morris, 2016, 2022; Turner and Young, 2022). The conceptual model we present is designed to aid staff in CBES as they work to intentionally provide safe spaces for Black girls.

We focus on CBES in the United States because we do not have much information related to Black girls in this context, yet they are important developmental settings for many Black girls. In community with adults and peers, these homeplaces or sanctuary spaces can help them explore, celebrate, and express their authentic selves in addition to encouraging them to work towards dismantling gendered racism and other types of oppression (Akiva et al., 2017; Akiva et al., 2022; Baldridge, 2020; Baldridge et al., 2017; Carey et al., 2020; Collins, 2022; Emdin, 2021; Ginwright, 2010; Ginwright & James, 2002; hooks, 1990; Inniss-Thompson et al., 2022; Li & Julian, 2012; Love, 2019; Nagaoka et al., 2015). This conceptual model focuses on three aspects of a Black girl’s life in community-based educational spaces – gendered racial socialization messages, gendered racial identity ideologies, and outward display of sense of self.

This work expands the literature on gender identity and socialization, racial identity and socialization, and the growing body of literature primarily with Black women on intersectionality,
gendered racism, gendered racial identity, and gendered racial socialization through the development of a conceptual model designed to help researchers and practitioners explore gendered racial socialization messages and 5th-12th grade Black girls’ interpretation of messages, gendered racial identity ideologies, and outward display of sense of self in CBES. We start here with 5th-12th grade because pre-adolescence and adolescence are critical times for identity exploration (Adams-Bass & Bentley-Edwards, 2021). The conceptual model (Figure 2.1) is a visual representation of a process Black girls go through as Black girls (1) receive external messages about being a Black girl from individuals and materials in CBES and in response to how Black girls show up in those spaces (i.e., gendered racial socialization messages), (2) internally interpret the messages which shape how they think and feel about, and perceive themselves as Black girls (i.e., gendered racial identity ideologies), and (3) how they outwardly display their sense of self in CBES based on their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions (e.g., appearance, language). The questions that guided the development of this literature-based conceptual model are:

- What are the gendered racial socialization messages communicated to Black girls in community-based educational spaces?
- How do Black girls internally interpret gendered racial socialization messages?
- What are Black girls’ personal gendered racial identity ideologies based on how they interpret gendered racial socialization messages?
- In what ways do Black girls outwardly display their sense of self in community-based educational spaces?
Conceptual Model Exploring Gendered Racial Socialization Messages and 5th-12th Grade Black Girls’ Interpretation of Messages, Gendered Racial Identity Ideologies, and Outward Display of Self in Community-Based Educational Spaces

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Model Exploring Gendered Racial Socialization Messages and 5th-12th Grade Black Girls’ Interpretation of Messages, Gendered Racial Identity Ideologies, and Outward Display of Sense of Self In Community-Based Educational Spaces
2.1 Positionality

Though the first, second, and third authors have insider knowledge on this topic as cisgender Black women, positionality is more than race and gender (e.g., ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, nationality, religious belief, disability, generation). We recognize the complexities among Black girls and women and continuously discussed how our unique experiences as Black women influence this work. Specifically, as the first author, I am a researcher-practitioner and use my personal experiences growing up as a Black girl (e.g., dealing with gendered racism socialization messages) and my professional experience in administrative and direct service roles in community-based educational spaces (CBES) to encourage holistic health of Black girls. The second author uses her personal knowledge of gendered racism and identity struggles to guide her as she does what she can to help young people with their own struggles. As a community educator, informal community support, and lifelong learner, she uses what she knows and what she’s learning to develop and implement programming specific to meeting the needs of Black girls. As a Black woman and mom of three Black daughters (and one Black son), the third author, experienced systemic racism and discrimination growing up and uses this knowledge to manage, facilitate, and design CBES to uplift the excellence of Black girls. The fourth author does not have lived experience as a Black girl and identifies as a white, cisgender, Jewish, US-born man; however, he has spent multiple years as a youth development practitioner and has a decades-long scholarly focus on belonging and relational practices in CBES.
2.2 Community-Based Educational Spaces

The conceptual model we present is situated in community-based educational spaces (CBES) as the setting but it’s critical to acknowledge other aspects of Black girls’ learning and development ecosystem because things that happen outside of the CBES settings impact what happens inside the CBES settings (Akiva et al., 2022; Ginwright, 2016; Nagaoka et al., 2015). Other contexts such as classrooms/schools, media, healthcare, and the juvenile justice system can actively cause harm to Black girls through gendered racism including but not limited to physical violence, zero tolerance policies, and criminalization of their bodies, hair, behaviors, and language (Baldridge et al., 2017; Carey et al., 2022; Ginwright, 2016; Kaler-Jones, 2021; Morris, 2016, 2022; Turner & Young, 2022). If CBES are not intentional and do not use an intersectional approach, they risk replicating the detrimental aspects of these systems and inflict harm on Black girls (Baldridge, 2020).

CBES include individuals, physical locations, activities, and what developmental ecosystem theorists call “collections of people, places, and possibilities that constitute an environment full of learning and development opportunities” (Akiva et al., 2022, p. 14). Though we need more research about Black girls in CBES, we can look to the general benefits of CBES as a starting place. Although some CBES focus on academics, have academic enrichment, or may even be led by the school (e.g., afterschool clubs), they operate outside of class time and thus are not restricted by grades or standardized testing (Akiva et al., 2023; Baldridge, 2020). This flexibility “allow[s] for more culturally relevant, culturally sustaining, and equalized relationships between youth and adults” (Baldridge et al., 2017, p. 389). Furthermore, authentic relationships with adults can facilitate young people’s exploration and expression of their identity and healing from traumatic experiences (Baldridge et al., 2017; Ginwright, 2016; hooks, 1990; Inniss-
Thompson et al., 2022; Kelly, 2020; Li & Julian, 2012; Morris, 2022). This “radical healing acknowledges the pain of oppression while fostering hope for justice and freedom” (French et al., 2020, p. 36).

Community-based educational spaces can also facilitate critical consciousness (Freire, 2000; Gonzalez et al., 2020). Critical consciousness consists of three phases: critical reflection, critical motivation or political efficacy, and critical action (Diemer et al., 2020; Freire, 2000; French et al., 2020; Gonzalez et al., 2020; Kokka, 2020). Critical reflection is when individuals analyze how systems of power create and sustain oppression. The perceived agency individuals have to work towards dismantling oppression either on their own or collectively describes critical motivation. Finally, critical action can be defined as individuals participating in individual and/or collective activities that challenge and work towards dismantling oppression (Diemer et al., 2020; Freire, 2000; French et al., 2020; Gonzalez et al., 2020; Kokka, 2020).

2.3 Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the foundation for the conceptual model presented in this literature review because without this lens the specific issues Black girls face can be hidden (Collins & Bilge, 2020). Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality in 1989 to describe the oppression Black women experienced in the legal system related to their race, gender, and class (Crenshaw, 1989). Collins and Bilge (2020) identify six core themes of intersectionality: social inequality, intersecting power relations, social context, relationality, social justice, and complexity. Their definition describes these themes more deeply:
Intersectionality investigates how intersecting power relations influence social relations across diverse societies as well as individual experiences in everyday life. As an analytic tool, intersectionality views categories of race, class, gender, sexuality, class, nation, ability, ethnicity, and age – among others – as interrelated and mutually shaping one another. Intersectionality is a way of understanding and explaining complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. (Collins & Bilge, 2020, p. 2)

Single-axis, additive, interactional, and intersectional approaches are a few ways researchers have used intersectionality to investigate the racism and sexism Black women experience (Brown et al., 2017; Collins, 2022; Lewis & Neville, 2015; Moody, 2018; Szymanski & Lewis, 2016; Thomas et al., 2008). The single-axis approach states Black girls experience racism and sexism separately (Lewis & Neville, 2015; Szymanski & Lewis, 2016). This approach claims Black girls experience racism the same as Black boys and experience sexism the same as white girls (Lewis & Neville, 2015; Szymanski & Lewis, 2016). An additive approach to oppression is similar to a “double jeopardy” mindset in that Black girls experience racism and sexism separately but the effects of the two types of oppression are compounded (Lewis & Neville, 2015; Szymanski & Lewis, 2016; Thomas et al., 2008).

Research in this area often tests the separate experiences of racism and sexism in women’s lives as if they are independent processes or hold one variable, race or gender, as a constant in examining psychological distress related to the other. (Thomas et al., 2008, p. 307)

The closely related interactional approach examines racism, sexism, and the interaction of the two (Lewis & Neville, 2015; Moody, 2018; Szymanski & Lewis, 2016; Thomas et al., 2008). Lewis and Neville (2015) explain, “Psychology researchers have included race, gender, and an interaction term of race and gender in their analyses to explore the influence of each identity group...
separately and together” (p. 290). These three approaches do not adequately and fully capture the lived experiences of Black girls (Moody, 2018; Thomas et al., 2008). They isolate the oppression Black girls experience into racism and sexism.

An intersectional approach is more holistic and describes sexism and racism as intertwined (i.e., gendered racism; Collins, 2022; Essed, 1991; Settles, 2006) and constructs that cannot be explored as separate entities in the lives of Black girls (Brown, 1989; Brown et al., 2017; Lewis & Neville, 2015; Moody, 2018; Thomas et al., 2008). Using an intersectional lens, we assert that socialization and identity are also unique concepts for Black girls (i.e., gendered racial socialization and gendered racial identity), and staff in community-based educational spaces must recognize this so they can holistically support and engage Black girls. It is also critical to acknowledge the complexities of Black girls’ experiences due to their other intersections (e.g., ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, skin color, nationality, religious belief, and disability).

2.4 Gendered Racism

Black girls living in the United States are a heterogeneous group – they have different ethnicities, sexual orientations, classes, nationalities, religious beliefs, and abilities. Yet, they tend to have shared experiences partially due to gendered racism – a specific type of oppression in which Black girls experience the intersection of sexism and racism simultaneously (Collins, 2022; Essed, 1991; Settles, 2006). Gendered racism is systemic (i.e., prejudice backed by institutional power); and it manifests at multiple levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, and organizational (Davis & Harrison, 2013; National Equity Project, n.d.; National Museum of African American History & Culture, n.d.).
Gendered racial stereotypes or tropes about Black girls such as jezebel (e.g., hypersexualized), mammy (e.g., self, obedient caretaker), and sapphire (e.g., angry Black girl) are historical narratives rooted in slavery that are still portrayed in mainstream media (Blake & Epstein, 2019; Brown et al., 2017; Collins, 2022; Epstein et al., 2017; Lewis et al., 2016; Morris, 2016; Thomas & King, 2007; West, 1995; Williams & Lewis, 2021; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). The presence of gendered racial stereotypes is “designed to make [gendered racism] appear to be natural, normal, and inevitable parts of everyday life” (Collins, 2022, p. 90) and they are used to control the image of Black girls and justify gendered racism.

2.4.1 Institutional and Organizational Levels

Gendered racism can manifest at the institutional and organizational levels through gendered racist policies, procedures, and materials (e.g., curricula, books, decorations). Black girls’ bodies, including their hair, and their language are criminalized, policed, objectified, and hypersexualized. Kaler-Jones (2021), Morris (2016, 2022), and Turner and Young (2022) provide examples of the criminalization and policing of Black girls’ hair – Black girls being sent home, threatened with expulsion and detention, not allowed to compete in sporting events or extracurricular activities, and forced to cut and change their hair at sporting competitions because their natural hair and protective hairstyles – locs, afros, and beads – were deemed as unacceptable and against policies. Black girls’ bodies are sexualized by adults under the guise of dress code policies, and they may feel hypervisible because adults single out their bodies and how they wear clothes (Gadson and Lewis, 2022; Kaler-Jones, 2021; Morris, 2022).

Additionally, dress code and hair policies are often written vague, and enforcement is left up to those placed in positions of power (Kaler-Jones, 2021). Subjective, vague, and unwritten
policies allow adults to discipline Black girls for what they claim is disrespectful, defiant, and disruptive behaviors (Blake & Epstein, 2019; Crenshaw et al., 2015). The sapphire stereotype is one reason why Black girls’ actions (e.g., falling asleep in class, small conflicts/disagreements Black girls have with peers and adults, self-defense, not adhering to dress code policies) are perceived and punished as criminal acts (Crenshaw et al., 2015; Morris, 2016).

2.4.2 Interpersonal Level

Individuals’ beliefs and actions influence how they interact with Black girls (i.e., interpersonal level) such as gendered racial microaggressions. Lewis et al. (2016) describe gendered racial microaggressions as the “subtle and everyday verbal, behavioral, and environmental expressions of oppression based on the intersection of one’s race and gender” (p. 758). Gendered racial microaggressions include things such as individuals touching and smelling Black girls’ hair without permission and comments about skin color (Gadson & Lewis, 2022; Kaler-Jones, 2021; Morris, 2022; Tribble et al., 2019).

Black girls are not given the flexibility to learn and grow from their mistakes; instead, their mistakes are viewed as deliberate, mischievous actions and harshly punished by individuals (Epstein et al., 2017; Morris, 2022). Crenshaw et al. (2015) list examples including “a 16-year-old…arrested when an experiment she tried on school grounds caused a small explosion” (p. 4). Michelle Obama shared a similar sentiment in her 2022 book, The Light We Carry, “If a Black woman expresses anything resembling anger, people are more likely to view it as a general personality trait rather than being connected to any type of inciting circumstance, which of course makes her easier to marginalize, and easier to write off” (pp. 269-270). At this level, it is
individuals making decisions, unconsciously and consciously, about how they engage with Black girls and carry out organizational/institutional level policies and procedures.

2.4.3 Intrapersonal Level

In this dissertation, the intrapersonal or individual level is described as the unconscious and conscious beliefs and actions of individuals about Black girls (e.g., internalized gendered racism, adultification bias). Internalized gendered racism is the idea that Black girls unconsciously and consciously accept gendered racial stereotypes and negative messaging, beliefs, and perceptions about Black girls (Brown et al., 2017; Williams & Lewis, 2021). Adults sometimes have an adultification bias – the perception that Black girls are more adult-like and less innocent compared to white girls of the same age (Blake & Epstein, 2019; Epstein et al., 2017; Morris, 2016). According to Morris (2022), “Adultification is also a form of dehumanization, as it strips Black girls of the ability to engage in their own experiences as a child or developing adolescent” (p. 11). The mammy stereotype is emphasized in adultification bias – Black girls are the caretakers; they don’t need caretakers. Adultification bias amplifies the inequities Black girls face (Brinkman et al., 2019). Additionally, Epstein et al. (2017) found adults in their study believed Black girls need less nurturing, protection, support, and comfort, are more independent, and know more about adult topics including sex compared to white girls, especially 5-14-year-olds. Black girls are disciplined at disproportionate rates in school because they should know better (Morris, 2022) – implying they are held to “adult-like standards” (Blake & Epstein, 2019, p. 3).

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6 Also called internalized racial oppression
Even though it is not heavily researched, community-based educational spaces are not immune to gendered racism and its manifestations. Our conceptual model considers, that although Black girls experience gendered racism, it may manifest differently in their lives based on other aspects (e.g., ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, skin color, nationality, religious belief, and disability).

2.5 Gendered Racial Identity Ideologies and Gendered Racial Socialization Messages

Conceptual models that describe gender identity development (Downing & Roush, 1985), racial identity development (Cross, 1971; Phinney, 1989), and gendered racial identity development (Williams & Lewis, 2021) present stages that start with unawareness and desire to assimilate to or accept the dominant identity⁷ and continue on the spectrum of not just a positive self-identity but also a commitment to social justice for that specific identity. Ideologies, or the beliefs and attitudes Black girls have about Black girls, are one aspect of identity – salience, centrality, and regard are other components (Collins, 2022; Huguley et al., 2019; Sellers et al., 1997; Szymanski & Lewis, 2016; Williams & Lewis, 2021). For this conceptual model, we describe gendered racial identity ideologies as how Black girls consciously and unconsciously think and feel about and perceive their intertwined gender and race memberships (Collins, 2022; Sellers et al., 1997; Williams & Lewis, 2021).

Previous models such as Sellers et al. (1997) focus just on racial identity ideologies, and we need to explore ideologies using an intersectional lens. If we only consider racial identity

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⁷ The dominant identity for racial identity is white individuals and for gender identity, it is individuals who identify as a cisgender boy/man.
ideologies, we have an incomplete picture for Black girls. Employing an intersectional lens, Williams and Lewis (2021) provide a more nuanced picture of gendered racial identity ideologies. However, their focus is on Black women, specifically undergraduate and graduate students. According to Williams and Lewis (2021), “The ideologies that emerged from the data reflect ideologies that participants either endorsed at the time of the interview or at previous times in their development” (p. 219). Since pre-adolescence and adolescence are times for identity exploration (Adams-Bass & Bentley-Edwards, 2021), it is necessary to explicitly look at ideologies during this time. Our conceptual model extends prior scholarship by specifically exploring gendered racial identity ideologies for 5th-12th grade Black girls in the present day.

Adults, young people, materials (e.g., curricula, books, decorations), policies, and procedures in community-based educational spaces communicate messages verbally, non-verbally, intentionally, unintentionally, directly, and indirectly to Black girls about being a Black girl (i.e., gendered racial socialization messages; Brown et al., 2017; Williams & Lewis, 2021). Black girls also receive messages in response to how they interact with the world (i.e., messages are sometimes tailored based on Black girls’ physical appearance, language, etc.).

2.6 Conceptual Model

This work expands the literature on gender identity and socialization, racial identity and socialization, and the growing body of literature primarily with Black women on intersectionality, gendered racism, gendered racial identity, and gendered racial socialization through the development of a conceptual model designed to help researchers and practitioners explore
gendered racial socialization messages and 5th-12th grade Black girls’ interpretation of messages, gendered racial identity ideologies, and outward display of sense of self in CBES.

2.6.1 What are the gendered racial socialization messages communicated to Black girls in community-based educational spaces?

In this conceptual model, we identify three types of messages in CBES: uplifting, gendered racism, and armoring. Uplifting socialization messages are messages that express to Black girls that they matter. Mattering is “the socio-psychological construct [that] describes the extent to which an individual perceives that their presence and involvement plays a fundamental role in others’ lives and to their larger society” (Carey et al., 2022, p. 73). Messages that exemplify gendered racism include stereotypes, policies, procedures, materials (e.g., curricula, books, decorations), and microaggressions that devalue and dehumanize Black girls (Blake & Epstein, 2019; Brown et al., 2017; Collins, 2022; Crenshaw et al., 2015; Epstein et al., 2017; Kaler-Jones, 2021; Lewis et al., 2016; Morris, 2016; Thomas & King, 2007; Williams & Lewis, 2021; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). Armoring socialization messages are messages communicated to Black girls, most often by families (e.g., mothers, mother figures) and Black women, to prepare them for experiences of gendered racism (Bell & Nkomo, 1998; Porter et al., 2020; Rogers et al., 2021; Thomas & King, 2007; Winchester et al., 2021). Armoring messages can help Black girls armor themselves which Bell and Nkomo (1998) describe as a process and is an approach for self-protection and resistance against gendered racism. As a protective factor for Black girls to thrive even in the midst of gendered racism, Black women socialize Black girls to behave in adult-like ways and teach them maturity and independence to mitigate the impacts of gendered racism (Blake & Epstein, 2019).
2.6.2 How do Black girls internally interpret gendered racial socialization messages?

Even though Black girls may be receiving the same gendered racial socialization messages, they interpret them differently based on several factors (e.g., ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, nationality, religious belief, disability, and support system; Burnett et al., 2023). Awareness of the messages also contributes to how Black girls can interpret them – if they aren’t aware of the messages, they can’t interpret them (Gadson & Lewis, 2022; Williams & Lewis, 2021). The intent of the message is not as important as the impact it has on the Black girl (Winchester et al., 2021). For example, the message “you need to straighten your hair because it looks neat that way,” could be intended to protect a Black girl, yet she may internalize it as her natural, curly hair is not neat. Black girls are constantly consciously and unconsciously reflecting on the gendered racial socialization messages including gendered racial stereotypes they encounter and how they are either consistent or inconsistent with their self-concept (Brown et al., 2017; Williams & Lewis, 2021).

Additionally, Black girls can intentionally and unintentionally interpret some messages such as those related to being a strong Black girl or supergirl stereotype in both beneficial or protective and harmful ways (Bell & Nkomo, 1998; Brown et al., 2017). This stereotype was to a degree developed to combat the jezebel, mammy, and sapphire stereotypes and create a positive narrative for Black girls and women, especially in the media (Williams & Lewis, 2021; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). In previous studies with Black women, the strong Black woman stereotype was shown to increase self-efficacy. It is a coping strategy that demonstrates the strength they need to deal with, overcome, and protect themselves against gendered racism, its manifestations, and the resulting trauma (Moody & Lewis, 2019; Szymanski & Lewis, 2016; Williams & Lewis, 2021; Woods-Giscombé, 2010).
However, for some Black girls, the message can have a harmful effect as they internalize gendered racism (Brown et al., 2017; Moody & Lewis, 2019; Thomas & King, 2007; Williams & Lewis, 2021; Winchester et al., 2021; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). Black girls interpreting supergirl as harmful determine they must always show strength and independence so they cannot ask for or accept help from others and cannot show emotions (Moody & Lewis, 2019; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). Alicia Keys describes this stereotype in her 2008 song, Superwoman, “Still when I’m a mess; I still put on a vest; With an ‘S’ on my chest; Oh, yes, I’m a superwoman.”

2.6.3 What are Black girls’ personal gendered racial identity ideologies based on how they interpret gendered racial socialization messages?

The way in which Black girls interpret messages shapes their gendered racial identity ideologies. In this conceptual model, we present four ideologies – pride, agentic, humanist, and assimilation – based on the intersectionality and child and youth development literature of 5th-12th grade Black girls. We describe the ideologies as non-linear and mutually independent because Black girls draw on different ideologies depending on the messages they receive and how they interpret the messages (Adams-Bass & Bentley-Edwards, 2021; Sellers et al., 1997; Williams & Lewis, 2021).

2.6.3.1 Pride Ideology

According to Williams and Lewis (2021), “Black women who expressed pride in their identity expressed no longer feeling pressure to prove themselves or fit stereotypes, and their identity was no longer dependent on societal definitions of being a Black woman” (p. 223). Black girls drawing on a pride ideology embrace their whole, authentic selves and define for themselves
what it means to be a Black girl. Even though they are still exploring who they are as Black girls, they are comfortable with being a Black girl. They perceive Black girls’ uniqueness, including ingroup diversity, as an asset and a sense of pride. Additionally, Black girls drawing on this ideology believe in themselves and their infinite potential. They do not ignore the gendered racism they experience or the devaluing and dehumanizing gendered racial socialization messages they receive; however, those with this ideology acknowledge it is only part of their experience as a Black girl (Collins, 2022; Emdin, 2021; Morris, 2019; Sellers et al., 1997; Williams & Lewis, 2021).

2.6.3.2 Agentic Ideology

An agentic ideology is the belief that Black girls create their own narratives and determine their destiny. This ideology is different than a pride ideology as Black girls identify uplifting, advocating, and activism for Black girls and women as a critical part of who they are as Black girls (Collins, 2022; Lindsey, 2013; Thomas et al., 2011; Williams & Lewis, 2021; Winchester et al., 2021). Black girls drawing on an agentic ideology perceive their identity as a strength as they defy, provide counters to, and overcome gendered racial stereotypes and devaluing and dehumanizing gendered racial socialization messages (Lindsey, 2013; Morris, 2022; Thomas et al., 2011; Williams & Lewis, 2021; Winchester et al., 2021). They know they are more than the superficial aspects they are described as, more than their physical features; they profess their humanity and as a Black girl with depth and layers (Lindsey, 2013; Thomas et al., 2011; Williams & Lewis, 2021).

2.6.3.3 Humanist Ideology

A Black girl drawing on a humanist ideology believes gendered racial stereotypes, labels, devaluing and dehumanizing messages, and characteristics assigned to Black girls by society are
restricting and limiting, so they identify generally as humans (Sellers et al., 1997; Thomas et al., 2011; Williams & Lewis, 2021). This includes Black girls focusing on similarities among people, ignoring race and gender (Sellers et al., 1997). Drawing on this ideology, they value individual qualities and suppress qualities related to their intertwined race and gender membership (Huguley et al., 2019; Moody, 2018; Moody & Lewis, 2019; Winchester et al., 2021). As quoted in Williams and Lewis (2021), “Black women are aware that they have a gender and race but choose not to define themselves and their identity based on their gendered racial identity” (p. 223).

2.6.3.4 Assimilation Ideology

An assimilation ideology is the belief that a way for Black girls to deal with gendered racial stereotypes and devaluing and dehumanizing messages is by aligning their appearance, language, etc. with Eurocentric feminine standards. Black girls with this ideology feel they are inferior and not desirable (Baker-Bell, 2020; Kaler-Jones, 2021; Kumashiro, 2000; Sellers et al., 1997; Thomas et al., 2011; Williams & Lewis, 2021). When Black girls draw on an assimilation ideology, they might not recognize the historical origins of the stereotypes and messages rooted in gendered racism, but still respond to them by believing they need to position themselves as closely as they can to Eurocentric feminine ways (Williams & Lewis, 2021).

Black girls do not have one ideology forever, it’s always changing based on their interpretation of the multitude of messages they receive on a moment-by-moment basis (Adams-Bass & Bentley-Edwards, 2021). They may also have more than one ideology at a time (Sellers et al., 1997; Williams & Lewis, 2021). For example, a Black girl could draw on an assimilation ideology about language (e.g., “Black language is not appropriate”) and a pride ideology about natural hair (e.g., “my natural hair is beautiful”).
2.6.4 In what ways do Black girls outwardly display their sense of self in community-based educational spaces?

Black girls make determinations of how they will outwardly display their sense of self based on (1) how they think and feel about and perceive Black girls which is shaped by how they internally interpret messages and (2) other factors (e.g., setting/location, other individuals present, personal experiences, values, and other aspects of identity). In this conceptual model, we separate ideology from outward display because one might be proud to be a Black girl and still navigate oppressive environments by shifting and suppressing their authentic selves (e.g., appearance, language) in those environments or engaging in code-switching (Bell & Nkomo, 1998; Obama, 2022; Rogers et al., 2021; Shorter-Gooden, 2004; Thomas et al., 2011; Williams & Lewis, 2021). Williams and Lewis (2021) highlighted the navigation the Black women in their study did:

It is important to make the distinction between navigating and assimilating for Black women. Rather than altering themselves in order to fit into European standards of beauty and aesthetics, the participants engaged in navigation as a way to shift aspects of their identity to survive in oppressive environments. (p. 222)

Black girls may express themselves through creative outlets such as hair, visual arts, dance, fiction writing, poetry, music, cooking, and fashion (Baker-Bell, 2020; Buchanan-Rivera, 2022; Collins, 2022; Kaler-Jones, 2021; Lindsey, 2013; Rogers et al., 2021; Williams & Lewis, 2021). Black Language, which has semantic, grammatical, pronunciation, and rhetorical patterns, is another way Black girls outwardly display their sense of self (Smitherman, 2022). Black language “served to bind the enslaved together, melding diverse African ethnic groups into one community” (Smitherman, 2022, p. 3) and connects to “Black people’s ways of knowing, interpreting, surviving, being, and resisting in the world” (Baker-Bell, 2020, p. 25). Black Language is not only
Black slang; however, Black slang is a part of Black Language (Smitherman, 1994, as cited in Baker-Bell, 2020).

Black girls may also participate in activism and advocacy on their own, with others, and at multiple levels (Collins, 2022; Lewis et al., 2013; Shorter-Gooden, 2004; Williams & Lewis, 2021). Black girls work to get gendered racist organizational, local, state, and national policies changed (Collins, 2022; Morris, 2022; Williams & Lewis, 2021). Critical action can take multiple forms including protesting, letter writing, and professional development and they might happen from inside the system and/or outside the system (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Ginwright, 2010; Diemer et al., 2020; Gonzalez et al., 2020; Rodriguez & Brown, 2009). When Black girls imagine what is possible for their future while still critiquing systems of oppression such as gendered racism, they are freedom dreaming – which is also how Black girls might express themselves (Kelley, 2002; Love, 2019).

2.7 Discussion

Community-based educational spaces include individuals, physical places, and activities, both collectively and independently, that center some aspect or aspects of holistic health (e.g., emotional/mental, intellectual, physical, spiritual, social including social identities, vocational) of young people (Akiva et al., 2022; Baldridge, 2020; Baldridge et al., 2017). These spaces have been shown to benefit young people (Akiva et al., 2017; Akiva et al., 2022; Baldridge et al., 2017; Carey et al., 2020; Collins, 2022; Emdin, 2021; Ginwright, 2010; Ginwright & James, 2002; hooks, 1990; Inniss-Thompson et al., 2022; Li & Julian, 2012; Nagaoka et al., 2015), but we need to understand the specific impact on Black girls. Black girls’ unique intersectional experiences, with the
recognition Black girls are still a diverse group with different ethnicities, sexual orientations, classes, nationalities, religious beliefs, and abilities, must be incorporated in CBES, so they are holistically supported (Collins & Bilge, 2020; Crenshaw, 1989). Even though Black girls vary, they have similar experiences in the United States partly because of gendered racism and a unique gendered racial identity (Collins, 2022; Essed, 1991; Settles, 2006; Thomas et al., 2011; Williams & Lewis, 2021). Building on this literature we propose a conceptual model (see Figure 2.1) for researchers and practitioners to explore gendered racial socialization messages and 5th-12th grade Black girls’ interpretation of messages, gendered racial identity ideologies, and outward display of sense of self in CBES.

2.7.1 Using the Conceptual Model

Researchers and practitioners can use this conceptual model to better understand a process in which Black girls receive external uplifting, gendered racism, and armoring gendered racial socialization messages, internally interpret the messages, identify their personal gendered racial identity ideologies, and outwardly display their sense of self.

2.7.1.1 Describing the Process

Adults, young people, materials (e.g., curricula, books, decorations), policies, and procedures in community-based educational spaces communicate messages verbally, non-verbally, intentionally, unintentionally, directly, and indirectly to Black girls about being a Black girl (i.e., gendered racial socialization messages; Brown et al., 2017; Williams & Lewis, 2021). Black girls also receive messages in response to how they interact with the world (i.e., messages are sometimes tailored based on Black girls’ physical appearance, language, etc.). Even though
Black girls may be receiving the same gendered racial socialization messages, they interpret them differently based on several factors (e.g., ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, nationality, religious belief, disability, and support system). Black girls are constantly reflecting on the gendered racial socialization messages including gendered racial stereotypes they encounter and how they are either consistent or inconsistent with their self-concept (Williams & Lewis, 2021). Additionally, one message can be both beneficial or protective and harmful such as the supergirl stereotype (Brown et al., 2017; Moody & Lewis, 2019; Szymanski & Lewis 2016; Thomas & King, 2007; Williams & Lewis, 2021; Woods-Giscombé, 2010).

The way in which Black girls interpret messages shapes their gendered racial identity ideologies. Gendered racial identity ideologies are how Black girls consciously and unconsciously think and feel about and perceive their intertwined gender and race memberships (Collins, 2022; Sellers et al., 1997; Williams & Lewis, 2021). Pride, agentic, humanist, and assimilation are the ideologies we identified for this conceptual model. Black girls outwardly display their sense of self in a variety of ways including through creative outlets, activism and advocacy activities, freedom dreaming, and language (Baker-Bell, 2020; Buchanan-Rivera, 2022; Collins, 2022; Kaler-Jones, 2021; Kelley, 2002; Lewis et al., 2013; Lindsey, 2013; Love, 2019; Morris, 2022; Rogers et al., 2021; Shorter-Goodeen, 2004; Smitherman, 2022; Williams & Lewis, 2021).

2.7.1.2 Research and Practice Implications

Staff in CBES must be aware of the types of messages communicated to Black girls in their spaces (Brown et al., 2017; Williams & Lewis, 2021). Are they actively uplifting Black girls or do the messages express gendered racism? Do Black women communicate armoring messages? Research can continue to investigate the messages in CBES and, specifically, techniques they use to convey uplifting messages to Black girls. Even though interpreting gendered racial socialization
messages and exploring gendered racial identity ideologies are internal processes for Black girls (Williams & Lewis, 2021), not specific to CBES, staff can be intentional with supporting Black girls in these processes by first learning about them. Further research is needed to explore the nuances of how Black girls’ other intersections influence these internal activities. We also need to discover practices staff use to create environments where Black girls feel supported by these processes. Additionally, staff can determine if Black girls feel comfortable outwardly displaying their sense of self the way they want (Emdin, 2021). Through working with staff and Black girls, researchers can learn more about the components that facilitate this.

2.8 Conclusion

The conceptual model offered in this chapter is concentrated on 5th-12th grade Black girls’ gendered racial identity ideologies and outward display of sense of self and external gendered racial socialization messages in community-based educational spaces; however, we need to generally learn about and share the intersectional experiences of Black girls, especially in those spaces where they are not the only population (e.g., young people of different races and genders). Ultimately, the field can use this information to integrate research and practice, continue to build on the conceptual model by adding other aspects of Black girls’ lives, and develop a guide for staff in CBES to hire and train staff, create and select materials (e.g., decorations, curricula, books), set policies and procedures, and generally engage with and better support Black girls.
3.0 Chapter 3: Empirically Testing a Conceptual Model Exploring Gendered Racial Socialization Messages and 5th-12th Grade Black Girls’ Interpretation of Messages, Gendered Racial Identity Ideologies, and Outward Display of Sense of Self in CBES

Black girl spaces or homeplaces are community-based educational spaces (CBES) that center safety and are purposefully co-designed with Black girls, for Black girls. In partnership with other Black girls and Black women, these spaces can help Black girls (1) process gendered racial socialization messages (e.g., unpacking and healing from the gendered racism they experience), (2) explore their gendered racial identity ideologies, and (3) outwardly display their authentic selves (i.e., freely express themselves without judgment; Brown, 2009; Emdin, 2021; hooks, 1990; Inniss-Thompson et al., 2022, 2024; Kelly, 2020b; Morris, 2022; Rogers & Butler-Barnes, 2021). These spaces can even be co-designed as a subspace when the general CBES population is not solely or primarily Black girls (e.g., phone group chat with the Black girls at a program, Black girls sitting or working together during activities at a program; Kelly, 2020b). This study adds to a growing body of literature by empirically testing a conceptual model that explores gendered racial socialization messages and 5th-12th grade Black girls’ interpretation of messages, gendered racial identity ideologies, and outward display of sense of self in CBES.

Generally, I describe CBES as activities and programs that operate when young people are not in class and emphasize increasing aspects of young people’s holistic health (e.g.,

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8 Black girls are individuals 18 years old or younger who self-identify as a girl, no matter sex assigned at birth, and have roots in the African diaspora (see Chapter 2).
9 CBES include “after school, before school, summer, art, weekend, youth activism, workforce, and mentoring programs,...libraries, religious institutions, museums, scouts, and city departments. Other terms include out-of-school time programs, informal education programs, expanded learning, and youth-serving organizations” (see Chapter 2).
emotional/mental, intellectual, physical, spiritual, social including social identities, vocational; Akiva et al., 2022; Baldridge, 2020; Baldridge et al., 2017). CBES is a broad term that encompasses activities and programs that occur during the school day in the school building outside of classroom time (including those led by community organizations) and independent of the school day (including those that are sponsored by schools; Akiva et al., 2022; Baldridge, 2020; Baldridge et al., 2017). Staff in CBES can better support Black girls when they humanize instead of pathologize them – for example listening and talking to them and caring about them, not criminalizing their behaviors or labeling them as “disrespectful” or “disruptive” (Baldridge, 2020; Brown, 2009; Kaler-Jones, 2021; Morris, 2016, 2022; Osai et al., 2024; Turner and Young, 2022). “...We can respond to [Black girls] in ways that facilitate healing rather than harm” (Morris, 2022, p. 98). Brown (2009) emphasized the importance of working to deliberately and specifically support Black girls:

Even in youth programs aimed at doing things differently by “empowering” young people, program processes do not necessarily translate into doing things so that Black girls’ and women’s voices and bodies are included, heard, and valued. (p. 27)

### 3.1 Conceptual Model

The conceptual model describes a process that includes (1) external gendered racial socialization messages and Black girls, (2) interpreting messages, (3) exploring their gendered racial identity ideologies, and (4) outwardly displaying their sense of self (see Chapter 2). Gendered racial socialization messages (e.g., armoring, uplifting, gendered racism) are messages communicated verbally, non-verbally, intentionally, unintentionally, directly, and indirectly to
Black girls about being a Black girl. In CBES, these messages can come from different avenues including individuals (i.e., staff and young people), materials, policies, and procedures (see Chapter 2). Black girls internally interpret the messages based on myriad variables such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, nationality, religious belief, disability, and even based on who is in their community (see Chapter 2). After Black girls interpret messages, they explore their gendered racial identity ideologies or how they “think and feel about and perceive their intertwined gender and race memberships” (see Chapter 2). This conceptual model highlights four ideologies: pride, agentic, humanist, and assimilation.

Black girls drawing on a pride ideology embrace their whole, authentic selves and define for themselves what it means to be a Black girl...An agentic ideology is the belief that Black girls create their own narratives and determine their destiny...Black girls identify uplifting, advocating, and activism for Black girls and women as a critical part of who they are as Black girls...A Black girl drawing on a humanist ideology believes gendered racial stereotypes, labels, devaluing and dehumanizing messages, and characteristics assigned to Black girls by society are restricting and limiting, so they identify generally as humans...An assimilation ideology is the belief that a way for Black girls to deal with gendered racial stereotypes and devaluing and dehumanizing messages is by aligning their appearance, language, etc. with Eurocentric feminine standards. (see Chapter 2)

The setting or location, people around, life experiences, personal values, and their other identity aspects determine how Black girls will outwardly display their sense of self at any given moment. They may decide to use creative outlets including language to express their identity, participate in activism and advocacy activities, freedom dream, or they could suppress their authentic self for self-protection (see Chapter 2).
In this chapter, I explore other ways Black girls outwardly display their sense of self. Black girls might express themselves through their agency (i.e., future planning and in the moment adjustments to work towards dismantling gendered racism; Diemer et al., 2020; Freire 2000; French et al., 2020; Gonzalez et al., 2020; Inniss-Thompson et al., 2024; Kelly, 2020b; Kokka, 2020). They speak up and advocate when they experience or witness injustice (e.g., gendered racial microaggression) even if it means they are disciplined, dismissed, or labeled as the angry Black girl (Lewis et al., 2013; Morris, 2016; Williams & Lewis, 2021). Armoring might be considered a form of agency and includes self-reflection, relying on community, code-switching, spirituality, escaping, and advocacy (Moody & Lewis, 2019; Shorter-Goeden, 2004; Szymanski & Lewis, 2016; Williams & Lewis, 2021).

Black girls may share their stories to connect and build solidarity with others and to tell their own narratives that counter gendered racial stereotypes (Brown, 2009; French et al., 2020; Kelly, 2020b; Obama, 2022). They support and get support from other Black girls and women as they work to cope with and heal from gendered racism including adultification bias, gendered racial microaggressions, gendered racist policies, and gendered racial stereotypes (French et al., 2020; Lewis et al., 2013; Shorter-Goeden, 2004). Connecting with Black girls and women is important because they validate and normalize each other’s experiences (Brown, 2009; French et al., 2020; Inniss-Thompson et al., 2024; Lewis et al., 2013). However, at times Black girls may avoid connecting with Black girls and women, especially if they are communicating gendered racism messages, for self-protection (Bell & Nkomo, 1998; Brown et al., 2017; Collins, 2022; Emdin, 2021; Shorter-Goeden, 2004; Thomas et al., 2008). Additionally, staff that do not identify as Black women have a role in supporting Black girls in their spaces. Morris (2022) describes:
I had a white teacher who saw something in me too. And the model was not, Oh, here’s a Black girl I need to save...She identified skillsets in me, and she took those skillsets and helped me hone them. I love her to this day. (pp. 75-76)

3.2 Current Study

This chapter describes a three-part exploratory critical narrative study (see Engel & Schutt, 2013; Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022; Hatch, 2002) I conducted for my dissertation. An exploratory critical narrative approach focuses on “learn[ing] how people get along in the setting under question…and what issues concern them” (Engel & Schutt, 2013, p. 18) and centers the participants’ stories to gain an “understanding of [their] lived experiences” (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022, p. 67) and “raise awareness” (Hatch, 2002, p. 28) of their needs and strengths. I used an exploratory design to (1) better understand 5th-12th grade Black girls’ intersectional experiences in community-based educational spaces and (2) empirically test a conceptual model exploring gendered racial socialization messages and 5th-12th grade Black girls’ interpretation of messages, gendered racial identity ideologies, and outward display of sense of self in CBES. Additionally, a critical narrative study is appropriate because I wanted to build the conceptual model out using the stories of Black girls and staff who work with them. My overall research questions align with the conceptual model:

- Related to gendered racial socialization messages, how can staff in community-based educational spaces support Black girls?
What can staff in community-based educational spaces do to support Black girls’ internal interpretation of gendered racial socialization messages and exploration of their gendered racial identity ideologies?

How do Black girls outwardly display their authentic self in community-based educational spaces? What are barriers to Black girls’ outwardly displaying their authentic selves in community-based educational spaces?

What can staff in community-based educational spaces do to encourage Black girls to be their authentic selves?

Part 1 is a secondary data analysis using publicly available data exploring how Black adolescent girls (i.e., 13-18 years old) reimagine afterschool. The research sub-questions for Part 1 are: (1) what needs did Black adolescent girl Generator Z participants identify as critical in afterschool programs, (2) what gendered racial identity ideologies did Black adolescent girl Generator Z participants draw on, and (3) how did Black adolescent girl Generator Z participants express themselves? I used initial findings from Part 1 to design Part 2 and Part 3. I received approval for collecting primary data from my university’s Institutional Review Board on April 4, 2023. In Part 2, I facilitated focus groups with two groups of 5th-8th grade Black girls specifically asking about being a Black girl in CBES. One of the groups that participated was an afterschool program with seven Black girls and we interviewed the program manager as well. The research sub-questions for Part 2 are: (1) what did focus group participants want in an afterschool program, (2) how did staff in community-based educational spaces communicate uplifting gendered racial socialization messages to the participants, (3) what characteristics helped Black girls feel comfortable in community-based educational spaces, and (4) how did focus group participants describe wanting to express themselves in community-based educational spaces? For Part 3, I
interviewed 15 staff members that work in CBES about their interactions with 5th-12th grade Black girls. The research sub-questions for Part 3 are: (1) what gendered racial socialization messages were communicated to Black girls in community-based educational spaces and (2) what did interview participants want for Black girls in community-based educational spaces? See Figure 3.1 for a visual overview of the study with the overall research questions mapped to the components of the conceptual model.

**Figure 3.1 Overview of Three-Part Exploratory Critical Narrative Study**
3.3 Positionality

A Black woman facilitated the focus groups, conducted the interviews, and coded the data with me. We both have experience in community-based educational spaces (CBES). I have worked in administration and directly with K-12\textsuperscript{th} graders and facilitate professional development opportunities for staff in CBES. She supports young people in small groups with gaining confidence and participates in a professional learning group exploring Black community educational knowledge traditions.

3.4 Part 1: Secondary Data

Ralph C. Wilson Foundation commissioned the Generator Z project which is a grantmaking initiative and ideas lab in Southeast Michigan and Western New York that sought to understand how adolescents and afterschool providers reimagine afterschool programs\textsuperscript{10} for the future. Over 1,000 adolescents were paid to share their background stories and afterschool aspirations that were then publicly published on the Generator Z website (generator-z.org/stories/). Each story is divided into two sections and there are four excerpts in each section (see Appendix A for the specific questions). Participants could respond with writing, photos, audio, and videos. Afterschool providers wrote grants proposals to receive funding to actualize the participants’ afterschool aspirations and addressing the needs from their stories. Adolescents were also involved in selecting the providers that received funding.

\textsuperscript{10} The dataset uses the language of afterschool.
Though the main goal of Generator Z was to transform the adult-led grantmaking process, we reviewed the Black adolescent\(^{11}\) girls’ stories to continue to develop the conceptual model. Part 1 addresses three research sub-questions: (1) what needs did Black adolescent girl Generator Z participants identify as critical in afterschool programs, (2) what gendered racial identity ideologies did Black adolescent girl Generator Z participants draw on, and (3) how did Black adolescent girl Generator Z participants express themselves?

### 3.4.1 Part 1: Methods

Part 1 of this exploratory critical narrative study (see Engel & Schutt, 2013; Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022; Hatch, 2002) is a secondary data analysis of data collected at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 by the Generator Z team (generator-z.org/team). In this part of the study, I sought to explore what the Black girl Generator Z participants wanted in their afterschool programs based on their stories.

### 3.4.1.1 Part 1: Sample

The full dataset includes 1,012 participants; however, given my focus is Black girls’ experiences, I drew on the subset of the Generator Z data authored by Black adolescent girls (n=236). I identified the sample for this study from those that selected the “she/her” gender pronoun and at least one of the following for their race/ethnicity: Black or African American, African, or Afro-Caribbean. Multiracial adolescent girls includes anyone that selected Black or African American, African, or Afro-Caribbean for at least one of their race/ethnicity selections.

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\(^{11}\) Generator Z participants were only asked about age; however, I estimate the 13-18-year-olds to be in 7th-12th grades.
See Table 3.1 for demographic information. Of the 236 Black adolescent girls, 187 (79%) participated in afterschool either at the time of data collection (during the COVID-19 pandemic), before the COVID-19 pandemic, or both. This is important to note because even though I am focused on Black girls’ experiences in CBES, I did include data from those that had never participated in afterschool as they still can provide insight into how CBES might support them.

Table 3.1 Black Adolescent Girl Generator Z Participants Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>N=236</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American, African, or Afro-Caribbean Alone</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age13</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
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<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4.1.2 Part 1: Data Analysis

I analyzed the data through an iterative coding process with a second coder. We started with descriptive and simultaneous coding with a set of 36 a priori codes and subcodes based on the conceptual model introduced in Chapter 2 (Miles et al., 2020; see Appendix B for our first-round codebook). We further developed the codebook inductively by coding 10% of the stories first (see Miles et al., 2020). This process was important because of the exploratory nature of this

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12 Participants were not directly asked about their gender identity, so although pronouns are not a perfect identifier, it is what was available. Participants were able to select all that apply from a list of 16 options for their race/ethnicity.

13 Age at time of data collection.
study. We added two new codes based on what we were seeing in the data: escaping and Black girl/woman. The escaping code was in reference to the many excerpts that described using various outlets (e.g., music, writing, sports, walking) to escape reality or cope with stress. Additionally, the Black girl/woman code was used to identify any time a participant specifically mentioned anything about Black girls or women to easily organize quotes with direct references to being a Black girl or woman. We did not initially have this code because the sample was all Black adolescent girls; however, as we coded during the first round, we wanted to specifically highlight the quotes where they mentioned being a Black girl or woman.

After several iterations of coding, discussion, and refinement of codes, we arrived at a Cohen’s Kappa of .59 which suggested by Cohen as cited in McHugh (2012) is moderate agreement. Given the overall agreement did not meet the ‘substantial’ threshold, I determined it was necessary to conduct a second round of coding with specific codes based on the themes we observed during the first round of coding (see Appendix C for detailed codebook for second coding). Our Cohen’s Kappa coefficient for this second coding codebook was .67 – substantial agreement.

We analyzed each story holistically using Dedoose Version 9.0.62 and coded participants’ words from their writing, audio, and video. We only coded photos if the participant wrote about or described the photo in the text because a picture without context would require making assumptions of why they included it and what it means. In the stories, we assigned codes to excerpts of the stories that illustrate that specific code. Additionally, some excerpts had multiple codes assigned to them from both codebooks. The second codebook provided another level of detail that was not present in the first codebook. After the second round of coding, the coders combined tactics described in Miles et al. (2020) as we generated meaning of the data including
noting patterns/themes and clustering. First, we generally noted the patterns and themes we noticed across all the stories we read. Then, I clustered the themes by the research questions, and from the excerpts, identified quotes that addressed each research question.

3.4.2 Part 1: Results

In their stories, Black adolescent girl Generator Z participants conveyed the need for spaces where they can (1) connect with both adults and other young people, (2) process and escape daily stressors, and (3) explore their gendered racial identity ideologies. They also drew on the ideologies from the conceptual model in Chapter 2 including pride, agentic, and humanist. The Black adolescent girl Generator Z participants expressed themselves through creative outlets. Even though we focus on community-based educational spaces, we can use what Black girls said generally about connection and outlets in other aspects of their lives (e.g., home and school) to inform what staff can provide in CBES.

3.4.2.1 What needs did Black adolescent girl Generator Z participants identify as critical in afterschool programs?

3.4.2.1.1 Space to Connect

In their stories, participants expressed a desire to connect with both peers and adults in CBES as they made sense of their world and worked to discover who they are. As Deja P. (16 years old) summarized, “The best afterschool experience would be getting to know other people.” Black adolescent girls in Generator Z that found connection in CBES wanted other people to experience those connections as well. Salenacalena J. (14 years old) highlighted:
I never really had any friends in school as a kid and I didn’t meet many people outside of school. But there is one afterschool program that allowed me to not only grow as a person but to be able to grow with other people.

Given the variety of community-based educational spaces, Black adolescent girls can find friends with similar interests. Montana J. (15 years old) showcased both these points in her quote: I am passionate about people feeling like they are a part of a community and that they belong somewhere because I used to feel the same way. It wasn’t until I joined community theater that I really found my place. I want to help other kids find their place, no matter where it is.

She wanted others to feel connected to a space just as she had found in community theater. Nya M. (16 years old) found community playing volleyball, “Through volleyball I have created relationships with people all over the country while finding new ways to connect in an unconventional way.” Participants found connection while engaging in their hobbies (e.g., theatre, volleyball). Participants like Makenna V. (16 years old) wanted to connect both with peers that had similar backgrounds and those with different backgrounds so everyone can learn from each other:

This would a place where people can be themselves and feel free to find who they are as a person and find their confidence in their community. They would be able to talk to people with the same background and people with other backgrounds and lifestyles, see and learn about all the different cultures and ways of life.

Black adolescent girls identified connecting to adults as a need in CBES. Cierra H. (17 years old) described having a space with “caring adults [who would] be there to talk to and give advice.” Similarly, Mwajuma S. (17 years old) wrote, “I believe that teenagers need guidance and
people to show them that they are cared for and loved.” Lkennedy (14 years old) added, “I think everyone needs someone in their corner to help and guide them.” These participants wanted adults present in CBES and welcomed guidance from them. Other participants were more specific about the type of support they wanted from adults. Brianna D. (17 years old) specified that she had traumatic experiences being a Black woman in America and she coped by talking about her experiences with other like-minded individuals. Eleanor H. (15 years old) shared a similar sentiment, “I want a place where teens who experience similar things as me have a place to relax and talk about it if they need to.”

3.4.2.1.2 Space to Process and Escape Daily Stressors

Participants expressed a desire to process what happens in their lives. Lovielita (17 years old) explained she needed a space where people “can confide in each other, because from experience I know that sometimes you can’t always count on or trust the people at home.” Her response highlights the necessity of spaces outside of the home where Black adolescent girls can freely process what is going on at home. In addition to having a space different than home, some participants described having a space different than school as well. Merarys P. (18 years old) explained:

[Afterschool] should not feel like school. Part of the reason why a lot of students enjoy after school programs is because it is interactive and as humans, we need social interactions…A place where students meet up, after school. The importance of having this area outside of school is so subconsciously they don’t feel like they are doing school in their after hours.

Some Black adolescent girls discussed the need to escape from daily stressors. Lyriq H. (13 years old) explained:
The best after school experience for me would be a place that all teens can go to after school or anytime we need stress relief. Almost like an outlet. We would be able to do different things and there would be things for everybody: athletic stuff, gaming stuff, design stuff, reading, crafting.

Amarria B. (14 years old) stated a related sentiment, “My dream after school experience doesn’t have a specific look. It’s a place where people can go to escape their current reality.” Staff in CBES can provide Black adolescent girls with opportunities “to take their minds off of things that might be bothering them” (Deja P., 16 years old).

3.4.2.1.3 Space to Explore Gendered Racial Identity Ideologies

Even when spaces did not exist, participants like Brianna D. (17 years old) created their own so they can work towards not just exploring their ideologies but also self-acceptance:

Having a Black American father and a white and African mother really confused me as far as how I should identify myself. After I started a cultural organization at my school, I saw my intersectionality and it helped me to accept all parts of myself.

Generator Z participants also connected to art as they explored their ideologies. Amarria B. (14 years old) wrote:

The most important poem would be “Phenomenal Woman” by Maya Angelou. This poem to me shows the hardships of women these days, and as a Black girl in America, it reminds me of who I am and who I can be.

Similarly, Kayla C. (16 years old) connected to “Still I Rise” by Maya Angelou. She wrote:

This poem not only empowers me as a Black woman in America but also influences my character as who I am beneath my complexion and how I see myself… Still I Rise reminds
me, though the world may look at me and come up with their assumptions of who I am and try to bring me down, that I have the power to pick myself up and prove them wrong.

Amarria B. (14 years old) described how representation in art (e.g., poetry and painting) influenced her gendered racial identity ideologies. Kayden H. (16 years old) used music to “help [her] through [her] own journey of self-discovery through a lens of [her] self-image as a Black girl.” CBES can incorporate art and music to help Black adolescent girls explore who they are.

3.4.2.2 What gendered racial identity ideologies did Black adolescent girl Generator Z participants draw on?

In the Generator Z stories, I found some examples of Black adolescent girls drawing on various ideologies identified in the conceptual model. Ksayres (17 years old) described her experience going from drawing on an assimilation ideology to drawing on a pride ideology:

I perceived myself as inferior to my peers because everyone had white, fair skin, a thin body structure, and long blonde or brunette hair. I was truly convinced that image was the “real beauty.” But that experience has made me who I am today. I enjoy wearing my big afros, being in the sun for as long as I can, and embrace my shape.

Rachel G. (17 years old) described how she draws on an agentic ideology:

[My mom] always told me that I already have two strikes against me: I am Black and I am a woman. I have to push past the restrictions that have been predetermined by outside forces and rise from the ashes. The way that I decided to do this is to further my education…This way I can destroy the stereotype of being an uneducated Black person and use these skills to further the advancement of my people using my field.

Activism and defying stereotypes seem to be a core piece of her identity as a Black adolescent girl. A humanist ideology was demonstrated in Tara’s (16 years old) story, “As students
get to know each other in this program, they will learn about diverse backgrounds and experiences, celebrate the differences, and find that they are more similar than different." She acknowledged the differences and focused on the similarities between people.

3.4.2.3 How did Black adolescent girl Generator Z participants express themselves?

Participants desired places where they could outwardly display their authentic selves (i.e., freely express themselves without judgment). Janiah W. (14 years old) highlighted the need for Black adolescent girls to have a space to be themselves:

Many people do not have a space they feel they can truly be themselves and not be judged. This relates to my life due to the fact of me being a young African American woman, I am a part of two minority groups.

Alexis W. (17 years old) stated, “If I had a magic wand, I would create a space where everyone could come out & just be themselves.” Aziza C. (15 years old) echoed the same sentiment:

My big afterschool dream is for all teens to be in a place where they can truly be themselves and be happy. Here, teens can express themselves regarding any part about them. Their race, religion, culture, sexuality, and more will be accepted and appreciated here.

Generator Z participants shared that they used creative outlets to express who they are. “I believe that being able to experience art and being able to express yourself as a person is very important. Art, dance, and music are good ways to show who a person is” (Delilah G., 16 years old). Shania (16 years old) stated, “Creativity makes me who I am… Whether it’s playing outside or participating in activities outside of school, I enjoy being able to express myself in different outlets.” Participants expressed themselves in a variety of ways including sports. Ananda Ami (15 years old) shared:
I always saw my mom with a journal and a pen. At the time I couldn’t explain it but energetically I felt the healing and happiness it gave her. It’s not just this music stuff I do, It’s solely the act of turning nothing into something being unconventional, being eccentric, being scary, intimidating, whatever it is, but being yourself.

They also used creative outlets to “communicate who they are to adults who have a hard time understanding them” (Jay Lee, 18 years old).

3.4.3 Part 1: Summary and Limitations

Part 1 was a starting place using available data to begin to understand Black girls’ needs in community-based educational spaces (CBES). I learned the participants need spaces where they can (1) connect with both adults and other young people, (2) process and escape daily stressors, and (3) explore their gendered racial identity ideologies. I illustrated how they drew on the ideologies presented in the conceptual model from Chapter 2: pride, agentic, and humanist. Additionally, the participants wanted to be able to their authentic selves (i.e., comfortable and safe to express themselves in the way they want) and express themselves through creative outlets (e.g., music, poetry, sports). Even though the data in this part of the study were collected for generally reimagining afterschool, I used the participants’ stories to better understand the support Black adolescent girls need in CBES. The limitations of this part of the study are that I was not involved in the data collection and I was not able to follow up with participants on ambiguous responses. However, I was able to build on what I learned to inform Part 2.
3.5 Part 2: Focus Groups and an Interview

In Part 1, I concluded that the Black adolescent girls that participated in the grantmaking initiative wanted to be able to build relationships with peers and adults, process and escape their daily stressors, explore their gendered racial identity ideologies, and express themselves through creative outlets. However, since this was not the focus of the dataset, I was not able to deeply explore the nuances of their experiences in community-based educational spaces (CBES). The participants shared their personal stories which often included information about their families and schools, which are critical components of their learning and development ecosystem (Akiva et al., 2022); however, CBES are the focus of the study. They also described how they would reimagine afterschool programs. Some discussed their own experiences in CBES, but it was not guaranteed. Thus, I needed to specifically ask Black girls about their experiences as Black girls in CBES in Part 2. Additionally, with the data collected in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, participants dealt with uncertainty and instability (Forum for Youth Investment, 2021; Osai et al., 2024). Finally, Part 1 uses a dataset from teenagers. I know identity exploration is a key part of pre-adolescence and adolescence (Adams-Bass & Bentley-Edwards, 2021), so I planned to expand the sample and ask younger Black girls about their thoughts. Part 2 continues to test the conceptual model and explores how what I found in Part 1 compares (1) if Black girls were specifically asked about being a Black girl in CBES, (2) with younger participants in a different geographical location, and (3) during a different timeframe. Part 2 addresses the following research sub-questions:

- What did focus group participants want in an afterschool program?
- How did staff in community-based educational spaces communicate uplifting gendered racial socialization messages to the participants?
• What characteristics helped Black girls feel comfortable in community-based educational spaces?
• How did focus group participants describe wanting to express themselves in community-based educational spaces?

3.5.1 Part 2: Methods

In Part 2 of this exploratory critical narrative study, I conducted two in-person 60-90-minute focus groups with two different groups of 5th-8th grade Black girls in Pittsburgh, PA in May 2023 with a co-facilitator. For this part of the study, I wanted to use Black girls’ stories to explore their intersectional experiences in CBES. Using purposeful sampling, we sent information to programs that worked with 5th-8th grade Black girls. Additionally, I advertised in newsletters and on the websites of two Pittsburgh, PA education intermediaries. Prior to the focus groups, caregivers consented for their child to participate and during the first focus group, participants assented to participate. Since the focus groups were recorded and transcribed via Rev, each participant selected their own pseudonym\(^{14}\) that everyone used during both focus groups. Across both sites, we had one fifth grader, five sixth graders, three seventh graders, and one eighth grader participate. Participants received $50 for their participation.

3.5.1.1 Amazing Program Procedures

Danielle, the program manager of Amazing Program, recruited seven Black girls from their program to participate in the focus groups. I coordinated with her to host the focus groups during

\(^{14}\) All participant, program, and neighborhood names in Part 2 are pseudonyms.
their afterschool program hours. In the first focus group, we reviewed guidelines such as only one person talks at a time and confidentiality, did an icebreaker, and created a collage to share their stories. After checking for accuracy about what we discussed during the first focus group, the second focus group consisted of the participants using collages and a questionnaire to design their perfect afterschool program\textsuperscript{15} for Black girls (see Appendix D for the questionnaire and Appendix E for Amazing Program focus groups protocol). After each focus group, the facilitators debriefed and identified patterns.

\textbf{3.5.1.1 Program Manager Interview}

After learning about the program from the Black girls, I asked Danielle to participate in Part 3 of the study, and I asked her those interview questions (see Appendix F for interview protocol). She received $50 for participating in the study. Danielle’s approximately 40-minute interview in June 2023 was recorded and transcribed via Zoom. She identifies as a white woman and was 38 years old at the time of the interview. Less than 50\% of the 6th-12th graders she works with are Black girls. Her interview transcript was analyzed with the rest of the interviews from Part 3\textsuperscript{16}; however, I integrate her narrative in Part 2 to provide a holistic story of the Amazing Program.

\textbf{3.5.1.2 Ashville Neighborhood Procedures}

Three Black girls from different community-based educational spaces participated in focus groups at a local center in Pittsburgh, PA on two Saturdays. The same as the first focus group held

\textsuperscript{15} I used the term afterschool program instead of community-based educational space because it is something the participants were familiar with.

\textsuperscript{16} See Part 3 for specifics on data analysis.
at Amazing Program, we reviewed guidelines, did an icebreaker, and created a collage to share their stories. This group also watched a clip about microaggressions and one about identity made for children and then discussed. Before participants designed their perfect afterschool program for Black girls by creating collages and completing a questionnaire during the second focus group, we reviewed data from the first focus group and asked for feedback (see Appendix D for the questionnaire and Appendix G for Ashville Neighborhood focus group protocol). After each focus group, the facilitators debriefed and identified patterns.

3.5.2 Part 2: Data Analysis

I coded the transcripts, artifacts, and notes from the focus groups with a second coder. We used a narrative analysis (see Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022) with narrative coding (see Saldaña, 2016) because I am most interested in discovering how Black girls “make sense of their lives through stories” (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022, p. 148) specifically in CBES. The data were organized by the questions we asked during the focus groups. We noted patterns and themes across all the questions, and I clustered them based on the research question (Miles et al., 2020). Once I had our clusters, I identified quotes that answered the research question.

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17 The Amazing Program did not watch the clips because we ran out of time.
18 I used the term afterschool program instead of community-based educational space because it is something the participants were familiar with.
3.5.3 Part 2: Results

The focus group participants and the program manager described communicating uplifting gendered racial socialization messages to Black girls through the physical space (e.g., paintings, murals), sharing information about cultural events, and directly telling them (e.g., “you’re beautiful”). The Black girls wanted to be in community so they could discuss the gendered racism they experience outside of the CBES and explore their gendered racial identity ideologies. Creating an environment of trust, providing opportunities for Black girls to share pieces of their culture, and seeing Black girls’ humanity are characteristics that helped Black girls feel comfortable in community-based educational spaces.

3.5.3.1 What did focus group participants want in an afterschool program?

The focus group participants discussed being in community as an important aspect of their afterschool experience. At the Ashville Neighborhood focus group, in response to “what is the best thing about being a Black girl,” one participant shared, “I like…the community. You’re a part of something.” Danielle, at Amazing Program, felt she wasn’t “a good person to be leading [Black girls] because [she doesn’t] have the same lived experience or [she] might not know how to answer a question they have.” She continued:

If they’re making fun of each other about something specific to their ethnicity, like me, jumping in as a white adult and saying, you can’t say that like, I know that’s the right thing to say, but I also feel like sometimes it might mean more if the adult was more similar to them.

To address this they “try to bring in guests who might have similar backgrounds” (Danielle). This was evident when the Black girls at Amazing Program excitedly told us about
their connection to a Black woman therapist that they were able to talk with during program about their experiences as a Black girl:

We were allowed to open up to her and like every time we would open up to her…about something that happened at school or like maybe a kid making fun of our skin color or something she would like, she would express and she’d be like, “oh, like you need to love your skin color. Like, don’t worry about these other kids…don’t let people talk about your skin color because you’re beautiful the way you are and your skin is beautiful and being Black is very special”. And she would kind of just like, tell us about how our skin color, like we would have games and like activities about Black girls…We had like all different types of like cultures and stuff…we would have different like, activities of different cultures…she would basically have like activities but like, um, “how do you feel about being a Black girl? Or like how like any negative or positive things about being a Black girl.”

A Black girl in the Ashville Neighborhood focus group also expressed wanting to be able to discuss gendered racism outside of the classroom. She described the Black Student Union at her school, led by a Black teacher outside of class time, as a place where she can debrief the negative experiences she has during classroom time, such as the time a teacher “briefly skimmed across the fact that Emmett Till was killed.” She continued, “One of the kids [asked a different teacher] who [is] Emmett Till. He’s like ‘a child who died’. I was like, ‘not like died of natural causes. A child that was basically mauled’.” This same participant suggested teachers in school that do not identify as Black women need to not “gloss over Black girls’ history, but don’t be weird about it,” for example, staring at Black girls when talking about topics such as slavery.
When describing their perfect afterschool program, some (6 of 10) of the focus group participants explained they wanted Black girls to learn about and how to love themselves, self-confidence, and be comfortable being their authentic selves. A focus group participant described, “what being a Black girl means to me is like, you don’t have to be ashamed for who you are or where you come from like just be you.” Another focus group participant stated, “I like being myself as much as I can.” The participants welcomed a conversation about their thoughts and feelings on, and perceptions of Black girls.

3.5.3.2 How did staff in community-based educational spaces communicate uplifting gendered racial socialization messages to the participants?

3.5.3.2.1 In the Physical Space

Danielle and the focus group participants both wanted the physical space to communicate uplifting messages to Black girls. Danielle described having physical spaces with art that center Black girls to “make [Black girls] feel seen and…supported.” Danielle also identified having “beautiful murals with uplifting quotes” as a feature of the space. Several focus group participants shared this vision, mentioning, “on the walls there [are] positive quotes.” Others shared they wanted to have “some painting[s] of Black women” and “posters about Black girls.” A focus group participant described having “wallpaper with different Black girl hairstyles.” Another suggested playing “music anyone is interested in.” When asked about the vibe of their perfect afterschool program, one focus group participant responded, “positive, welcoming program, it looks like Black girl magic.”
3.5.3.2.2 By Sharing Events and Direct Communication

Danielle communicated to Black girls they matter by providing information about other events specific for them even if it was outside of her organization, “I’m always like seeing different opportunities happening…and if there ever is anything that’s focused on Black girls, I’ll make sure to let our girls know about it…I also try to take them to [cultural] events.” The staff at Amazing Program also explicitly communicated uplifting messages directly to Black girls. One of the Black girls at Amazing Program stated the staff, “helped me love me skin.” Other participants agreed and noted the staff told them, “you’re beautiful”, “you’re unique”, and “Black girls are pretty.” One participant expressed, “It’s nice to hear the compliment.”

3.5.3.3 What characteristics helped Black girls feel comfortable in community-based educational spaces?

3.5.3.3.1 Environment of Trust

Danielle described creating an environment of trust so Black girls can feel comfortable attending their programming and being themselves. She stated, “showing them that they can trust the adults in the room and trust the other kids so that what they're gonna say is not going to be made fun of or judge[d].” Danielle also noted, “A lot of the [Black] girls come every day. They don’t have to…but they like coming...because they know that it’s a safe space where they’re not gonna get all the negative attention they might get elsewhere.” In her suggestion, she also mentions providing them something different than the gendered racism messages they may get other places.

3.5.3.3.2 Black Girls Sharing Pieces of Culture

The Amazing Program participants communicated when staff allowed them to not only share pieces of their culture as Black girls, but the staff also actively participated in activities, that
helped them feel comfortable being themselves in the space. Even though Danielle was concerned about not “having the same lived experience” as the Black girls, most (5 out of 6) of the Amazing Program participants responded they felt comfortable being their authentic selves at Amazing Program. They shared they were comfortable because “you can open up to them,” “you don’t have to…change your personality,” and “you don’t have to like have like shame for like who you are.” The participants at Amazing Program also appreciated that the adults went outside their own comfort zone and allowed the Black girls to do activities from their culture. One participant described, “they let us have opportunities to do anything…it if you wanna do something in your culture, they love doing things…that are like, not like their, their own culture…And that’s what I like about them.”

3.5.3.3 Seeing Black Girls’ Humanity

In the focus groups, we asked, “What do you want adults to know about Black girls?” and the participants essentially described they want adults to see their humanity. One focus group participant even said, “We are humans…you want to call us animals because we’re Black, we are humans, we’re girls.” She wants adults to recognize she is a person and more specifically a Black girl. Another person added, “we have feelings too.” One Black girl wanted adults to simply listen to them and not automatically “take other people’s sides.” The participants were aware when they were being treated unfairly and different than their peers that are not Black girls and suggested adults need to listen to them and their feelings. They dreamed and wished “that the stereotypes…could stop.” A participant requested, “Don’t describe us in ways that aren’t accurate” and another added, “Don’t underestimate women just because the color of their skin.”
3.5.3.4 How did focus group participants describe wanting to express themselves in community-based educational spaces?

The focus group participants shared attributes of their perfect program which included cooking soul food and foods from different cultures – expressions of themselves. Black girls described expressing themselves through their hair. “It’s usually said that most like Black women have like all their pride shows in like how they wear their hair, which I think is pretty cool” (focus group participant). Many (6 out of 9) of the focus group participants mentioned hairstyles as one of the best things about being a Black girl. A focus group participant shared, “I think that the best thing about being a black girl is like the different hairstyles that you get to do” (focus group participant). In celebrating Black girls’ hair, they noted they wanted Black girls to learn “to love their hair” and “how to do hair.” One focus group participant stated:

I feel like a lot of Black girls don’t really... I don’t know how to explain it, but I feel like a lot of black girls, they feel comfortable only when they get their hair done and I want to show that having your natural hair out, you could feel good.

3.5.4 Part 2: Summary and Limitations

The purpose of Part 2 was to specifically explore Black girls’ intersectional experiences in community-based educational spaces (CBES). Participants described wanting the physical space to uplift Black girls including the artwork and music. Staff in CBES also uplifted Black girls by sharing external opportunities that celebrate them and directly communicating to them. Additionally, Black girls wanted a community where they could discuss the gendered racism they experienced in other settings (e.g., in class) and explore how they think and feel about and perceive Black girls. Staff helped Black girls feel comfortable in their spaces by creating an environment
of trust, providing opportunities for Black girls to share pieces of their culture, and seeing Black girls’ humanity. The focus group participants mentioned food and hair as outward displays of their sense of self.

As this was exploratory with time restraints, we only briefly reviewed the conceptual model topics (e.g., gendered racial identity ideologies). I learned the Black girl participants wanted to talk more generally about their experiences and have suggestions for how staff in CBES can better support them. Due to the nature of focus groups, I was not able to adequately match what was said to who said it and discover differences based on demographics (e.g., ethnicity, grade). However, the focus group format was beneficial because the participants were able to build on what one another said.

**3.6 Part 3: Interviews**

The primary purpose of this part of the study is to use community-based educational spaces (CBES) staff interviews to continue to test the conceptual model. Although Part 2 and Part 3 were designed concurrently, the focus groups were facilitated first so in the interview debriefs the interviewers made connections between what we were learning from staff and what we talked about with the Black girls in the focus groups. I wanted to interview staff because they are the primary audience for the conceptual model and need to be a part of the development of it. Part 3 focuses on two research sub-questions:

- What gendered racial socialization messages were communicated to Black girls in community-based educational spaces?
• What did interview participants want for Black girls in community-based educational spaces?

3.6.1 Part 3: Methods

An exploratory critical narrative approach is appropriate to use to further develop the conceptual model using the stories of individuals that would utilize it. I gleaned information on how to better support 5th-12th grade Black girls from staff in community-based educational spaces, using interviews conducted from May 20, 2023 to June 30, 2023.

3.6.1.1 Part 3: Procedures

I conducted 15 semi-structured interviews (average time: 68 minutes) with staff in community-based educational spaces and a co-interviewer was present for nine of them. We used purposeful and snowball sampling for this part of the study. To participate, staff had to work or have worked with 5th-12th grade Black girls (did not need to solely or primarily work with Black girls) in a community-based educational space (CBES). Participants did not need to identify as a Black woman. Initial recruitment was primarily through the interviewers’ network on LinkedIn and former co-workers. Additionally, I presented the research study to CBES around Pittsburgh, PA. It was advertised with education focused intermediaries in Pittsburgh, PA – newsletter and website. Participants were also asked to share the opportunity with their networks.

Interested participants scheduled an interview and were contacted to complete the informed consent after confirmation they met the criteria. They received $50 for their participation. One interview was completed in person, recorded, and transcribed via Rev. All others were completed virtually, recorded, and transcribed via Zoom. I cleaned the transcriptions prior to data analysis.
(i.e., ensuring transcriptions matched the recording, redacting confidential information, and adding pseudonyms).

### 3.6.1.2 Part 3: Participants

The mean age for the participants is 34.13 with a range of 24-49. The participants self-described their race and gender and were given the option to select their own pseudonym. See Table 3.2 for the demographic characteristics of participants. Interviewees had multiple roles over the course of their career including camp counselors, CEOs, coordinators, directors, instructors, librarians, group facilitators, managers, mentors, support during the school day, and volunteers located in 10 cities (Pittsburgh, PA, Cleveland and Columbus, OH, Chicago, IL, Washington, DC, Detroit, Ypsilanti, and Ann Arbor, MI, New York City, NY, and Houston, TX). Collectively, interviewees referenced 29 different roles (average of 2 roles per individual). See Figure 3.2 for the grades participants worked with across all their roles. All participants worked directly with Black girls either in a previous or current role. Referring to the question, “Do/did you primarily work with Black girls...like more than 50% of the young people you worked with?,” 73% of participants referenced at least one role during their interviews where they worked primarily with Black girls.
Table 3.2 Demographic Characteristics of Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>City, State</th>
<th>Grades Worked With</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beyonce</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Pittsburgh, PA</td>
<td>6th-12th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chantel</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Pittsburgh, PA</td>
<td>5th-8th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deasha</td>
<td>Black (Nigerian)</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Houston, TX</td>
<td>5th-12th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>Black (Haitian American)</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Washington, DC</td>
<td>6th-8th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janelle</td>
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<td>Woman</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Cleveland, OH</td>
<td>6th-12th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kara</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Metro Detroit, MI</td>
<td>6th, 12th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Metro Detroit, MI</td>
<td>5th-11th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
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<td>Woman</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Metro Detroit, MI</td>
<td>5th-12th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pongo</td>
<td>Black and Italian</td>
<td>Non-Gendered</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Pittsburgh, PA</td>
<td>7th-12th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Woman</td>
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<td>Pittsburgh, PA</td>
<td>5th-12th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Woman</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Metro Detroit, MI</td>
<td>5th-12th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Woman</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Pittsburgh, PA</td>
<td>5th-8th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Pittsburgh, PA</td>
<td>5th-12th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Woman</td>
<td>38</td>
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<td>5th, 7th-12th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>49</td>
<td>Chicago, IL</td>
<td>6th-8th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19 Black includes those who self-identified as Black and/or African American
20 At time of interview
21 At time of interview
22 This includes all the roles the participants referenced in their interview. Some participants worked with younger Black girls; however, I do not capture that information here. I use the following to translate age to grade for consistency:
   10/11 years old - 5th
   11/12 years old - 6th
   12/13 years old - 7th
   13/14 years old - 8th
   14/15 years old - 9th
   15/16 years old - 10th
   16/17 years old - 11th
   17/18 years old - 12th
3.6.1.3 Interviews

In the interviews, we asked participants about their dreams and wishes for Black girls; how they see gendered racism manifesting in Black girls’ lives; how they support, celebrate, and uplift Black girls and encourage them to be their authentic selves; the similarities and differences they notice between 5th-12th grade Black girls now and when they were that same age; and what they want to know more about to better support Black girls. Additionally, we asked about the role of their organization in celebrating and uplifting Black girls including what adults and young people say about and to Black girls. I also walked through the proposed conceptual model and asked for feedback. (See Appendix F for interview protocol.) After each interview, the interviewers debriefed and noted common themes.
3.6.2 Part 3: Data Analysis

For Part 3 of this exploratory critical narrative, I conducted a thematic analysis (see Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022; Miles et al., 2020) with a second coder. When the co-interviewer was present for the interview, we took time after the interview to note and review the topics discussed. These topics plus the conceptual model informed the development of the codebook. See Appendix H for codebook. The data were organized into sections based on the interview questions to allow for holistic coding (see Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022; Miles et al., 2020). Additionally, for each section, we coded the data using multiple primary, secondary, and tertiary codes (see Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022; Miles et al., 2020). After coding separately, we reviewed the data together and discovered themes (see Miles et al., 2020) across participants and interview questions. One of the interview participants also reviewed the themes and provided feedback. I then clustered the themes (see Miles et al., 2020) based on the research questions and selected quotes from the excerpts that described the research questions.

3.6.3 Part 3: Results

Participants discussed how they communicated gendered racial socialization messages (i.e., armoring, uplifting, and gendered racism) to Black girls and what they wanted for Black girls in community-based educational spaces (i.e., helping them navigate society, building relationships, showcasing the diversity of Black women and girls, not passing on trauma to Black girls, giving them opportunities to lead).
3.6.3.1 What gendered racial socialization messages were communicated to Black girls in community-based educational spaces?

3.6.3.1.1 Uplifting Socialization Messages

Staff in CBES discussed the barriers to communicating uplifting messages to Black girls at the organizational level (e.g., policies, procedures, physical atmosphere, materials), but also shared how they can overcome those barriers. Interviewees stated their organizations could do more to specifically uplift Black girls. Some participants that did not solely work with Black girls expressed their organizations didn’t have “anything personal against Black girls” (Chantel), but it’s not “our thing per se to like really highlight Black girls” (Tee). In reference to the physical space, some interviewees conveyed the notion that Black girls were “ignored by omission” (Chantel). However, they noted their organizations could provide uplifting books with Black girl/woman leads, play Black girl/woman empowerment music, decorate the physical space with pictures of Black girls/women, or partner with other organizations that primarily work with Black girls to intentionally communicate uplifting messages to Black girls.

Participants expressed even when their organization wasn’t specifically uplifting Black girls, they intentionally did so on their own. Staff uplifted Black girls by celebrating not just their academic and sports accomplishments, but also celebrating them as Black girls. Queen shared, “We magnify our girls for the things that people think are small.” Along the same lines, others, like Kim, mentioned using detailed encouragement and words of affirmation:

The specific affirmation, specific praise is really important to me also. So, like not just good job, but you got that step or you, you added like this other piece of the character… and it really showed that emotion that I wanted to see or like you remembered this part, and like being specific with it, so they know they’re being celebrate and that like that was them.
Participants like Janelle even uplifted Black girls after they were no longer working with them. One of the Black girls she’s worked with is a makeup artist and “anytime there is a social event that happens…she's [her] person” meaning she has her do her makeup for the event. In addition to celebratory and encouraging messages, staff conveyed a desire to communicate messages for Black girls to love themselves and feel worthy, proud, and confident. For example, Deasha said, “If you’re not confident in, just, yourself you can’t excel forward…And that’s another thing we really push is self-worth to make sure they understand they’re worthy.” Pongo added a note about pride, “one of the focuses was to instill pride in who you are and where you come from.” As these participants described, staff explicitly and directly communicated uplifting messages to Black girls. However, Scarlett noted, it’s also critical to be genuine because “sometimes when people call people confident…they said [it] in a way…as if they’re amazed that this person could exude this.”

Interviewees identified a few uplifting messages communicated to Black girls from other Black girls. One interviewee, Kara, described the relationships between Black girls in general as “super supportive of one another” and that they attended “each other’s grad parties [and] prom send offs.” Chantel observed the Black girls in her program doing each other’s hair and talking about serious life events where they “comfort each other.”

3.6.3.1.2 Gendered Racism Socialization Messages

Participants reported several gendered racism messages in community-based educational spaces (CBES) generally (not necessarily their own program) and in different areas (e.g., schools). Janelle emphasized, “hear[ing] a lot of pejorative or deficit discussion[s].” In addition to using deficit language to talk about Black girls, interviewees described an “overinvestment in appearance” (Sam) specifically “people car[ing] too much about Black girls’ bodies” (Scarlett).
Criminalizing Black girls’ behaviors was another theme participants identified as seen in Reva’s statement, “You get in trouble once, and you’re like written off for the rest of your life.” The adultification of Black girls, such as, “It’s like they can’t just be moody teenagers. They are angry Black women” (Beyonce), came up as well.

Interviewees described how young people sometimes communicated gendered racism messages to Black girls, specifically amplifying gendered racial stereotypes. For example, Reva described seeing the “sapphire” stereotype:

I feel it's easy for Black girls to be misunderstood. Let's say if you're not afraid to speak your mind, people kind of like don't really want to be bothered with you or may have this for like this negative light on you...that came up a lot with...the middle schoolers.

Elizabeth saw the reinforcement of the “mammy” stereotype:

The girls felt like number one they had to be protective of the Black boys because…they didn't want them to get in trouble, because a bigger issue is our Black boys and our boys of color get a lot more in trouble than you know anyone else…This is like from birth for Black women to feel so protective of sometimes the very group that's hurting us… The thing that always stuck with me is like they felt more protective of the boys than they did of themselves.

Additionally, interviewees reported young people (both Black girls and others) communicated gendered racism messages to Black girls including insults and harassment about their skin color, hair, and clothing choices – things that Sam described as things Black girls can’t change whether because it’s about their bodies or restrictions from caregivers.

Participants shared many gendered racism messages came from outside CBES (e.g., schools, families, media – TV, movies, music, books, and social media) but influenced Black girls’
participation in CBES. Reva and others were curious about, “how we combat these different forces.” Deasha suggested providing resources:

> Sometimes they don’t have that safe space throughout those 8 hours that they’re with admin, and with their teachers. So, we come in for that 45 to hour and a half time, like let’s see what we can do, and to not only have this session with us, but let’s see how we can pull other resources and get the support you need.

In Tee’s case, she focused on doing what was in her control in the context of her role with a CBES working in a school:

> We can’t go to Hollywood and change what’s on these movie screens, but we could start within our circles…letting them know how beautiful they are, how strong they are, tap into their skills and their talents and congratulate them on how well they did. Look how far you’ve come along, even if it’s a little bit…I think it’s good to start early with our young girls, for sure, because they got so many things against them…I don’t have too much say so, or control over like curriculum, because this is a public school…but what I do have a little bit of control over is partnerships.

Even though participants acknowledged sometimes gendered racism messages came from families, they struggled with identifying how CBES could be buffers. Participants acknowledged the challenge of respecting other’s cultures and supporting the Black girls in their space, especially when the messages are conflicting. However, they questioned if they have a role in coaching the family to communicate uplifting messages.

### 3.6.3.1.3 Armoring Socialization Messages

In efforts to protect Black girls from the effects of gendered racism, Black women participants like Tonya mentioned the value of armoring messages in the context of CBES:
You could have a rites of passage for somebody that is going off to college. Sometimes that's really what grad parties have become…it's like we're shepherding you to that next level…But are we arming Black girls with enough of the meat and potatoes? Not just like oh, you know all of your decorations in your room are going to be turquoise. Isn't that cute?...Are you ready for how you will be perceived when you walk through the door [on a predominately white campus]? You're automatically different.

Participants also noted that though the goal of armoring messages is to prepare and protect, they can also be harmful. Additionally, Elizabeth highlighted the need for staff to be intentional with communicating protective messages about “navigat[ing] the world...[and] surviv[ing] it...without scaring [Black girls].”

3.6.3.2 What did interview participants want for Black girls in community-based educational spaces?

Interviewees described wanting to provide guidance and help Black girls understand all the information they receive and “navigate society” (Sam). One of the differences the participants identified between when they were in 5th-12th grade and Black girls now is the access to information including injustices and language to describe their experiences. Elizabeth “didn’t have language [to describe what she was experiencing] growing up...[but] knew [those experiences were] wrong because it didn’t feel good.” There is also an opportunity to learn from Black girls as Tee shared, “They got access to [information], [so] talk to them about what they know. Maybe we can learn something from them.”

Participants like Beyonce wanted to “find that balance between of when to push [and] when to let up”. Sam had her own hardships with “learning how to balance what they need now, but what they need for the future and being able to instill those things. It’s really difficult”. However,
Beyoncé described, “giving them the space to feel, to express. I want to hear what you have to say. I don’t even care if I don’t like it. I want to hear what you have to say”. Tonya echoed the same view:

I want to have an impact on girls feeling like there’s a place for them where they can figure out who they are and have a positive identity that they’re developing intentionally and not just like letting an identity fall upon them. Like you have choice in this.

Interviewees noted several techniques they used to build and maintain relationships with Black girls in community-based educational spaces including being vulnerable and connecting with Black girls outside of structured programming time. Janelle described, “There were times where we would sit with them while we were eating what they made [during summer camp] and having conversations just natural. It didn't have to be about anything just checking in with them.” Chantel, who facilitates programming inside a school building, described interacting in the hallways. Tee built relationships by being an advocate and showed she was an advocate by providing or connecting to tangible resources.

Related to building relationships, Janelle explained, “I think me being my authentic self from jump was important because…you can’t hide anything from them.” Other interviewees like Pongo agreed, “I just try to be myself as much as possible and I think being your genuine self shows that you're comfortable and models for them that they can be their genuine self.” As staff are their authentic selves, they encourage Black girls to be their authentic selves. Along the same lines as being their authentic selves, interviewees described not relying on gendered racial stereotypes to connect. Chantel reflected, “Am [I] unknowingly perpetuating the stereotypes?...Do I expect girls to have braids in her hair? Is that the only time [I] tell her [her] hair is nice?...What are ways that I am unknowingly doing what I’m working against?”
Black women participants discussed wanting to provide Black girls in their organizations with what they didn't have growing up including connecting with Black women with diverse experiences, interests, and careers. To address the diversity of Black girls and women, Lisa “had 5 different [Black] women who were leading it to be able to share their experiences and to be able to also share their struggles.” Elizabeth gave an example of the diversity among Black girls and women from her work:

A lot of the old school, you know, R&B and rap, I don't know a lot of it…[Now] I have a Black girl who's obsessed with My Chemical Romance…I used to listen to them when I [was] younger, so like her advisor says to me, ‘I'm so happy that she has you because I can't keep up with her and you can keep up with her.’

Black women interviewees were mindful of their own traumatic experiences due to gendered racism, so they don’t pass the trauma onto Black girls. Lisa expressed, “What’s really interesting is being able to recognize that you haven’t worked through [trauma due to gendered racism].” Reva added, “Being a Black girl that constantly has to show up in white spaces all your life…I never realized how traumatic or how much harm has been done to me and continues to be done.”

Participants mentioned they observed that staff who are not Black women were sometimes afraid and uncomfortable working with Black girls. Scarlett shared, “It was really hard for [the co-facilitator that was not a Black woman] to connect with [the Black girls] on that level just because they were so afraid.” Kara expanded, “It was more so like this fear of messing up.” However, she also highlighted, “[Staff who are not Black women] have [their] own points of connection within these groups or an ability to learn how to be of use and service to these students.” They wanted other staff to be comfortable working with Black girls.
Interviewees desired to provide Black girls opportunities to lead in CBES through a range of activities (e.g., steering individual conversations, giving them the opportunity to listen to the music they like and dress to their comfort level – keeping their coat on inside, and advocating for better treatment of Black women/girls). Kim discussed learning more about the Black girls’ interests to incorporate into program. She stated:

A lot of time spent together. Time to talk about those interest but like also like scheduling it into that schedule… asking them what they like… I also pay attention to what they do like…finding those ways, be flexible, but also get things done… just being flexible to their interest, I think, helps them feel like just more comfortable.

Pongo added, “admitting when I don't know something, or you know, asking them to clarify because I don't understand.” In her interview Janelle discussed the balance of programming and flexibility: “Although we have to provide some level of programming via curriculum and things that we are required to do, they still should have a say.”

3.6.4 Part 3: Summary and Limitations

I identified staff communicate uplifting, gendered racism, and armoring messages to Black girls in community-based educational spaces (CBES). Additionally, participants wanted to help Black girls navigate society. They wanted to build relationships with Black girls, showcase diversity of Black women and girls, not pass on trauma to Black girls, and give Black girls an opportunity to lead. Adults were interviewed so I do not know the actual impact of the environments they are working to create. For example, I don’t know if staff’s attempts to celebrate Black girls encourage them to be their authentic selves in their spaces.
The mostly Black woman sample, which was unintentional, allowed me to explore the conceptual model topics (e.g., gendered racial socialization messages) deeper because they were able to approach the questions from both a perspective as an adult now and reflecting on their experiences when they were growing up as Black girls. However, I was not able to fully explore differences among how adults interact with Black girls, and it is difficult to identify general practices with a limited sample. Even though the interview participants did note differences between how they interact with Black girls and how they observe staff who are not Black women interact with Black girls, future research needs to include others for a more complete picture of how all staff can support Black girls and explore not just race and gender differences, but also differences among Black women (e.g., ethnicity, age, personal background).

3.7 Discussion

3.7.1 Revisiting the Conceptual Model

In this three-part exploratory critical narrative study, I investigated 5th-12th grade Black girls’ intersectional experiences in community-based educational spaces (CBES). Additionally, the three parts of this study empirically tested the conceptual model I presented in Chapter 2.

3.7.1.1 Related to gendered racial socialization messages, how can staff in community-based educational spaces support Black girls?

Consistent with the conceptual model I presented in Chapter 2, I found evidence of uplifting, gendered racism, and armoring messages in CBES (Brown et al., 2017; Carey et al.,
When organizations were not solely or primarily working with Black girls, materials (e.g., books, physical space) did not intentionally communicate uplifting messages. However, Black girls and staff shared CBES can uplift Black girls at the organizational level through books, music, and decorations/artwork on the wall. They also noted partnering with organizations that explicitly center Black girls as a way they can communicate to Black girls they matter. Even when uplifting messages were not coming from the organizational level, individual staff members intentionally communicated to Black girls that they matter and celebrated them in their spaces at an interpersonal level. They encouraged Black girls to attend cultural events designed for them and directly gave them sincere compliments and words of affirmation specifically about being a Black girl. They hoped these explicit messages would help Black girls feel worthy, proud, and confident as Black girls. Uplifting messages also came from other Black girls. They celebrated each other’s accomplishments and supported one another when they needed.

In alignment with the conceptual model, gendered racism messages devalued and dehumanized Black girls (Blake & Epstein, 2019; Brown et al., 2017; Collins, 2022; Crenshaw et al., 2015; Epstein et al., 2017; Kaler-Jones, 2021; Lewis et al., 2016; Morris, 2016; Thomas & King, 2007; Williams & Lewis, 2021; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). In this study, Black girls and staff reported gendered racism messages generally came from outside of their space – schools, families, and other CBES for example – and their CBES were the places they heard uplifting messages (i.e., CBES have the potential to counteract external gendered racism messages). However, participants noted Black girls’ bodies, including their hair, and their behaviors are criminalized, and they are not given grace to make mistakes just as the conceptual model described (Blake & Epstein, 2019; Epstein et al., 2017; Morris, 2016, 2022). Young people in particular amplified gendered racial stereotypes such as the sapphire and mammy stereotypes (Blake & Epstein, 2019; Brown et al.,...
I observed armoring messages in this study just as in the conceptual model – messages from Black women that seek to protect Black girls from gendered racism, but can also intensify harm (Bell & Nkomo, 1998; Porter et al., 2020; Rogers et al., 2021; Thomas & King, 2007; Winchester et al., 2021). Black women staff expressed they wanted to prepare Black girls for living in a world with gendered racism in a way that it is beneficial not harmful.

3.7.1.2 What can staff in community-based educational spaces do to support Black girls’ internal interpretation of gendered racial socialization messages and exploration of their gendered racial identity ideologies?

As conveyed in the conceptual model, interpreting gendered racial socialization messages, and exploring gendered racial identity ideologies are internal activities for Black girls based on how they perceive and process the external messages. How a Black girl interprets messages is facilitated by their own personal characteristics (e.g., ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, nationality, religious beliefs, disability), their support system, and awareness and purpose of the message (Burnett et al., 2023, Gadson & Lewis, 2022; Williams & Lewis, 2021; Winchester et al., 2021). How Black girls interpret the message shapes how they think and feel about and perceive Black girls (i.e., gendered racial identity ideologies). In this study, I noticed Black girls drew on the pride and agentic ideologies as presented in the conceptual model. However, based on Black girls in this study, I expand the humanist ideology. Even though Black girls wanted others to see them as humans, they weren’t ignoring their identity as Black girls, which is different from previous literature (Sellers et al., 1997; Thomas et al., 2011; Williams & Lewis, 2021). Additionally, when Black girls described drawing on an assimilation ideology, they talked about
it as an ideology they previously drew on but not anymore. Based on Black girl’s descriptions of interpretation and ideologies, I identified how staff in CBES can support them through these internal activities to build on the conceptual model: facilitate (1) connections between Black girls and staff, (2) spaces where Black girls can process the gendered racism they experience, and (3) exploration of their gendered racial identity ideologies.

3.7.1.3 How do Black girls outwardly display their authentic self in community-based educational spaces? What are barriers to Black girls’ outwardly displaying their authentic selves in community-based educational spaces? What can staff in community-based educational spaces do to encourage Black girls to be their authentic selves?

In this study, I found Black girls outwardly displayed their sense of self as noted in the conceptual model – specifically creative outlets (e.g., hair and food). Black girls wanted a place where they could be themselves and staff wanted Black girls to be their authentic selves. But what does it mean for a Black girl to be her authentic self? It’s when she can freely express herself without judgment. It’s less about the action and more about why she does it (e.g., does she straighten her hair because she wants to, because she sees natural hair as unprofessional, or because she is navigating an oppressive environment?). As I build out the conceptual model, I note staff in CBES can build relationships with Black girls, provide opportunities for them, show diversity among Black women and girls, see Black girls’ humanity, and recognize them as experts to create environments where they are free to outwardly display their sense of self as they are comfortable.
3.7.2 Interpretation of Results

As I interpreted the results, I identified three main techniques for staff as they support 5th-12th grade Black girls in community-based educational spaces (CBES) that align with the conceptual model: be intentional about gendered racial socialization messages communicated, support Black girls’ interpretation of gendered racial socialization messages and exploration of gendered racial identity ideologies, and create an environment where Black girls can be their authentic selves. See Figure 3.3 for techniques. This is not a comprehensive list of techniques; they are simply a starting place as we, as a field, continue to explore this topic.
Figure 3.3 Techniques for Staff as They Support 5th-12th grade Black Girls in Community-Based Educational Spaces
3.7.2.1 Be Intentional About Gendered Racial Socialization Messages Communicated

The Black women interview participants underlined the role of arming messages that came from them as they tried to prepare Black girls for gendered racism – equip Black girls with protective tools for when they encounter gendered racism (Bell & Nkomo, 1998; Porter et al., 2020; Rogers & Butler-Barnes, 2021). Since arming messages can be both protective and harmful, it’s critical for Black women to be intentional about using the messages to help Black girls heal and not cause more harm (Bell & Nkomo, 1998; Morris, 2022).

Consistent with previous literature (Burnett et al., 2023; Griffith, 2023; Inniss-Thompson et al., 2022; Morris, 2022), interviewees expressed the importance of communicating uplifting messages to Black girls about Black girls (Brown et al., 2017; Williams & Lewis, 2021) and described the messages conveyed at the organizational level, with individual staff, and between Black girls. At the organizational level, staff participants shared organizations needed to intentionally uplift Black girls even if Black girls were not the primary group they worked with (Kelly, 2020b). This is necessary because their experiences are sometimes lumped into either Black young people’s experiences or girl experiences and Black girls’ intersectional experiences are often minimized or ignored (Rogers & Butler-Barnes, 2021). Participants in all parts gave a few ideas on how staff can do more to specifically uplift Black girls such as provide uplifting books with Black girl/woman leads, play Black girl/woman empowerment music, decorate the physical space with pictures of Black girls/women, and partner with other organizations that primarily work with Black girls.

However, even if organizations are not specifically communicating uplifting messages to Black girls through policies, procedures, decorations, and materials, individual staff mentioned still doing so on their own. For example, interview participants shared specific opportunities,
celebrated them as Black girls, and used detailed encouragement and words of affirmation even after they were no longer in their programs. They described wanting to be genuine and communicate self-love, worth, pride, and confidence messages to Black girls. Black girls echoed this sentiment as well. Black girls expressed wanting Black girls to love themselves and have self-confidence. Similar to other studies (Kelly, 2020b), participants noted Black girls supported and comforted each other. Uplifting messages can potentially serve as a catalyst for Black girls be their authentic selves in CBES (Emdin, 2021; Morris, 2022; Turner & Young, 2022).

Gendered racism socialization messages, on the other hand, may contribute to Black girls hiding their authentic selves as self-protection (Bell & Nkomo, 1998; Burnett et al., 2023; Morris, 2022; Shorter-Gooden, 2004). Participants witnessed several examples of gendered racism messages – deficit discussions, comments about Black girls’ appearance including their bodies, criminalizing their behaviors and bodies, and adultification of Black girls. They also noticed young people amplified gendered racial stereotypes such as Black girls are loud and they have a responsibility to take care of others even to the detriment of themselves. Additionally, interviewees reported young people insulted and harassed Black girls about their skin color, hair, and clothing choices.

Staff can work to eliminate gendered racism socialization messages in CBES and work to counteract the gendered racism messages Black girls receive from outside CBES (e.g., media, schools, families) to facilitate an environment in which Black girls feel safe and comfortable being themselves (Baldridge, 2020; Burnett et al., 2023; Emdin, 2021; Inniss-Thompson et al., 2022; Morris, 2016a; Morris, 2022; Rogers & Butler-Barnes, 2021). Interview participants stated they did this by providing resources and doing what was within their control in their role. The Black
3.7.2.2 Support Black Girls Interpretation of Gendered Racial Socialization Messages and Exploration of Gendered Racial Identity Ideologies

Even though interpreting gendered racial socialization messages and exploring gendered racial identity ideologies are internal processes for Black girls (Williams & Lewis, 2021), not specific to CBES, staff can be intentional with supporting Black girls in these processes. Consistent with previous research (Kelly, 2020b), the Black girls from Part 1 and Part 2 of this study expressed needing homeplaces – spaces where they can speak freely about the gendered racism they experience – even if Black girls are not the sole or primary population of the space. As they reflected, the Black women participants in Part 3 also noted the importance of having a space to process. As seen with the Amazing Program, these homeplaces are an opportunity to incorporate Black women into a space when there are not any who are on the regular staff. For the Black women participants, it was important for them to show up for Black girls and give them what they needed as a Black girl including having diverse representation of Black women in their organizations to showcase there is not one way to be a Black woman or Black girl and no one has to hide their authentic self (McArthur & Lane, 2018; Porter et al., 2020; Rogers & Butler-Barnes, 2021). They also noted it’s necessary for Black women to reflect on their own traumatic experiences with gendered racism so they do not continue an unhealthy cycle (Emdin, 2021; Morris, 2022). As the focus group participants highlighted, it’s critical for all staff in CBES to support Black girls without relying on stereotypes and for staff to embrace their humanity by listening to them and validating their feelings (Baldridge, 2020; Brown, 2009; Inniss-Thompson et al., 2024; Kaler-Jones, 2021; Morris, 2016, 2022; Turner and Young, 2022).
3.7.2.3 Create an Environment Where Black Girls Can Be Their Authentic Selves

Trust, vulnerability, connecting with Black girls outside of structured programming time, providing or connecting to tangible resources, and staff being their genuine selves are techniques participants used to build and maintain relationships with Black girls, so they feel comfortable outwardly displaying their sense of self (Emdin, 2021; Morris, 2022). Interview participants shared staff who are not Black women have their own points of connection with Black girls and they can advocate with Black girls and be co-conspirators (Gonzalez et al., 2020; Kelly, 2020a; Love, 2019; Morris, 2022). The Black girls in Amazing Program demonstrated how staff who are not Black women can support them by being open and giving them space to share about their culture.

Interviewees noted that Black girls have agency and aren’t empty vessels waiting to be filled. Staff in CBES can provide structure and still have flexibility to allow Black girls to lead in big and small ways (Emdin, 2021; Inniss-Thompson et al., 2022, 2024; Morris, 2022; Osai et al., 2024). For example, they can have structured and intentional opportunities for Black girls to express themselves as the Black girls described in this study. Even though these techniques align with child and youth development practices (American Institutes for Research, 2019; Cantor et al., 2021; CASEL, 2020; Forum for Youth Investment, 2021; Li & Winters, 2019; Nagaoka et al., 2015; Osai et al., 2024), when working with Black girls, staff can be intentional about how they specifically implement the techniques. For example, Black girls are labeled “disrespectful” for standing up for themselves, like the focus group participants shared, so staff in CBES can humanize them, allow them to make mistakes, and be cognizant about not punishing them for their agency (Baldridge, 2020; Brown, 2009; Epstein et al., 2017; Kaler-Jones, 2021; Morris, 2016, 2022; Osai et al., 2024; Turner and Young, 2022).
3.8 Implications and Limitations

In this chapter I identified techniques for staff in community-based educational spaces (CBES) to better support 5th-12th grade Black girls based on a literature-based conceptual model. Staff can use these techniques as they design and facilitate their activities and programs. I added to the Black girl space and homeplace literature (Brown, 2009; hooks, 1990; Inniss-Thompson et al., 2022, 2024; Kelly, 2020b; Morris, 2022; Rogers & Butler-Barnes, 2021); however, research can continue to test the conceptual model and add techniques. Although I established the techniques based this three-part study that included 5th-12th grade Black girls and staff in CBES, I interacted with adults and Black girls separately. A strength of the study was facilitating focus groups with Amazing Program’s Black girl participants and interviewing one of the staff members. This model could be expanded to other programs and include individual interviews with the Black girls and observations of the program. I could also benefit from getting explicit feedback about the conceptual model from Black girls. Additionally, as the conceptual model is constantly evolving, coding using the conceptual model as a basis is difficult. However, since the foundation is the same, I was able to still use the coding to answer the research questions.

3.9 Conclusion

This three-part exploratory critical narrative study empirically tested a conceptual model that explores gendered racial socialization messages and 5th-12th grade Black girls’ interpretation of messages, gendered racial identity ideologies, and outward display of sense of self in community-based educational spaces (CBES). Staff in CBES need to be intentional about the
gendered racial socialization messages they communicate. Do they communicate armoring, gendered racism, or uplifting messages? Staff can support Black girls to interpret gendered racial socialization messages and explore gendered racial identity ideologies by creating Black girl spaces or homeplaces, have diverse representation of Black women, and center Black girls’ humanity. To create an environment where Black girls can be their authentic selves, staff can build and maintain relationships with Black girls, encourage Black girls’ agency, and specifically implement child and youth development practices with an intersectional lens.
4.0 Chapter 4: Conclusion and Future Research and Practice

4.1 Conceptual Model Feedback

It is not a dominant practice to add new empirical data in a conclusion chapter of a dissertation; however, the interviews I conducted in Chapter 3 with 16 staff in community-based educational spaces (CBES) were very informative for the implications and future research and practice related to the conceptual model. In the interviews, I reviewed the conceptual model with the participants and asked their initial thoughts on the model and how they might use it in their work. We also asked them what they wanted to know more about to better support the gendered racial identity of 5th-12th Black girls. Overall, participants provided positive feedback on the conceptual model. They saw a need for it in their spaces and thought the visual was clear.

4.1.1 Using the Conceptual Model

When asked, participants stated that the conceptual model can be used to help staff better understand Black girls’ intersectional experiences. Reva suggested, “I feel as though your conceptual model can be an introductory training...to be that strong support system where Black girls are able to really be themselves and see themselves in...a positive light.” Scarlett recommended using the conceptual model as, “a lens to decide should we use this curriculum, should we hire this person, or if we do hire this person, what’s the process that we need to take them through so that they understand how they play a role in this model.”
Tonya “appreciate[d] a research basis,” and Danielle said, “It is good to...take a step back from the day-to-day and actually think about what’s going on in society and what’s going on that’s shaping the girls’ ideology.” Additionally, Chantel wondered, “is there a buffer...is there a way to to help skew these thoughts?” Interviewees mentioned talking to Black girls about their ideologies. Kara expressed:

I think a model like this just helps to show like, okay, what I say actually does matter. My...non-verbal communication, it does matter, and it’s still a part of [Black girls] eventual understanding of themselves in relation to the rest of the world.

Scarlett expanded, “I think [the conceptual mode] is a great example of one explaining why we need to be intentional...The process could hopefully allow people to be more intentional and thoughtful about what they’re putting out there.”

4.1.2 Getting Support

Participants communicated wanting to know more about what resources already exist so they don’t have to “reinvent the wheel” but be able to “learn [from] and adapt for a particular setting or group” (Kara). Additionally, participants identified the need for professional development opportunities for staff, “no matter who they are, to better support Black girls in these spaces” (Janelle), including having spaces “to just talk about this work” (Elizabeth). Supervisors like Scarlett pondered, “What does that look like to really help someone understand [because she] would be at a complete loss on how to get [staff who are not familiar with the concepts in the conceptual model] to really get it.”

Lisa and Deasha wanted to know more about history and age-appropriate language to talk about the concepts, respectively. Tonya “wondered...how can we better support [Black girls]
during major transition points [like transition to college].” Some participants described wanting to know how to interact with Black girls from different backgrounds. Chantel highlighted the diversity of Black women and girls as she talked about how even as a Black woman, some of the Black girls she works with are different than the Black girls she grew up with, so she reflected, “How can I support them in a way that I don’t understand...how do I weigh in?”

4.1.3 Summary of Feedback

I received positive feedback on the conceptual model from the staff we interviewed. They provided feedback on how they could use the conceptual model in their work, including as a guide for them as they decide on programmatic aspects. Participants suggested the model allowed for them to look at the ecosystem that influences that Black girls are a part of. Interviewees suggested explicitly talking to Black girls about gendered racial socialization messages, interpreting them, exploring their gendered racial identity ideologies, and outwardly displaying their sense of self. However, they expressed a desire to learn about how to have age-appropriate conversations. Staff, even Black women, identified they want techniques to engage Black girls when they come from a different background. Participants’ responses indicate staff need to be intentional in their actions because they influence how Black girls see themselves. Professional development opportunities are necessary for staff to explore current resources and be aware of what is going on related to Black girls based on research and the Black girls themselves.
4.2 Discussion

This dissertation continued the work I started in 2010, exploring the impacts of community-based educational spaces (CBES) on Black girls. Over the years, I’ve grown not just as a researcher and practitioner but also as a Black woman. The work I do is personal because I want to help staff create and maintain CBES that could have helped me start my holistic health journey when I was younger. As a researcher and a practitioner, I hope both groups find this dissertation a useful document so we can all better support 5th-12th grade Black girls.

4.3 Implications

Through this dissertation, I developed a conceptual model to explore gendered racial socialization messages and 5th-12th grade Black girls’ interpretation of messages, gendered racial identity ideologies, and outward display of sense of self in community-based educational spaces (CBES). In CBES, there are external gendered racial socialization messages (e.g., uplifting, gendered racism, armoring) that Black girls internally interpret so they can determine their personal gendered racial identity ideologies (e.g., pride, agentic, humanist, assimilation), and how they want to outwardly display their sense of self. Staff in CBES must be intentional about the messages they communicate in their space whether it is policies and procedure or from individual staff and young people. They can support Black girls’ internal processes by providing spaces with diverse Black women so Black girls can freely discuss the gendered racism they experience and heal from it. When staff in CBES build and maintain relationships with Black girls and recognize them as experts, they are working to create environments where Black girls can be their authentic
selves. Staff can use this information to guide their programming including hiring and training staff, creating and selecting materials (e.g., decorations, curricula, books), setting policies and procedures, and generally engaging with and better supporting Black girls. This dissertation adds to the literature on gendered racial socialization messages (Brown et al., 2017; Williams & Lewis, 2021), gendered racial identity ideologies (Collins, 2022; Sellers et al., 1997; Williams & Lewis, 2021), and Black girl spaces and homeplaces (Brown, 2009; hooks, 1990; Inniss-Thompson et al., 2022, 2024; Kelly, 2020b; Morris, 2022; Rogers & Butler-Barnes, 2021) as I developed and tested a conceptual model with an emphasis on spaces where Black girls are not the only population or the majority.

I also highlight the importance of professional development opportunities grounded in both research and practice in collaboration with Black girls (American Institutes for Research, 2019; Blake & Epstein, 2019; Morris, 2022; Mosely, 2018). These opportunities can take many forms. Staff members might benefit from engaging in improvement science or rapid, iterative cycles of planning, doing, studying, and acting (Bryk et al., 2015; Coburn et al., 2013; Lewis, 2015). It focuses on three questions: (1) what is the specific problem I am now trying to solve, (2) what change might I introduce and why, and (3) how will I know whether the change is actually an improvement? (Bryk et al., 2015). Leaders in CBES can create professional learning communities where they invite staff to notice and wonder and encourage self-reflection and dialogue about engaging Black girls in their spaces (Anderson, 2022; French et al., 2020; Morris, 2022; Mosely, 2018). I acknowledge professional development opportunities can be time consuming; however, after developing and testing the conceptual model presented in this dissertation, it seems it may be necessary if staff want to better support 5th-12th grade Black girls.
4.4 Future Research and Practice

I focused on the social dimension, specifically related to gendered racial identity, of holistic health for this dissertation, and I plan to expand the conceptual model to include other dimensions of wellness (e.g., emotional/mental, intellectual, physical, spiritual, social including social identities, vocational). In the future, I plan to conduct a youth-led participatory action research (YPAR) using mixed methods with Black girls in community-based educational spaces with a dual purpose of (1) being a Black girl space or homeplace where Black girls can work towards holistic health including healing from gendered racism and exploring gendered racial identity ideologies and (2) expand and operationalize the conceptual model to build out professional development opportunities for staff such as training sessions and toolkits (Adams-Bass & Bentley-Edwards, 2021; Brown, 2009; hooks, 1990; Inniss-Thompson et al., 2022, 2024; Kelly, 2020b; Morris, 2022; Rodriguez & Brown, 2009; Rogers & Butler-Barnes, 2021). I will continue to expand, test, and operationalize the conceptual model so staff in community-based educational spaces are best equipped to holistically support Black girls.
### Student Background Stories

**Your Story, Short & Sweet**

Teens Answered One of the Following Questions
- What is one of your favorite things in the world to do?
- What’s the song (or movie, book, poem, or piece of art) that means everything to you?

Teens Answered One of the Following Questions
- What was the hardest thing you’ve ever done?
- What is something you could use help with right now?

It’s 3 pm, What’s up

### Afterschool Aspirations

**Title**

When you applied to be a Generator and picked a theme, why did you choose it?

Imagine that you have a magic wand that can make the best afterschool experience ever that relates to your afterschool theme-what is it?

Imagine that you are an inventor that finds clever ways to solve problems. How does your afterschool dream happen during a pandemic?
Appendix B Generator Z First Round Codebook

# Appendix B Generator Z First Round Codebook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Subcode – Level 1</th>
<th>Subcode – Level 2</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gendered Racism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a specific type of oppression in which Black girls and women experience the intersection of sexism and racism simultaneously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internalized Gendered Racism</td>
<td>Internalized Gendered Racism</td>
<td></td>
<td>idea that Black girls unconsciously and consciously accept gendered racial stereotypes and negative messaging, beliefs, and perceptions about Black girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adultification Bias</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>adults have a bias that Black girls are more adult-like and less innocent compared to white girls of the same age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gendered Racial Microaggressions</td>
<td>Gendered Racial Microaggressions</td>
<td></td>
<td>“subtle and everyday verbal, behavioral, and environmental expressions of oppression based on the intersection of one’s race and gender” (Lewis et al., 2016, p. 758)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gendered Racist Policies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>policies that target Black girls’ appearances (e.g., dress code, hair) and subjective and vague policies that disproportionately discipline Black girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gendered Racial Stereotypes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>historical narratives rooted in slavery that are still portrayed in mainstream media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jezebel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Black girls as hypersexualized, sexually promiscuous, oversexed, and seductive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mammy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Black girls as nurturing and the selfless, obedient caretaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sapphire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>loud, aggressive, disrespectful, and angry (i.e., angry Black girl/woman stereotype)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-Based Educational Spaces</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“collections of people, places, and possibilities that constitute an environment full of learning and development opportunities” (Akiva et al., 2022, p. 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gendered Racial Socialization Messages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>communicated (verbally/non-verbally, intentionally/unintentionally, directly/indirectly) to Black girls about being a Black girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Love Messages</td>
<td>Black girls encouraged to accept, feel good about, and celebrate their whole selves</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair</td>
<td>Black girls encouraged to accept, feel good about, and celebrate their hair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Black girls encouraged to accept, feel good about, and celebrate their language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattering Messages</td>
<td>“the socio-psychological construct [that] describes the extent to which an individual perceives that their presence and involvement plays a fundamental role in others’ lives and to their larger society” (Carey et al., 2022, p. 73); Black girls valued as their authentic selves – without condition or having to change themselves – and they are important to themselves, others, and society as a whole</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devaluing Messages</td>
<td>criminalized, policed, objectified, and hypersexualized</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td>Black girls punished for wearing certain items of clothing while white girls wearing the same items are not; Black girls’ bodies are sexualized by adults under the guise of dress code policies, and they may feel hypervisible because adults single out their bodies and how they wear clothes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair</td>
<td>hair criminalized and policed; personal space violated (e.g., people touching and smelling hair without permission)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>communication styles (e.g., speech, writing, tone, body language) are devalued</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dehumanizing Messages</td>
<td>policies written vague, and enforcement is left up to those placed in positions of power; adults interact with Black girls based on gendered racial stereotypes; Black girls’ actions (e.g., falling asleep in class, small conflicts/disagreements Black girls have with peers and adults, self-defense, not adhering to dress code policies) are perceived and punished as criminal acts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress Code Policies</td>
<td>subjective, vague, and unwritten dress policies allow adults to discipline Black girls for what they claim is disrespectful, defiant, and disruptive behaviors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair Policies</td>
<td>subjective, vague, and unwritten hair policies allow adults to discipline Black girls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Black Linguistic Racism</td>
<td>“Anti-Black Linguistic Racism describes the linguistic violence, persecution, dehumanization, and marginalization that Black Language-speakers experience in schools and in everyday life” (Baker-Bell, 2020, p. 11)</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpreting Gendered Racial Socialization Messages</td>
<td><strong>Beneficial/Protective</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black girls reflect on messages and stereotypes (e.g., jezebel, mammy, and sapphire) and how they are either consistent or inconsistent with their self-concept [interpret and make meaning]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Harmful</strong></td>
<td>Internalizing gendered racism (Black girls unconsciously and consciously accepting gendered racial stereotypes and negative messaging, beliefs, and perceptions about Black girls)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gendered Racial Identity Ideologies</td>
<td><strong>Pride Ideology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how Black girls consciously and unconsciously think and feel about and perceive their intertwined gender and race memberships; beliefs and attitudes Black girls have about Black girls</td>
<td>embrace their whole, authentic selves; Black girls’ uniqueness as an asset and a sense of pride</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agentic Ideology</strong></td>
<td>belief that Black girls create their own narratives and determine their destiny; perceive their identity as a strength as they defy, provide counters to, and overcome gendered racial stereotypes and devaluing and dehumanizing gendered racial socialization messages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Humanist Ideology</strong></td>
<td>gendered racial stereotypes, labels, devaluing and dehumanizing messages, and characteristics assigned to Black girls by society are restricting and limiting, so they identify generally as humans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assimilation Ideology</strong></td>
<td>a way for Black girls to deal with gendered racial stereotypes and devaluing and dehumanizing messages is by aligning their</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gendered Racial Identity Manifestations</td>
<td>Artistic and Creative Outlets</td>
<td>Connection</td>
<td>Activism/Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
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<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appearance, language, etc. with Eurocentric feminine standards</td>
<td>how Black girls express their ideologies specifically in community-based educational spaces with staff and peers</td>
<td>Examples: hair, visual arts, dance, fiction writing, poetry, music, cooking, fashion</td>
<td>Black girls share their stories to connect and build solidarity with others and to tell their own narratives that counter gendered racial stereotypes; they support and get support from other Black girls and women as they work to cope with and heal from gendered racism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Subcode</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctuary Place</td>
<td>Authentic Self</td>
<td>describing a place of sanctuary - should be a place for everyone, no judgment, safe, encourage diversity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>building relationships with others (e.g., peers, adults), community in the context of a sanctuary space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity,</td>
<td>Escaping</td>
<td>general mentions of creativity (hair, visual arts, dance, writing, poetry, music, cooking, fashion), sports, religion, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports, Religion,</td>
<td>Expression</td>
<td>using creative outlets (hair, visual arts, dance, writing, poetry, music, cooking, fashion), sports, religion, etc. to escape/relive or cope with stress, &quot;break from reality&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etc</td>
<td></td>
<td>using creative outlets (hair, visual arts, dance, writing, poetry, music, cooking, fashion), sports, religion, etc. to express themselves</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I am proud&quot; of myself, &quot;so hard to fully accept me&quot;, &quot;others accept me&quot;, &quot;I accept others&quot;, self-acceptance, &quot;find out what makes you, you&quot;, self-discovery, &quot;getting over my insecurities&quot;, self accepting or not accepting of identity, &quot;ashamed of being who I was&quot;, love self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurship</td>
<td></td>
<td>mentions they are entrepreneurs, currently have their own business, wanting to be an entrepreneur/ non-profit, pitch competitions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing the</td>
<td></td>
<td>advocacy/activism in their own lives or more globally, speaking up when they experience or witness injustice, working to get policies changed, impacting others, helping others, working with community, volunteering, giving back</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D Focus Group Questionnaire

Describe the Perfect Afterschool Program for Black Girls

Fake Name:____________________________________________________________________

Fake Program Name:____________________________________________________________________

1. What does a day in the perfect afterschool program for Black girls look like? What time do you get there? What do you do while you’re there? What time do you leave?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

2. What’s the vibe in your program? What does the physical space look like? What’s hanging on the walls? Is there music playing? What type?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

3. When does the program take place? Before school? During school? After school? Weekend? Summer?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
4. Besides Black girls, who else is at the program? Are there other children? Who are they? Who are the adults?

5. How do people interact with each other? What do others say to you? What do you say to them?

6. How do you want Black girls to feel in your program?

7. What does it look like to be yourself in the program?
8. What needs to happen in the program so you feel comfortable being yourself?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

9. What do you want Black girls to learn in the program?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

10. What do you hope Black girls will get out of the program?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Appendix E Amazing Program Focus Group Protocol

Focus Group #1

[Words in body, gray, and brackets are notes for focus group facilitator.]

[OPENING – approximately 10 minutes]

[Debralyn read] Hello! My name is Ms. Debralyn and I am student at the University of Pittsburgh working to become a doctor specific to education – not a medical doctor. This is Ms. Chelsea and we are going to lead the activities we’re doing today. We are very excited that you all are here today. As Black women ourselves, it is a honor to be able to share your stories about being a Black girl with other people. Thank you for taking time to talk to us today!

Before we get started, I want to take a minute to go over this document that will let me know you understand what we’re going to do in both these focus groups and to see if you have any questions.

[Debralyn read Black Girls Assent – pasted below for convenience]

As I mentioned, I am excited for you to participate in these two 90-minute groups. In these groups we are going to do some activities and talk about being a Black girl. You’ll have the opportunity to share your story and explore more about being a Black girl. I’ll also use this information to help staff in community-based educational spaces like your afterschool programs support you. To thank you for participating in both focus groups, you will receive $50 for your time.

I am going to record the audio while we’re meeting. I want to keep your identity a secret, so you’ll each come up with a fake name to use during the groups. I ask that you respect the privacy of other group members by not talking about anything we discuss during the groups outside of the groups. There are no right or wrong answers and you can ask questions or for clarification at any time.

Does anyone have questions?
[After answering all questions]

[Debralyn read] A couple other guidelines for our time together. Only one person talks at a time. Respond positively to others and their stories by snapping or clapping after listening to them.

Does everyone agree to all this?

You’ll need to remember your fake name, so you can use your middle name, a sibling’s name, or your last name – just something you’ll remember. Write this name on your nameplate and that’s what everyone will call you while you’re here. Even if you know each other outside of this space, please use the fake names.

[All create nameplates]

[CHECK-IN/ICEBREAKER – approximately 20 minutes]

[Debralyn read] We are going to start off with a check-in. We’ll all go around and answer:

• State fake name
• How are you feeling?
• What is something that made you happy this past weekend?
• What is the best thing about being a Black girl? [Debralyn take notes]

[Debralyn read] Our icebreaker today is Stand Up If. I am going to read statements such as “stand up if you like pizza” and you’ll stand up (or raise your hand if they are not able to stand) if the statement applies to you. This will help us get to know each other a bit better since we’ll be spending some time together.

[Chelsea read & Debralyn take notes]

Stand up if you’re an only child.

Stand up if you were not born in Pittsburgh.

[To Those Standing] Where were you born?
Stand up if you’ve traveled outside of Pittsburgh before.

[To Those Standing] Where have you been?

Stand up if an adult has ever thought you were older than you actually are.

Stand up if you’ve ever been called loud.

Stand up if you’ve ever been called angry.

Stand up if someone has ever said you have an attitude.

Stand up if someone has ever said what you were wearing was inappropriate.

Stand up if you’ve ever been punished for what you were wearing.

Stand up if you are comfortable being yourself at the programs you are a part of (for example afterschool program, scouts, sports’ programs).

[To Those Standing] What makes you feel comfortable?

[STORYTELLING ACTIVITIES – approximately 45 minutes]

[Debralyn read] It’s time to do your own to tell your story as a Black girl through a collage. Ms. Chelsea is going to read statements and you’ll find pictures using these magazines, drawing your own picture, or writing words.

[Chelsea read then facilitate conversation & Debralyn take notes]

1. What are 2 things that make you unique as a Black girl?

2. What is something you believe about Black girls? Think of Black girls as a whole not just Black girls you know or yourself.

3. What have you heard adults in the program you attend say about Black girls? What have they said directly to you about being a Black girl?

   a. How do you feel about what the adults say about you or to you?
4. What have you heard other children in the program you attend say about Black girls? What have they said directly to you about being a Black girl? Think about both other Black girls and those that are not Black girls.

   a. How do you feel about what the other children say about you or to you?

5. When you look at books you use in the program, the examples used in the program, the people you talk about, and the decorations in the physical space, what do they tell you about Black girls?

6. How do you feel when you are at the program you attend?

7. What are 3 stereotypes people have about Black girls?

8. What does being a Black girl mean to you?

9. How do you feel about being a Black girl?

10. What do you think about being a Black girl?

11. What do you dream and wish for Black girls?

We are going to go one by one to share our stories. [Both as people are sharing, ask clarifying questions if necessary]

[Debralyn collect stories, take a picture of them, and upload to OneDrive.]

[Debralyn read] Thank you for sharing your stories! How are you feeling after sharing your story?

[This is the time we will talk with anyone that may have experienced discomfort during the activities.]

[Debralyn read] I mentioned at the beginning that your participation is voluntary. The next time we meet will be [redacted]. If you are not interested in participating in the second focus group, please let me know. Otherwise, I will see you next time.
Focus Group #2

[Words in body, gray, and brackets are notes for focus group facilitator]

[Remember to have them state their name before responding]

[OPENING/CHECK-IN – approximately 15 minutes]

[Debralyn read] Welcome Back! Remember my name is Ms. Debralyn and this is Ms. Chelsea. Thank you all for returning for our second and last group. The focus of our group today is to make sure we understood what you all said in the first group and give you the opportunity to correct us if we’re wrong. You’ll also give input to a toolkit for staff in community-based educational spaces to use to support Black girls.

I’m not going to go over the whole document again, but I just wanted to remind you that I’m recording the audio. Also, we are keeping your identity a secret, so remember to use your fake name. Finally, remember to respect the privacy of other group members by not talking about anything we discuss during the groups outside of the groups. Only one person talks at a time. Respond positively to others and their stories.

There are no right or wrong answers and you can ask questions or for clarification at any time.

Does anyone have questions?

[After answering all questions…]

[Chelsea read] We’re going to start with the same check-in from last time but with a new last question. We’ll all go around and answer:

- State fake name
- How are you feeling?
- What is something that made you happy this weekend?
- In one sentence, what do you want adults to know about Black girls? [Debralyn take notes]
[Chelsea and Debralyn can participate but go last]

[MEMBER CHECKING – approximately 5 minutes]

[Debralyn read] We reviewed the notes and the audio from the last time we were together and I want to share with you what we thought we heard. Once I’m finished, I want you all to let me know if what I’m saying is what you actually said or not.

There was a lot of talk about hair and skin color. You talked about how Amazing Program really helps you all to love your skin and just that they give you all positive messages about being Black girls. Amazing Program is a safe space for you all to be yourself.

Was there anything we missed that you want to make sure we get from last time?

[DESIGN PROGRAM FOR BLACK GIRLS – approximately 35 minutes]

[Chelsea read] Last time we shared our individual stories and talked about your experiences at Amazing Program. Today we want you to dream about the perfect program for Black girls. You’re going to make another collage but this time you’re finding general pictures to design the perfect program for Black girls. There are magazines, but there are also printed out pictures and as always you can draw your own. Take about 7 minutes to create your collage and put your fake name somewhere on it. After you design your program, we’ll give you this sheet to answer some more questions about your program. You’ll have about 3 minutes to answer the questions then everyone will share out.

[When sharing they each have about 3.5 minutes; Chelsea and Debralyn take notes; have them leave their pictures and responses]

[CLOSING – approximately 5 minutes]

[Debralyn read] As we wrap up our time together today, how are you feeling? Since this is our last time together, is there anything else you want to say?
[This is the time I will talk with anyone that may have experienced discomfort during the activities.]
Appendix F Interview Protocol

[Words in brackets and bolded are notes for interviewer.]

Date:

[Introduction Section – estimated to take about 10 minutes]

[DWS] Thank you for taking time to talk with us today about your interactions with 5th-12th grade Black girls in community-based educational spaces specifically related to your work with [insert actual organization/program name]. My name is Debralyn, and this is Chelsea. For my dissertation I am exploring gendered racial identity in 5th-12th grade Black girls in community-based educational spaces.

[CF] A few highlights from the consent form you signed:

• The interview will take about 90 minutes.

• Your real name, real organization name, and other recognizable information will not be identified in anything written that comes from this work.

• Participation in this research study is voluntary. Even if you decide to participate in the interview, you may decline to answer a question, or return to it later.

• You can withdraw from this research study at any time.

• As a reminder, we are recording the interview and taking notes so we can go back and review.

• You will directly benefit from this research study by both sharing your stories about supporting Black girls and learning about current research on the topic. However, no direct benefit can be guaranteed.
• The information from this interview will provide input for a toolkit for community-based educational spaces to support Black girls.

• There are no risks anticipated beyond slight discomfort experienced during an average work conversation.

[DWS] For this study, community-based educational spaces include but not limited to after school, before school, summer, art, sports, weekend, and mentoring programs, programs during the school day led by community organizations, libraries, home programs, scouts, and city departments. Also, gendered racial identity is a unique identity that is the intersection between a Black girl’s gender identity and racial identity.

Any questions before we start? [Allow for questions.]

[DWS start recording] We are recording.

[CF] Before we start the interview questions, what is your gender and your race/ethnicity?
What pseudonym do you want to use for your name and your organization name?

[General Section – estimated to take about 20 minutes]

[CF] What do you dream and wish for Black girls?

[DWS] Gendered racism, which is a specific type of oppression in which Black girls experience the intersection of sexism and racism simultaneously, can be a barrier to Black girls thriving. How have you seen gendered racism manifest in Black girls’ lives for example biases, stereotypes, microaggressions, and policies specific to Black girls and how they might internalize them?

[DWS] What similarities and differences do you notice between Black girls currently in 5th-12th grade and when you were that same age?23

23 Danielle was not asked this question
Let’s switch to focusing on your experiences at [insert organization/program pseudonym], starting with background information.

What years did you work there?

What grades do/did you work with?

Do/did you primarily work with Black girls…like more than 50% of the young people you worked with?

What is/was your role there?

Do/did you specifically support Black girls in your role?

- [If yes,] What do/did you do?
- [If no,] What were the barriers to supporting them?

Do/did you encourage Black girls to not just be their authentic selves but also provide a space they feel comfortable being their authentic selves?

- [If yes,] What do/did you do?
- [If no,] What were the barriers to providing this space?

Do/did you personally celebrate and uplift Black girls in your space?

- [If yes,] What do/did you do?
- [If no,] What were the barriers to celebrating and uplifting them?

What about your organization? Do/did the organization celebrate and uplift Black girls?

- [If yes,] What do/did they do?
- [If no,] Why do you think the organization didn’t celebrate and uplift them?

What have you heard adults in [insert organization/program pseudonym] say about Black girls? How do/did they interact with Black girls?
What have you heard other young people in [insert organization/program pseudonym] say about Black girls? How do/did they interact with Black girls? Think about both other Black girls and young people that are not Black girls.

When you look at books, curriculum, and examples you use, people you talk about, and decorations in the physical space, what messages are they communicating to Black girls?

[Conclusion Section – estimated to take about 15 minutes]

[DWS bring up PPT and review conceptual model]

What are your initial thoughts on this model? How might you use this in your work?

[CF] As we wrap up, what do you want to know more about so you can better support the gendered racial identity of 5th-12th grade Black girls?

[DWS] Thank you once again for your participation. I appreciate your honesty as I try to better equip community-based educational spaces to support Black girls. I will be in touch regarding your $50. In the meantime, if you have any questions please don’t hesitate to reach out to me.
Appendix G Ashville Neighborhood Focus Group Protocol

Focus Group #1
[Words in body, gray, and brackets are notes for focus group facilitator.]

[OPENING – approximately 10 minutes]

[Debralyn read] Hello! My name is Ms. Debralyn and I am student at the University of Pittsburgh working to become a doctor specific to education – not a medical doctor. This is Ms. Chelsea and we are going to lead the activities we’re doing today. We are very excited that you all are here today. As Black women ourselves, it is a honor to be able to share your stories about being a Black girl with other people. Thank you for taking time to talk to us today!

Before we get started, I want to take a minute to go over this document that will let me know you understand what we’re going to do in both these focus groups and to see if you have any questions.

[Debralyn read Black Girls Assent – pasted below for convenience]

As I mentioned, I am excited for you to participate in these two 90-minute groups. In these groups we are going to do some activities and talk about being a Black girl. You’ll have the opportunity to share your story and explore more about being a Black girl. I’ll also use this information to help staff in community-based educational spaces like your afterschool programs support you. To thank you for participating in both focus groups, you will receive $50 for your time.

I am going to record the audio while we’re meeting. I want to keep your identity a secret, so you’ll each come up with a fake name to use during the groups. I ask that you respect the privacy of other group members by not talking about anything we discuss during the groups outside of the groups. There are no right or wrong answers and you can ask questions or for clarification at any time.

Does anyone have questions?
[After answering all questions]

[Debralyn read] A couple other guidelines for our time together. Only one person talks at a time. Respond positively to others and their stories by snapping or clapping after listening to them.

Does everyone agree to all this?

You’ll need to remember your fake name, so you can use your middle name, a sibling’s name, or your last name – just something you’ll remember. Write this name on your nameplate and that’s what everyone will call you while you’re here. Even if you know each other outside of this space, please use the fake names.

[All create nameplates]

[CHECK-IN/ICEBREAKER – approximately 20 minutes]

[Debralyn read] We are going to start off with a check-in. We’ll all go around and answer:

- State fake name
- How are you feeling?
- What is something that made you happy this past weekend?
- What is the best thing about being a Black girl? [Debralyn take notes]

[Debralyn read] Our icebreaker today is Stand Up If. I am going to read statements such as “stand up if you like pizza” and you’ll stand up (or raise your hand if they are not able to stand) if the statement applies to you. This will help us get to know each other a bit better since we’ll be spending some time together.

[Chelsea read & Debralyn take notes]

Stand up if you’re an only child.

Stand up if you were not born in Pittsburgh.

[To Those Standing] Where were you born?
Stand up if you’ve traveled outside of Pittsburgh before.

[To Those Standing] Where have you been?

Stand up if an adult has ever thought you were older than you actually are.

Stand up if you’ve ever been called loud.

Stand up if you’ve ever been called angry.

Stand up if someone has ever said you have an attitude.

Stand up if someone has ever said what you were wearing was inappropriate.

Stand up if you’ve ever been punished for what you were wearing.

Stand up if you are comfortable being yourself at the programs you are a part of (for example afterschool program, scouts, sports’ programs).

[To Those Standing] What makes you feel comfortable?

[STORYTELLING ACTIVITIES – approximately 45 minutes]

[Debralyn read] It’s time to do your own to tell your story as a Black girl through a collage. Ms. Chelsea is going to read statements and you’ll find pictures using these magazines, drawing your own picture, or writing words.

[Chelsea read then facilitate conversation & Debralyn take notes]

1. What are 2 things that make you unique as a Black girl?

2. What is something you believe about Black girls? Think of Black girls as a whole not just Black girls you know or yourself.

3. What have you heard adults in the program you attend say about Black girls? What have they said directly to you about being a Black girl?

   a. How do you feel about what the adults say about you or to you?
4. What have you heard other children in the program you attend say about Black girls? What have they said directly to you about being a Black girl? Think about both other Black girls and those that are not Black girls.
   
   a. How do you feel about what the other children say about you or to you?

5. When you look at books you use in the program, the examples used in the program, the people you talk about, and the decorations in the physical space, what do they tell you about Black girls?

6. How do you feel when you are at the program you attend?

7. What are 3 stereotypes people have about Black girls?

8. What does being a Black girl mean to you?

9. How do you feel about being a Black girl?

10. What do you think about being a Black girl?

11. What do you dream and wish for Black girls?

We are going to go one by one to share our stories. [Both as people are sharing, ask clarifying questions if necessary]

[Debralyn collect stories, take a picture of them, and upload to OneDrive.]

[Debralyn read] Thank you for sharing your stories! How are you feeling after sharing your story?

[This is the time we will talk with anyone that may have experienced discomfort during the activities.]

[Debralyn read] I mentioned at the beginning that your participation is voluntary. The next time we meet will be [redacted]. If you are not interested in participating in the second focus group, please let me know. Otherwise, I will see you next time.
Focus Group #2

[Words in body, gray, and brackets are notes for focus group facilitator.]
[Remember to have them state their name before responding]

[OPENING/CHECK-IN – approximately 15 minutes]

[Debralyn read] Welcome Back! Remember my name is Ms. Debralyn and this is Ms. Chelsea. Thank you all for returning for our second and last group. The focus of our group today is to make sure we understood what you all said in the first group and give you the opportunity to correct us if we’re wrong. You’ll also give input to a toolkit for staff in community-based educational spaces to use to support Black girls.

I’m not going to go over the whole document again, but I just wanted to remind you that I’m recording the audio. Also, we are keeping your identity a secret, so remember to use your fake name. Finally, remember to respect the privacy of other group members by not talking about anything we discuss during the groups outside of the groups. Only one person talks at a time. Respond positively to others and their stories.

There are no right or wrong answers and you can ask questions or for clarification at any time.

Does anyone have questions?

[After answering all questions…]

[Chelsea read] We’re going to start with the same check-in from last time but with a new last question. We’ll all go around and answer:

- State fake name
- How are you feeling?
- What is something that made you happy this week?
• In a couple of sentences, what do you want adults to know about Black girls? [Debralyn take notes]

[Chelsea and Debralyn can participate but go last]

[MEMBER CHECKING – approximately 5 minutes]

[Debralyn read] We reviewed the notes and the audio from the last time we were together and I want to share with you what we thought we heard. Once I’m finished, I want you all to let me know if what I’m saying is what you actually said or not.

There was a lot of talk about hair and being natural. You talked about experiencing both subtle and obvious signs of sexism and racism. There was also mention of community and finding support in others such as family.

Was there anything we missed that you want to make sure we get from last time?

[DESIGN PROGRAM FOR BLACK GIRLS – approximately 35 minutes]

[Chelsea read] Last time we shared our individual stories and talked about your experiences at the programs you attend. Today we want you to dream about the perfect program for Black girls. You’re going to make another collage but this time you’re finding general pictures to design the perfect program for Black girls. There are magazines, but there are also printed out pictures and as always you can draw your own. Take about 7 minutes to create your collage and put your fake name somewhere on it. After you design your program, we’ll give you this sheet to answer some more questions about your program. You’ll have about 3 minutes to answer the questions then everyone will share out.

[When sharing they each have about 8 minutes; Chelsea and Debralyn take notes; have them leave their pictures and responses]

[CLOSING – approximately 5 minutes]
[Debralyn read] As we wrap up our time together today, how are you feeling? Since this is our last time together, is there anything else you want to say?

[This is the time I will talk with anyone that may have experienced discomfort during the activities.]
## Appendix H Interview Codebook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Code</th>
<th>Subcode</th>
<th>Second-Level Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conceptual Model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of Message</td>
<td>Black Woman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family Member</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black Girl</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adult (not Black woman)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peer (not Black girl)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Member</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Message</td>
<td>Celebrating</td>
<td>USE SUBCODE</td>
<td>What was the type of message communicated to Black girls about being a Black girl?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td></td>
<td>Uplifting, mattering, confidence, affirming, validating, compliments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Armoring</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inclusion, &quot;you belong here&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exacerbating Gendered Racism</td>
<td></td>
<td>Black women communicating messages for Black girls to self-protect and resist gendered racism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of Message</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>USE SUBCODE</td>
<td>Where was the Black girl when the message was communicated?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CBES</td>
<td></td>
<td>Includes mentions of when CBES contradict social media, school, families, and communities messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td>Processing messages; internalization; &quot;without worldly influence&quot;; what do people think about me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideologies</td>
<td>How Black girls think and feel about and perceive themselves as Black girls and other Black girls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manifestations</td>
<td>How Black girls outwardly display their gendered racial identity ideology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
<td>How society and individuals respond to how Black girls express themselves</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Safe space; Black girls are protected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic Self</td>
<td>Black girls' authentic selves including language, skin color, expressions (music, hair, dress, etc.), age (grace to &quot;be a kid&quot;); &quot;see their value&quot;; &quot;be able to be&quot; [intrapersonal - within self]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Acceptance</td>
<td>Black girls accepting, embracing their authentic selves; self-confidence; not comparing self to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Masking</td>
<td>Black girls masking (shifting and/or hiding) their authentic selves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Solidarity, sisterhood, relationships [interpersonal - between individuals]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Women Acceptance or Criticism</td>
<td>USE SECOND-LEVEL CODE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BW Acceptance</td>
<td>Black women accepting, embracing Black girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BW Criticism</td>
<td>Black women criticizing Black girls that stray away from Eurocentric feminine standards or from perception of what Black girls &quot;should&quot; be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Girls Acceptance or Criticism</td>
<td>USE SECOND-LEVEL CODE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BG Acceptance</td>
<td>Black girls accepting, embracing Black girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BG Criticism</td>
<td>Black girls criticizing Black girls that stray away from Eurocentric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Individuals Acceptance or Criticism</td>
<td>USE SECOND-LEVEL CODE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O Acceptance</td>
<td>Other individuals (those that are not Black women or Black girls) accepting, embracing Black girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O Criticism</td>
<td>Other individuals (those that are not Black women or Black girls) accepting, embracing Black girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergenerational Mentorship</td>
<td>Black girls/women shared experiences/interests/identity; 1:1 conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representation</td>
<td>Interacting with Black women in CBES (staff, speakers, etc.); media with Black girl/women leads (books, curriculum, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Connecting</td>
<td>Black girls/women shared experiences/interests/identity; 1:1 conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of Black Girls</td>
<td>Black girls are not a monolith; there is diversity inside the Black girls' community (religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity); intersectionality; unique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ally</td>
<td>Adults supporting Black girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>Black girls isolated from each other and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>Black girls' voices are uplifted in CBES [institutional - policies, laws, media]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activism</td>
<td>Black girls advocating in schools/communities and speaking and standing up for self and others; &quot;know their power&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Girl-Led</td>
<td>Black girl lead and have choice and ownership in CBES; catering CBES to their interests/likes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society Acceptance</td>
<td>Society accepting, embracing Black girls; world values them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own Path</td>
<td>Purpose, individual plan/success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom to Fail</td>
<td>&quot;learn from mistakes&quot;; grace to make mistakes</td>
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<td>Freedom to Fail</td>
<td>&quot;learn from mistakes&quot;; grace to make mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seen/Heard</td>
<td>Black girls are seen and heard (or not seen/heard)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silencing</td>
<td>Society and individuals actively try to silence the voices of Black girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignoring</td>
<td>Society and individuals passively ignore Black girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imitating</td>
<td>Society (individuals from other cultures) taking creative expressions created/led by Black girls/women and passing it off as their own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disrespected</td>
<td>Black girls are disrespected, devalued, etc. by society/world</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


possibilities of learning and development across settings (pp. 67-86). Information Age Publishing, Inc.

CASEL. (2020, October 1). CASEL’s SEL framework: What are the core competence areas and where are they promoted?. [https://casel.org/casel-sel-framework-11-2020/?view=true](https://casel.org/casel-sel-framework-11-2020/?view=true)


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