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For Black and Brown Girls Who Learn (Even) When School is Not Enough:

An Intersectional Case Study of the Academic Engagement of Girls of Color

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Education

by

Shena Crystel Alquetra Sanchez

2021

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

For Black and Brown Girls Who Learn (Even) When School is Not Enough:

An Intersectional Case Study of the Academic Engagement of Girls of Color

by

Shena Crystel Alquetra Sanchez
Doctor of Philosophy in Education
University of California, Los Angeles, 2021
Professor Kimberley Gomez, Chair

Current research on discipline and academic tracking reveal that Girls of Color (GoC) are some of the most academically marginalized students in K-12 settings. They experience school discipline at disproportionately higher rates than their peers and are more likely to be tracked out of advanced courses. Yet, in spite of their negative schooling experiences, GoC persist and maintain high postsecondary aspirations. This case study provides a critical investigation into the perspectives and academic engagement of adolescent GoC—also called Black and Brown girls—who are tracked in low academic courses (e.g., remedial and general classes) *and* disciplined formally and informally (e.g., public castigation, suspension, expulsion). Here, GoC are those who identify as Latina, Black, Pacific Islander, Asian, Native American girls from poor- and working-class backgrounds.

This study employs intersectionality as a conceptual framework to examine how Black and Brown adolescent girls engage in school when they experience punishment and exclusion. It illuminates the types of knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes that GoC employ to participate in the academic process and obtain their postsecondary goals. Additionally, drawing from multicultural epistemologies developed by Women of Color, this work explores how Black and

Brown girls at the intersection of multiple marginalized oppressions use their identity to shape their academic engagement and postsecondary aspirations.

This dissertation is a multisite qualitative case study using data from the Lavender Girls Project (LGP), an intersectional research project on the schooling experiences of 32 adolescent GoC who have been tracked out of advanced courses and disciplined. It is situated across five Title I high schools in California (Inglewood, Anaheim, Long Beach), Tennessee (Nashville), and New York (Brooklyn) between 2015 and 2018. During data collection, 5-7 semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted at each site and more than 400 student artifacts total were gathered for analysis. Participants reported feeing pathologized and villainized in school because of their identities as Black and Brown girls from poor- and working-class families, which adversely impacted their academic engagement. However, despite having negative experiences in school, most of the participants claimed to have high academic aspirations and positive perceptions of their identities. Specifically, this study reveals that the strengths-based orientation of GoC around their identities helped them strategies ways to subvert meritocratic notions of achievement, engage academically on their own terms, and navigate systemic barriers.

The dissertation of Shena Crystel Alquetra Sanchez is approved.

Patricia Gándara

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Kimberley Gomez, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2021

DEDICATION

To the *Lavender Girls*

Dani	Ashlee	Cherissa	Anna
Angela "Lalo"	Alicia	Charmaine	Malia
Chrissy	Taliah	Shya	Jenny
Ellie	Candace	Evelyn	Seema
Jada	Alana	Ambar	Eileen
Vanessa	Kiki	Nina	Shawna
Rihanna	Shakeia	Rita	Nadiya
Blanca	Kayla	Felicia	Dionne

"I wish you power that equals your intelligence and strength.

I wish you success that equals your talent and determination.

And I wish you faith."

—Dr. Betty Shabazz

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My cup overflows with love and appreciation for everyone who gave me the encouragement, inspiration, support, and strength to pursue a PhD and complete this dissertation. Words will never fully capture the depths of my gratitude, so I will work my whole life to show y'all how much you each mean to me. For now, I want to say…

Si Yu'us Ma'ase to…

My Lavender Girls – I carry you all with me and am eternally grateful for your trust and openness. Thank you for teaching me so much about sisterhood, courage, and joy. I am a better scholar and woman because of each of you.

My Love – You take care of me, dream with me, and hold my hand through it all. Thank you for all the ways that you manifest and embody unconditional love. I'm so glad we get to close this chapter and start a new one together. Here's to all the adventures, growth, and laughter ahead.

My Family – Si yu'us ma'ase for loving, supporting, and protecting me. I have always known my worth, strength, and purpose because I have been blessed to be a Sanchez from the beautiful island of Saipan. I am me because of each of you.

My Beloveds – Miles, borders, and time never stood a chance to our deep friendship. Thank you for celebrating every milestone and grieving each loss with me. Y'all are my chosen family and I could not have chosen any better.

My Sister Scholars – There is no greater joy than being in your brilliant and powerful presence. Thank you for making sure I was never alone and for consistently hyping me up. I'm so excited that we get to continue our work, grow our sisterhood, and create spaces for more women like us.

My Academic Village – It took each of you to see me through the finish line. Thank you for pouring into me, valuing my contributions, and believing that when one of us wins, we all win.

My Committee – Thank you for your thoughtful and detailed insights, encouragement, and mentorship. You each paved the way for my academic journey and your scholarship will always inspire my work.

SHENA CRYSTEL A. SANCHEZ

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Problem We All [Still] Live With:
The Punishment and Exclusion of Black and Brown Girls

Introduction

"I have been waiting to meet you!" Dani said to me with a big smile and a gleam in her eyes. Although I had not planned to meet any of the students prior to the first focus group session for my dissertation project, I felt that I had to make an exception when my school contact at Betty Shabazz High School mentioned that Dani was eager to meet me and had questions about the project. So, I made the thirty-minute drive to Shabazz in the middle of the week to meet Dani, the first official participant who had signed up for my study, the Lavender Girls Project (LGP). After introducing herself, Dani stood in the doorway of the counselor trailers and asked me back-to-back questions about the project. I watched as the intense brightness of the southern California sun sparkled on her impeccably slicked back ponytail and made obvious the wear on her baggy clothes.

I could tell that Dani was a girl who had a lot to say, and perhaps, she often went unheard. As the first participant in the pilot study for my dissertation, I recruited Dani based on the recommendation of her school administrator and counselor. They felt that Dani had the background and qualities that I was looking for to understand the schooling experiences of Girls of Color (GoC)—students who identified as Black, Latina, Native American, Pacific Islander, and/or Asian girls—from poor/working class families who had experienced school punishment and been academically tracked to low-level courses. Dani was a senior with excellent communication and interpersonal skills, which allowed her to rise among her peers as a leader. Her educators suggested that other girls in the study would respect Dani and that she would be

able to help me achieve my goals of facilitating a participatory project, co-led and -directed by my participants. It amazed me when Dani did all of this and more.

When I asked Dani, who identified as a Black girl, to describe herself, she said, "The type of person I am—I'm very dedicated and I'm driven. Like, any obstacle or problem I have, it pushes me to go hard. So, I'm pretty awesome" (Shabazz, Session 1). Dani aspired to become a lawyer and listed "debating" as one of her interests. She claimed that she was good at arguing, but it had not always produced positive results in school. Dani was on the general education track, so she took no advanced or honors courses. She reported that she liked school (for the most part) and said "school was always my reliever because I know if I didn't have this, I'm not gonna have a future" (Shabazz, Session 3).

After dabbling in lacrosse, Dani developed a passion for swimming and took a leadership role on the Shabazz swim team, serving as its captain for two years. However, for as ambitious and committed as Dani was to her studies, she indicated that she had always been known in school as the student with disciplinary and behavioral issues. With two suspensions and multiple reprimands from educators on her school record, Dani suggested that she was a constant target for punishment and ridicule from her educators. She pushed back on the notion that this made her a bad student and claimed that her discipline record did not represent who she was, asserting, "I have problems, but I'm not a problem child" (Shabazz, Session 4).

Dani's story—along with the stories of the six other participants of the LGP pilot study—led me to expand the project to include more GoC, whom I also refer to as Black and Brown girls, from across the country. I wanted to focus exclusively on GoC, like the Shabazz participants, who had been subject to punishment and excluded from advanced courses in Title I high schools. After my time with the LGP students at Shabazz, I had more questions than I did

answers. I wondered whether the themes that I found were unique to their experiences or if they were shared with other Black and Brown girls at different schools and cities. I wanted to know more about the different forms of punishment—overt and subtle—that GoC felt they experienced frequently and unfairly. Equally important, I felt that I needed more information to better understand how the identity of Black and Brown girls helped to shape the ways that they participated in school and thrived despite their negative experiences.

All of these wonderings and questions prompted me to extend LGP across five school sites in California, Tennessee, and New York to speak to 25 moreGoC. This dissertation tells the story of Black and Brown girls from poor/working-class families who strived to engage in the academic process despite feeling that they were punished and excluded from learning because of their identity. I recount the different ways that they felt punished by educators, whom they claimed often humiliated them and expected them to fail. Additionally, I shed light on the different ways that these GoC perceived academic exclusion and neglect, particularly with how they were left out of advanced and honors classes. The following section offers context for and the rationale behind this study as well as the research questions that drive the investigation.

Overview and Purpose

In this research study, I employ Crenshaw's intersectionality (1989) along with critical feminist epistemologies (Walker, 1984; Isasi-Díaz, 2004) as the primary frameworks to explore the ways in which two long standing school policies—academic tracking and discipline—shape the academic experiences and engagement of Black and Brown girls. I also examine how these students perceive their identities, which are located at the intersection of multiple dimensions of oppression, help them to positively engage in the academic process. To understand the effects of these educational policies, I developed the concept of *academic engagement*, which includes a

student's behaviors, knowledge, and attitudes that facilitate her participation in the schooling process and efforts to achieve her postsecondary aspirations. The goals of this study are: (1) to advance research exclusively about urban Black and Brown girls, who make up one in every four students in the United States (Civil Rights Data Collection, 2013); (2) diagnose the ways in which schools deprive GoC of an equitable and quality education; (3) push for educational reforms that are responsive to the distinct needs of Black and Brown girls; (4) lay more of the groundwork in the field of education to provide a framework for other researchers who aspire to contribute to this scholarship.

This project used data from the Lavender Girls Project (LGP), a national qualitative study that I began in the spring of 2016 with the support of my advisor, Dr. Kim Gomez. Through participatory research methods and mentorship, LGP examined the relationship between school policies and the academic engagement of urban GoC from poor/working-class (and sometimes, immigrant) backgrounds. The project was funded by the Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies, the American Indian Studies Center, the Carlos M. Haro Scholarship Fund, and the Shirley Hune Inter-Ethnic/Inter- Racial Studies Award through the Institute of American Cultures grant from the University of California, Los Angeles. The sites for this study spanned five major cities and three regions across the United States: Inglewood, Long Beach, and Anaheim, California (West); Nashville, Tennessee (South); and Brooklyn, New York (East). To select each school, I created two methodological boundaries to ensure that the sites shared significant similarities in the demographic make-up of their students, discipline policies, and academic tracking practices.

First, I narrowed my selection to Title I high schools in urban settings to which I referred to Richard Milner's (2012) definition for urban intensive as communities concentrated in large,

metropolitan areas. This boundary was important for understanding how schools become institutions that are forced (and are often illequipped) to address a great deal of systemic and intergenerational poverty and racial oppression faced by those from urban intensive communities. Second, integral to my approach as a critical scholar conducting an intersectional study, it was essential that I had some form of relational, contextual, and experiential knowledge of each school and/or its community members. Although I would be entering these schools still as an outsider, it was important that I was invited/welcomed by the teachers, administrators, staff, and students. Thus, I drew the second boundary around schools in which I either spent a great deal of time in, knew someone who worked there personally, and/or was in a city in which I had previously lived. In chapter three, I will provide an in-depth description of how I selected each school.

Using preliminary findings from the pilot study, I extended my research questions to build on the original line of inquiry and guide the dissertation. This study furthers scholarship on the ways in which the academic engagement of Black and Brown girls is shaped by their experiences of being academically tracked and discipline as well as their identities (e.g., race, gender, class, and (im)migrant status).

Research Questions

This dissertation is guided by the following questions:

1. What is the essence of the schooling experiences of Black and Brown girls who have been punished in school and excluded from advanced courses?
2. How does being tracked out of advanced courses and disciplined shape the academic engagement of Girls of Color?

These questions have been largely informed by and developed based on findings from the pilot study on the unique ways that GoC navigate school in light of perceived injustices. The first

question addresses the collective experience of GoC regarding school punishment and exclusion that pertain specifically to their social location at the intersection of multiple dimensions of marginalization. The second question builds upon the research inquiries from the pilot study and dissertation proposal phase to examine more deeply the consequences of dual punishments and exclusion through discipline and tracking policies. Simply stated, the first question centers the *identity* of the study's participants while the second question focuses on the *school system* in which they are educated. The following section is an overview of the problem at the national and school level regarding the state of education for Black and Brown girls.

Statement of the Problem

During his first few months in office, President Barack Obama signed an executive order to create the White House Council on Women and Girls, led by two Women of Color (WoC)—his advisor, Valerie Jarrett and the director of the White House Public Engagement, Tina Tchen (2014). On November 13, 2015, the White House announced a $118 million commitment to creating more equitable opportunities for Women and Girls of Color (McClain, 2015). During a forum held at Wake Forest University, the White House Council on Women and Girls established five areas it aimed to tackle with interventions to expand opportunities for GoC. At the top of the list was "fostering school success and reducing unnecessary exclusionary school discipline" (The White House, 2015). The Council indicated that leaders were attempting to respond to findings of the disproportionately high and severe levels of school discipline that GoC, especially Black girls, experienced (Crenshaw et al., 2015). However, as far as I could tell, these efforts came to a halt as the Council, along with its initiatives, was dismantled when President Donald Trump came into office in 2017.

At the time, President Obama's response was not only timely but also symbolically

meaningful and had promise in leading policy reform in a direction towards greater equity for GoC. However, I argue that this singular focus on school discipline was inadequate in improving the learning environment for Black and Brown girls. The Council's goals neglected to factor other issues of educational injustice, such as academic tracking—another area in which GoC and Students of Color (SoC) as a whole face academic inequities (Oakes, 2008). Additionally, the list did not contain any goals regarding postsecondary attainment and success for GoC, which caused it to fall short in its aims to improve the overall quality of life for girls and women of color.

A postsecondary education is crucial to mitigating the disadvantages that GoC and WoC have been shown to experience when it comes to their socioeconomic status (SES) as well as other educational and social opportunities (Lee & Mortimer, 2020; Luedke, 2020). Therefore, beyond providing all students with a quality public education during their K-12 years, schools are also tasked with the responsibility to ensure that students are prepared for the postsecondary path of their choice. Currently, as my study reveals, this has not been the case, especially for Black and Brown girls in Title I schools. Part of the issue here is that while much is known about the ways that students are excluded from the academic process (Oakes, 2008; Rosa et al., 2006), there is scant empirical evidence on how academic tracking and discipline policies may have compounding adverse impacts that put educational and postsecondary opportunities further out of reach for GoC.

This study addresses the junction of academic tracking and discipline policies, which separately, have been shown to negatively affect the schooling experiences of Black and Brown girls. I postulate that, together, tracking and discipline policies create greater and different forms of punishment that often go unseen and unaddressed, especially when experienced by GoC. Throughout this dissertation, I discuss the need to examine these policies from the perspectives

of the GoC who experience them simultaneously if their negative effects are to be authentically understood and addressed. Understanding the various layers of challenges faced by Black and Brown girls that are shaped by inadequate policies and how these students are hindered from obtaining their academic goals is the first step to creating much needed and appropriate remedies and reforms.

It has been a well-established phenomenon that GoC, like Dani, experience academic and life challenges that are unique to them because of the interlocking nature of oppression that they face and upon which society and schools are built (Annamma, 2018; Collins, 1986; Crenshaw et al., 2015; E. W. Morris, 2007). These students are particularly vulnerable in schools, which are sites of reproduction that often recapitulate—rather than critique or remedy—societal injustices and inequalities (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Specifically, the experiences of Black and Brown girls with harsh school discipline policies have been shaped by the gendered racism that exists in institutions of learning and animates the harmful perceptions and stereotypes of GoC (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; E. W. Morris, 2007; Wun, 2016).

Black and Brown girls have been found to be some of the most vulnerable students in schools not because they are fragile or weak, but because of the lack of support for their well-being and academic success (Annamma, 2018; Blake et al., 2010; Crenshaw, 2015; M. W. Morris, 2016; Murphy et al., 2013; Nanda, 2011; Parks et al., 2016; Rollock, 2007; White, 2013). Rather than a caring place of learning, school has often been a place that has exacerbated the numerous obstacles that GoC face, such as financial hardship, the loss of a loved one (through detention, incarceration, or death), and the day-to-day pressures that come with poverty, girlhood, racial/ethnic minoritization, and adolescence. In the following section, I offer a definition for educational harm and a conceptualization of schools as sites of reproduction to

shed light on the punishment and exclusion of GoC that occur in these institutions of learning.

Definitions of Key Terms

Here, I provide detailed definitions for the terms that are critical and used throughout the study as well as the ways that I have conceptualized them to understand the findings of this dissertation.

Girls of Color from Poor/Working-Class Backgrounds

"There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives."

—Audre Lorde, 1982

To begin my description of the key terms, I consider the phrase Girls of Color (GoC), also referred Black and Brown girls. This dissertation focuses on GoC from poor/working-class families living in urban cities, the research and literature that are pertinent to them, and some of the gaps that exist in the understanding of who they are. In this study, I use the terms GoC and Black and Brown girls interchangeably to refer to students who identify as Asian, Asian American, African American, Black, Hispanic, Indigenous, Native American, Latina, and/or Pacific Islander, including all ethnic groups within these categories. I use these terms to trouble and transcend the rigid conceptualization of race and ethnicity as one-dimensional with extra consideration for my participants who identify as multi-racial and/or -ethnic (Harris, 2016). I also do this with the aim of disrupting the White settler-colonial strategies of categorization and labeling that has historically been used to create divisions among oppressed groups. By using the collective phrase/terms GoC and Black and Brown girls, I disrupt the static lines, which are often already unclear, between race and ethnicity. Additionally, I demonstrate the wealth of understanding that can be gained from going beyond the traditional single-axis and disaggregated

approaches to race/ethnicity, and instead, attending to the intersection of these dimensions of identity.

I use the phrase poor/working-class to describe GoC who: (1) identify as poor- or working-class, (2) live below the federal poverty line (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2017) based on their eligibility for Free and Reduced Lunch, (3) come from families with parents who lack a formal postsecondary education (i.e., did not graduate from college) and work low-wage jobs with little security in their employment, (4) have limited access to health care, secure housing, and nutritious food, and (5) live in communities with high concentrations of poverty. I developed these categories with the guidance of the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2015), which identified these areas as some of the key dimensions for assessing the holistic well-being of a child.

Title I Schools in Urban Intensive Settings

Title I, which is short for Part A (Title I) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, is a federally mandated program that provides financial support to schools with "high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards" (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Formulas that include the school's student population and other relevant variables are used to determine the amount of funds that are given to the school or the local educational agency within each academic year. For the most part, Title I schools, particularly those featured in this study, are widely known to serve significant proportions of students from low-income families of color and, depending on the geographic location of the school, immigrant backgrounds. Students from Title I schools typically face numerous struggles in their education, such as chronic absences, low standardized test scores and graduation rates, and high rates of discipline. Other challenges

that plague Title I schools that are pertinent to this study consists of high educator turnover, a lack of resources and funds, and inadequate facilities. In this dissertation, I focus specifically on Title I schools in urban settings.

To date, there is minimal consensus in social science research, including educational research, on what constitutes an urban setting. For the most part, "people across the U.S. classify schools in different parts of the country as urban because of characteristics associated with the school and the people in them, on the larger social context where the schools and districts are located" (Milner, 2012, p. 557). In this study, I identify the participants as students who live in what Milner (2012) calls "urban intensive" areas where schools are "concentrated in large, metropolitan cities across the United States" (p. 560). I argue that urban intensive Title I schools are met with distinct challenges in serving students who are located at the intersection of myriad dimensions of marginalization, such as racism, classism, and xenophobia. Therefore, I selected schools based on their Title I status and the urban intensive area in which they were located. In the next section, I provide a definition for academic engagement, which is central to understanding the phenomenon of this study.

Defining Academic Engagement

For the purposes of this dissertation, I conceptualize *academic engagement* as a student's participation in the academic or schooling process. It consists of the behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge necessary for students to develop to meaningfully participate in the processes, activities, and events that help put them on a path to academic success and their postsecondary goals. This definition of academic engagement is based on what economists have called "non-cognitive skills"—attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge—that a student possesses which facilitate her eligibility for the postsecondary institution or occupation of her choice. Heckman and

Rubinstein (2001) first introduced the concept of non-cognitive skills to educational research by studying participants in a GED program to determine the importance of these skills in an academic setting. They found that non-cognitive skills, such as motivation, perseverance, and dependability, were important factors that had not been adequately considered in educational reforms.

Since Heckman and Rubinstein's (2001) study, numerous studies have emerged that have also suggested the importance of non-cognitive skills in academic achievement, particularly in college preparedness and success (Bowles & Gintis, 2011; Farkas, 2003). Currently, non-cognitive skills have been defined to "include a range of behaviors that reflect greater student self-awareness, self-monitoring, and self-control" (Roderick, Nagaoka, & Coca, 2009, p. 189). Additionally, non-cognitive skills consist of effort, motivation, aspirations, and persistence (Nagaoka et al., 2013). These attributes have been shown to have positive academic outcomes for students, especially with regard to academic achievement. Social emotional learning (SEL) is another concept that similarly captures these non-cognitive skills that are integral for academic success. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), "SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions" (CASEL, 2020). There are five areas of competence that make up the SEL framework: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Numerous studies have explored the non-cognitive skills and social emotional competencies of Black and Brown girls. Although these concepts are not usually explicitly

named or highlighted, there is broad ranging scholarship on GoC who have high levels of self-awareness and confidence, a strong sense of who they are (Butler-Barnes et al., 2018; B. J. R. Leadbeater & Way, 1996; B. J. Leadbeater & Way, 2007; Wun, 2016), and are able to cultivate caring, supportive, and empathetic relationships (Jones et al., 2018; O'Connor et al., 2014; Villaseñor et al., 2013). To date, however, the development of these attributes among GoC who have experienced school punishment and academic exclusion have yet to be thoroughly examined. Little is known about how these students keep up their morale and continue to strive for academic success. This dissertation investigates the ways that Black and Brown girls remain engaged in school and develop non-cognitive skills and social emotional competencies even during times when they are hyper punished and not receiving a rigorous, high-quality education.

Academic engagement in this study is undergirded by non-cognitive and social emotional skills that promote a student's academic success and postsecondary opportunities. By and large, however, the research on non-cognitive skills focus primarily on college readiness and success, leaving a significant gap in the understanding of the role that non-cognitive skills play in the academic process leading up to the postsecondary level (i.e., K-12). And although SEL has been studied and used in the K-12 settings primarily as an alternative school discipline (Dyson et al., 2021; Gregory & Fergus, 2017; Mahoney et al., 2020), there is virtually no research that look explicitly into SEL among students who have been academically tracked to low level courses.

Through my conceptualization of the non-cognitive and social emotional skills that are relevant in the academic process for GoC, I contribute to the growing body of work around these subjects and illuminate other possibilities for better engaging historically marginalized students in school. I also aim to complicate what it means when schools, educators, and research prioritize these skills and competencies for GoC instead of focusing on the harm and systemic oppression

these students face in school. Although my definition of academic engagement shares some elements with non-cognitive skills and SEL, my goals are focused more on understanding how GoC develop these abilities despite the hardships and disregard that they experience in school. In the next section, I provide a definition for educational harm based primarily on ideas around punishment and exclusion/neglect.

Educational Harm: Punishment and Exclusion

To situate my discussion of academic tracking and discipline as educational harm that is to come in the second chapter, I define educational harm as the maltreatment that students experience in a school setting due to punishment and exclusion or neglect. I developed this definition based on the United Nations Study on Violence Against Children (Pinheiro, 2006), which called for an examination of psychological violence inflicted upon children as it had been historically under investigated. With regard to punishment, the study pointed specifically to instances where educators psychologically and emotionally abused children in ways that had lasting effects beyond their childhood. Psychological violence included "insults, name-calling, ignoring, isolation, rejection, threats, emotional indifference and belittlement – that can be detrimental to a child's psychological development and well-being" (Pinheiro, 2006, p. 91). The study revealed that psychological harm in school was typically a result of punishment for wrongdoing such as misbehavior or rule-breaking.

Along with this definition, and specific to the focus of my dissertation, I highlight the U.N.'s use of gender-specific violence that occurred out of "the desire to punish or humiliate girls because of their sex or sexuality, or by sexual interest and bravado… also [serving] to intimidate, humiliate and diminish girls" (p. 118) as a crucial component of my analysis in showing the ways in which school discipline becomes gendered. Next, I draw from article 19 of

the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) that defined violence as "all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse." Here, I focus primarily on the aspect of neglect and negligent treatment—or as I call it in this study, exclusion—to understand the ways in which tracking students out of academically rigorous courses can be deemed as educational harm.

Black and Brown girls have experienced mild to severe forms of harm as a byproduct of academic tracking policies that emerged from xenophobic sentiments of perceiving immigrant students as intellectually inferior (Donelan et al., 1994). Likewise, they have been subject to discipline policies and practices premised on racist ideology that suggest that GoC are prone to misbehavior, and thus, deserving of harsher forms of discipline (Davis, 2003; Wacquant, 2001). I argue that the residue of the harmful (and at times, violent) history of academic tracking and school discipline continue to be experienced by Black and Brown girls today as they have been shown to be subject to disproportionate punishment and exclusion in schools (Crenshaw et al., 2015; Lucas, 2001). Conceptualizing educational harm as I have defined it, I investigate the ways in which GoC experience punishment and neglect in school and the effects on their academic engagement. In the following section, I posit that schools often act as reflections of the state, and through educational policies and practices, perpetuate violence against Black and Brown girls.

Significance

As I have discussed, there is a gap in knowledge of the academic experiences of urban GoC, particularly with regard to how they experience punishment and exclusion in school. The extant research surrounding the academic experiences of urban GoC often lack a critical analysis that examines the punishment and exclusion that they experience as a result of school discipline

and academic tracking policies. This dilemma cannot be overlooked as these students are being educated with a lack of regard to their unique social locations at the intersection of multiple forms of oppression. My dissertation demonstrates the importance in evolving lines of inquiry to understand how school discipline and academic tracking are inappropriate educational approaches to fostering student engagement and achieving positive academic outcomes.

The significance in this dissertation lies in the way that it reveals how GoC, who report that they have been excluded from high-level courses *and* disciplined in formal and informal ways engage in the academic process. Additionally, it also employs a strengths-oriented approach to examining the ways in which students at the intersection of multiple oppressions participate in school despite the negative experiences of being punished and tracked into low-level courses. This in-depth study into the educational harm experienced by GoC extends the definition of harm to consider the academic, psychological, and emotional effects of maltreatment in schools. Along with the scholarly contributions that it makes to expanding scholarship for and about GoC, this work provides a space for its participants to receive support and validation of their identity and cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), learn more about how to critically analyze systems of oppression, and voice their perspectives about the quality of education that they have received.

Finally, this dissertation introduces the concept of *Liberatory Academic Engagement (LAE)* to scholarship around the areas of intersectionality, adolescent girlhood, and school/academic engagement. LAE, which will be described further in chapter four, is the way in which GoC participate in the schooling process and work toward their academic/postsecondary goals as well as the epistemological foundations that inform their academic engagement. In this dissertation, I aim to provide further empirical evidence to spur researchers to shift the (often

deficit) ways that issues surrounding Black and Brown girls are discussed. The reach and impact of this timely research effort will be significant for reimagining an equitable education that positions GoC to succeed academically and be prepared to pursue the postsecondary path of their choice.

Overview of the Dissertation

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the problem that this dissertation seeks to tackle as well as contextual information for the issues at hand. I also discussed the rationale for this study and how it drives the research questions. Following this, I defined the key terms that are critical to understanding this work as: GoC and Black and Brown girls, Title I schools, urban intensive settings, and educational harm. Chapter two is divided into two parts, beginning with a review of the extant literature and scholarship surrounding the topic of this dissertation as well as a more detailed explanation of terms and definitions that I use throughout this study. The latter half of chapter two presents intersectionality as the conceptual framework that ground this research and asserts the importance of creating knowledge that is developed by intersectional feminist scholars and Women of Color. Throughout this chapter, I also identify some of the underdeveloped and undertheorized areas within the topic of this dissertation and I discuss how I aim to respond.

In chapter three, I outline the methodological design and approach of the study. I begin with a positionality statement to situate myself within the work and reflect on the experiences that may influence my approaches to the research and shape how I interpret the findings. Next, I detail the process of organizing the study, describe the data analytic procedures, and provide profiles of each of the school sites that were part of this project. The first half of chapter four includes findings that respond to the first research question, which highlight LGP participants'

perceptions of the ways in which they have been pathologized and villainized in school and how these impositions shape the ways that they are punished and excluded by their educators. The second half of chapter four lays the groundwork for understanding how Black and Brown girls engage in the academic process despite feeling mistreated in school. Chapter five offers findings that address the second research question, underscoring how GoC view their experiences with educational harm adversely affecting their academic engagement, postsecondary opportunities, and other life outcomes. In the final chapter, I offer a summary of the dissertation, my contributions to theory and recommendations for praxis, a discussion of the study's limitations, and the direction of my future research.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Miseducation of Girls of Color

Overview

We know far too little, in educational scholarly literature, about the academic experiences of Black and Brown girls, in general, and in particular with respect to their engagement in the schooling process. Specifically, there is scant literature about the schooling process for GoC, living in contexts of poverty, their experiences of schooling, and opportunities and access to advanced high school courses. We know even less about their perceptions of their high school academic and disciplinary experiences. The empirical and theoretical information that does exist often represent GoC within data for all students of color or, given the increase in attention around boys of color, GoC are assumed to have similar experiences as their male counterparts. Some areas of study that incorporate Black and Brown girls include the racial imbalance of academic tracking (Burris & Welner, 2005; Oakes, 1995), the severe school discipline experienced by Black and Brown girls (Crenshaw et al., 2015), the college aspirations of racial and ethnic minorities (Kao & Tienda, 1998), and the experiences of urban girls in society (Leadbeater & Way, 1996 & 2007).

A consistent theme throughout the literature has shown that, in general, GoC are in a perpetually vulnerable state in school (Blake et al., 2010; Leadbeater & Way, 1996; López, 2003; White, 2013). A growing body of research reveals that GoC are punished severely and frequently for offences that are more subjective by nature and this experience with school discipline often puts them on a tenuous academic path as they become entangled in the school-to-prison nexus (Crenshaw et al., 2015; Epstein et al., 2017; Meiners, 2010; E. W. Morris, 2007; M. W. Morris, 2016). The implications of discipline policies and practices on GoC (Crenshaw et al., 2015),

along with the high likelihood that they will be tracked in low-level courses (Oakes, 1995), contribute greatly to academically marginalizing these students.

Equally important, and specifically relevant to this study, there is a lack of understanding around the ways in which the intersection of their oppressed identities shapes the academic engagement of GoC. In an educational context, factors of race, gender, class, and (im)migration status have been understood to have significant and lasting effects on the experiences of students with regard to the ways that they are educated and socialized for academically and postsecondary opportunities (Bernhardt, 2013; Knaggs et al., 2015; Knight, 2004). The last decade saw an increase in research on intersectionality and greater attention to the complexities of what an identity located at the intersection of multiple oppressions entails for GoC (Annamma, 2018; Crenshaw et al., 2015; M. W. Morris, 2016; Wun, 2016). However, there remains to be limited research on the relationship between two dominant schooling policies—academic tracking and discipline—and students' ascriptive backgrounds, particularly for GoC.

This chapter is a discussion of some of the current literature and scholarship on this topic and areas that warrant further exploration. It begins with a literature review portion that brings together research on the historical and social contexts of the experiences of GoC from poor/working-class backgrounds with academic tracking and discipline policies in secondary public schools. It then provides an overview of the geopolitics of the urban settings in which GoC, like the ones featured in this study, live and learn. Highlighting some of the challenges that are unique to urban Black and Brown girls, whose identities are intricately woven by their multiple marginalized identities, the literature review elaborates on how the injustices that GoC face are often consequences of oppressive views regarding their complex identities.

In the latter half of this chapter, I outline the conceptual frameworks that guide this effort. I employed Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality as the foundation of this study to examine and argue for socio-demographic status (e.g., race, class, (im)migration status, gender) as a construct that must be considered in education research. According to intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), an analysis that tackles race and gender (here, I include other historically oppressed dimensions such as class, sexuality, and (im)migrant status) as separate entities will not accurately capture the experiences of those whose subjugation is based upon the convergence of these dimensions. Rather, these marginalized identities must be considered as interlocking dimensions that shape the overall experiences that individuals have with historical and institutional oppression. Along these lines, I also consider the role that girlhood plays in the experiences of Black and Brown girls in school.

Girlhood is captured in this study as grades pre-kindergarten to twelfth (3 to 19 years old). Although the participants are 16- to 19-year-old girls, I do not confine the bounds of this study to these years only. In my interview protocol and the activities, I ask the Lavender girls about their academic experiences across the span of their years spent in school to capture whether/how their sociopolitical location shifts as their age changes. I look to works by Cox, (2015) Evans-Winters (2017) and Fernández-García (2020) to inform my understanding of girlhood, and I specifically draw from Butler's (2018) assertions on understanding the sociopolitical spaces through which GoC move in order to appropriately examine their position at the intersection of multiple oppressions. It is through this lens that I include girlhood in my study and seek to understand how punishment and exclusion is shaped around the social location of my participants as young women of color.

It has been demonstrated that their youth and adolescence make the GoC in my study potentially vulnerable to the phenomenon of adultification (Espstein et al., 2017; González, 2018) and harsher forms of punishment and exclusion (Crenshaw, 2015; Morris, 2016). Within girlhood studies, particularly those centering Black and Brown girls, there is a focus on the violence and harm experienced by these students (Annamma, 2018; Brown, 2009; Butler, 2018; Cox, 2015; Evans-Winters, 2017; Fernández-García, 2020). This study builds on girlhood scholarship by situating the Lavender Girls at the nexus of multiple oppressed identities, girlhood (i.e., adolescence and age) being one of them. I examine how their social location as adolescent Black and Brown girls from poor/working-class families makes the Lavender Girls vulnerable to harm in school through discipline and disempowerment through academic exclusion. Beyond harm and punishment, I also aim to understand how the perspective, wisdom, and joy that are particular to GoC help them navigate the world and develop a sense of liberation and agency.

Along these lines, I argue for the necessity of exploring how existing at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities positively shape the academic engagement of GoC and enhances their participation in the schooling process. Finally, throughout this chapter, to situate the purpose and aims of this study, I illuminate some areas for further research on academic tracking and school discipline policies as well as on the schooling and lived experiences of GoC.

Girls of Color at the Intersections of Poverty and Other Systemic Disadvantages

As previously mentioned, the Black and Brown girls who are the focus of this literature review live in urban intensive areas (Milner, 2012). The geopolitical make up of cities like Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and Houston are such that these students are exposed to some of them most visible and proximate signs of economic segregation as neighborhoods are partitioned not only by price of real estate, but often, also by the skin color of the residents. Consequently,

the schools in which GoC in urban intensive areas, like those in this study, are enrolled have a wide range of shared characteristics, which include high levels of poverty (over 75%), large concentrations of students who are English language emergent (ELE), predominantly underrepresented minorities, and sizeable im/migrant populations (Milner, 2012). Because child well-being reports at the national scale typically do not disaggregate members of the population by gender and there are no data for these dimensions that are exclusively for Black and Brown girls, I assume that the following descriptive statistics regarding children of color and those living in poverty are representative of GoC.

Overall, African American girls experience the greatest rates of poverty (39%), followed closely by their American Indian (37%) and Latina (33%) peers. To put this into perspective, the national average rate of poverty is 22% with Asians/Pacific Islanders (14%) and Whites (14%) reporting the lowest rates; however, these rates also obfuscate the numbers of people living in a household who contribute to overall household income. The same group of girls—American Indian (50%), African American (48%), and Latina (37%)—are living with parents who lack employment security, which is well above the 31% national average. Specific to the participants in this study, who are in high school, the rates for graduating on time are much lower for African American (68%), Latina (76%), and American Indian (68%) girls compared to their White (85%) and Asian (93%) counterparts. High school attainment for the parents of GoC—Latina (65%) and American Indian (81%)—are also lower than those of their White (94%), Asian (89%), and African American (87%) peers (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015). Considering the necessity of a high school diploma in today's workforce, there are significant implications for Black and Brown girls who live in homes where the primary earner has extremely limited employment opportunities due to their lack of formal education.

I conclude this section with a review of the statistics on the rates of Black and Brown girls living in high-poverty areas, a prominent characteristic of urban intensive cities. The data is dismaying in that it shows that African American (32%), American Indian (30%), and Latina (24%) girls have a one in four chance of living in a community with high concentrations of poverty. This is a notable disparity, especially considering the disparities in the employment opportunities, nutritious food sources, and quality of schools that inherently occur when wealth and poverty lines are drawn. As I will discuss in the following sections, the lack of access and opportunities that GoC from poor/working-class backgrounds experience has significant implications for how they are educated, punished, and excluded in schools.

Punishment: Issues of Race, Gender, and Class in School Discipline

In the last twenty years, a great deal of research has emerged showing the alarmingly and disproportionately high discipline rates for our Black and Latine students, particularly when it comes to exclusionary methods such as suspension and expulsion (Crenshaw et al., 2015; George, 2015; Gregory et al., 2010; Losen & Martinez, 2013; Skiba et al., 1997; Wun, 2016). It has been well documented that although students of color do not exhibit greater propensities for misbehavior, they are disciplined more frequently and receive harsher punishments for less serious offences (Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba et al., 2002). Additionally, the types of infractions for which these students receive disciplinary referrals are typically more subjective.

In one analysis, researchers found that "white students were significantly more likely than black students to be referred to the office for smoking, leaving without permission, vandalism, and obscene language" while "Black students were more likely to be referred for disrespect, excessive noise, threat, and loitering" (Skiba et al., 2002, p. 332). This form of discrimination—against a backdrop of a large and growing overrepresentation of Black and

Brown students entangled in the school-to-prison pipeline—is concerning, and harsh discipline policies have been shown to only further exacerbate the issue. This presumption of misbehavior creates the justification for the violence that schools enact on students of color under the guise of discipline, which manifests in treating these students as criminals, thus permitting the presence of metal detectors, law enforcement, and other means of surveillance in schools.

The school-to-prison pipeline is a metaphorical explanation to describe this phenomenon of carcerality in schools and students entering the justice system as a result of draconian discipline policies. It is through these harmful discipline policies that many students of color, often from poor/working-class families, are criminalized from a young age and robbed of opportunities to learn, grow, and flourish. According to the Advancement Project (2010), much of the ballooning prison population between 1987 and 2007 can be attributed to harsh school discipline policies. Up until recently, the bulk of research surrounding the school-to-prison pipeline has pertained mostly to the over-disciplining of Black and Brown (i.e., Latino, Native American, Pacific Islander, Asian) boys, leaving Black and Brown girls largely out of the conversation. The consequences of this include the assumption that GoC are not disciplined excessively compared to their White peers or that the experience of their male counterparts speak broadly to the experiences of all Black and Brown students.

Stereotypes, biases, and other forms of discrimination may influence the ways in which Black girls (and GoC, in general), especially those in schools located in historically disadvantaged communities, are disciplined. Even more concerning, these prejudices "may contribute to perceptions by decision makers that a Black girl has run afoul of institutional norms, and that punishment, rather than restorative or therapeutic responses, is warranted" (Crenshaw et al., 2015). Research that is heavily focused on boys has a tendency to eclipse the

injustices that their female contemporaries face in a highly punitive school system. The groundbreaking report, *Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced and Underprotected* (Crenshaw et al., 2015), reveals that urban GoC are severely punished at a disproportionately high level and their entrance into the school-to-prison pipeline begins as early as the age of six. Crenshaw's report is only one of a handful of studies on the discipline experiences of Black and Brown girls (Annamma, 2018; M. W. Morris, 2016; Epstein, 2017; Wun, 2016).

Other relevant research on the academic experiences of GoC from marginalized backgrounds demonstrate that they generally have lower educational outcomes and are in a perpetually vulnerable academic state in school (Blake et al., 2010; Leadbeater & Way, 1996; López, 2003; White, 2013). Similar to academic tracking and college preparation, there is little research that examines the effects of discipline on the academic engagement of students. Congruent with the aforementioned findings of how discipline funnels students into the school-to-prison pipeline, studies show that punishment in the form of excluding students from the learning environment (e.g., referral, suspension) has significantly negative effects on their academic participation.

The implications of draconian discipline policies on Black and Brown girls (Crenshaw et al., 2015; Wun, 2016) only contribute to further disenfranchising these students. Data from the United States Department of Education show that Black girls are the recipients of punishments at astoundingly disproportionate rates. In New York City, for example, they are fifty-three times more likely to be expelled and ten times more likely to be suspended than their White peers. In Boston, Black girls are ten times more likely to be expelled and twelve times more likely to be suspended than White girls (Crenshaw et al., 2015). A glaring issue in the discussion around discipline is the lack of focus specifically on GoC, who experience an inordinate amount of

punishment, sometimes surpassing their male counterparts. Consequently, "many of the gender-specific factors that contribute to low achievement and the separation of girls of color from school are often placed outside the dialogue about achievement and school discipline altogether" (Crenshaw et al., 2015, p. 14). Exclusion from advanced courses is another topic left out of the conversation regarding the academic achievement of GoC. In the following section, I review what is known about Black and Brown girls who are tracked into low-level courses.

Exclusion: Issues of Race/Ethnicity and Class in Academic Tracking

Like school discipline, the policy and practice of academic tracking has been shown to have negative effects on the academic outcomes of students, specifically those who are tracked in remedial and general education courses. Academic tracking, which is typically done in high schools, "is the practice of dividing students into separate classes for high-, average-, and low-achievers; it lays out different curriculum paths for students headed for college and for those who are bound directly for the workplace" (Oakes, 1986, p. 2). Tracks or groups are generally named to reflect students' academic ability (e.g., honors, regular, remedial) or to indicate postsecondary trajectory (e.g., college-bound, vocational) (Donelan et al., 1994; Oakes, 1986).

Tracking, as an educational practice, first emerged from xenophobic sentiments during the early twentieth century when American schools were met with an influx of immigrant children. In response to this increase in cultural and linguistic diversity, schools began the practice of grouping students based on their abilities and aspirations, grounded in the belief that "the lower classes are inherently inferior" (Donelan et al., 1994, p. 379). Considering the discriminatory origins of tracking, it comes as no surprise that this practice has produced the deep racial and class divides of today where "children from low-income or one-parent households, families with an unemployed worker, or linguistic and ethnic minority groups are

more likely to be assigned to low-ability groups or tracks" (Alvarez & Mehan, 2006, p. 83). When students are tracked out of rigorous and engaging courses, they have less access to curriculum, resources, and opportunities that will put them on a path to academic success and better prepare them to achieve their postsecondary goals.

Research has shown the inherent racial bias in academic tracking, particularly around educators' assumptions of academic ability and expectations being tied to racial and class identity (Davis & Haller, 1981). In one study, teachers explained that White, middle-class students on the college-bound track needed computer skills while vocational classes (e.g., wood shop, cosmetology) were better suited for low-income Latine and Black students since these students were likely not going to college, but rather into the workforce. These racial biases that "signal ability to educators" (Oakes & Guiton, 1995, p. 29) add to the mounting evidence of the discriminatory consequences of tracking policies and practices, especially in urban schools. Yet, in spite of substantial empirical evidence on the ineffectiveness (and to a certain extent, detrimental effects) of tracking, the practice remains widely prevalent in schools today.

There is an unspoken understanding that tracking is generally discouraged in schools because of the inequitable outcomes that I previously highlighted. Yet, according to research (Worthy, 2010) and based on my years of experience as an education researcher, schools continue to implement tracking policies with most educators viewing it as a viable way to provide quality and equitable education to all students. However, research has proven this notion otherwise, showing that high school seniors of comparable background and academic achievement "become *increasingly* different in achievement and future aspirations when they are placed in different tracks" and the ability grouping that takes place during primary school carry over to middle and high school, which then dictates whether students will be on a college-bound

or vocational track (Oakes, 1986, p. 4). Additionally, Gamoran (1987) found that, after controlling for other schooling variables, the statistical effects of tracking remain substantially significant in a student's academic achievement and college-going outcomes.

Numerous studies show that students' ascriptive characteristics often serve as reliable determinants for ability grouping and tracking (Campbell, 2012). As such, students who are racial or ethnic minorities and poor are likely to get sorted into lower-track courses (Gamoran, 1987; Goldrick-Rab & Mazzeo, 2005; Oakes, 1986). Here, the inequities are further unmasked in findings that show general- and low-tracked students receive less rigorous materials and are subject to teachers having lower expectations of them. The irony in all of this is that research shows that teachers having high expectations for students has a positive effect on improving test scores despite SES (Goldrick-Rab & Mazzeo, 2005). Meanwhile, students who are placed on the advanced or college-bound track are not only put at a greater advantage but also are more likely to remain at an advantage from taking more advanced courses, having a better educational experience, and being more likely to enroll in college as a consequence of having been postured for it (Gamoran, 1987; Oakes, 1985).

Rubin and Noguera (2004) show that the negative effects of tracking for Black and Brown students are such that "African American, Latino, Native American, and some Southeast Asian immigrants, are more likely to be relegated to the lower tracks, while affluent European American and Asian American students are concentrated in the higher tracks" (p. 93). On the other hand, Oakes and Guiton (1995) highlight the racial and ethnic inequities by revealing that White, Asian, and high SES students "had consistently better access to courses that would lead them to college and higher status jobs" compared to their Latine contemporaries (Oakes & Guiton, 1995, p. 28). Additionally, parents of the advanced tracked students are often the

staunchest supporters of academic tracking policies and practices (Rubin, 2006). Academic tracking has long been viewed as a way to provide the appropriate level of academic rigor for the varying abilities of students. Lost in the rhetoric, however, are the ways in which tracking policies exacerbate educational inequities for students of color from poor/working-class backgrounds.

Although research has already demonstrated the negative effects of tracking on academic outcomes and college-going, this study provides a more in-depth exploration of how students, specifically GoC, perceive ability grouping in tandem with school discipline adversely impacting their academic engagement. Rather than using traditional measures such as grade point average (GPA) and standardized test scores to explore the academic effects of these policies, I employ a set of unconventional factors to explain these outcomes. I do this with the aim of characterizing the approaches that GoC, despite being tracked and disciplined, are employing in order to prepare themselves to engage in the academic process and prepare for the postsecondary path of their choice.

Conclusion of Literature Review

As evidenced by current literature and scholarship, urban Black and Brown girls have long been at the margins of education research. It was not until recently, with the focus on school discipline, have they been centered in discussions around education policy reform. However, I argue that these discussions, and initiatives, do not go far enough and that the voices of GoC at the intersections of multiple oppressions must be amplified greater and more often. In this study, I aim to center urban GoC in my investigation of how school discipline and ability grouping policies may affect students' academic engagement. I focus on discipline and tracking as two school policies that jointly contribute to educational setbacks as well as potential educational

harm, negatively affecting students' ability to engage in the schooling process, and consequently, achieving their postsecondary goals. In the following section, I discuss the conceptual and epistemological underpinnings that ground this dissertation.

Intersectionality as a Conceptual Framework

This work—and thus, the epistemologies and frameworks that guide it—is highly political in its exploration of the educational harm experienced by Black and Brown girls who have struggled with the intersectional and interlocking nature of their oppression (Cho et al., 2013; Crenshaw, 1991; Hill Collins, 1986). I interrogate the particular ways in which society has siloed issues that pertain to Black and Brown girls as issues exclusively of race, gender, or class, and the lack of recourse to pursue remedies that address the intertwined nature of their social locations. Although commonalities are important in building solidarity between oppressed groups, it also is equally important to bring to light inequalities in power that exist because "groups are not yet equal in making their standpoints known, either to themselves or to others" (Eugene, 1992, p. 97). A singular approach limits the possibilities of understanding more thoroughly the different types of injustices experienced by GoC and stymies alternative ways of understanding the issues (Hill Collins, 2004). Among one another, Women of Color (WoC) continually work to address the problems within their differences, but society as a whole has not invested in sufficiently researching, theorizing, or addressing them. One conceptual framework upon which feminists of color rely is *intersectionality*, which:

> …emerged initially as a mechanism for revealing that power works in uneven and differentiated ways. Its earliest iterations promoted expressly political resistance to the dangers posed by the disaggregation and individuation that single-axis approaches brought to collective struggles for social justice (Crenshaw 2011; Lipsitz 2011). The idea of intersectionality helped shift the focus of academic feminist and anti-racist contestations away from preoccupations with intentional prejudice and toward perspectives grounded in analyses of systemic dynamics and institutional power. (Chun et al., 2013, p. 922)

In this dissertation, I employ an intersectional framework to understand how the harm and exclusion that GoC experience is shaped by their social location at the nexus of racism, xenophobia, sexism, and/or classism. Kimberlé Crenshaw developed the framework of intersectionality in the legal field during the late 1980s as a response to the traditional single axis approach to race and gender as separate categories of identity in litigation and legal analysis (Crenshaw, 1989 & 1991). In her 1989 piece, Crenshaw shared an account of an experience she had as a student at Harvard Law School. For purposes of illustration, in what follows, I recount Crenshaw's experience.

A Black male classmate, who was the only Black member of an elite male club at Harvard, invited Crenshaw and another Black friend for drinks at the private club. When they arrived, her classmate informed them of a detail about the club that he failed to mention. Crenshaw tensely anticipated that he would tell them that they were not permitted to enter because of their race. But instead, he said that Crenshaw's male companion was allowed to come through the front door, but, as a woman, she had to enter through the back door. This anecdote captures the tension, confusion, and ambiguity that WoC often feel when they are discriminated against. As a prelude, GoC experience harm at the macro, micro, and inter-personal levels in schools as they face multifaceted forms of oppressions due to their gender, race, class, and/or immigration status. Intersectionality asserts that any approach that does not consider the nexus of the sociodemographic identities of students (i.e., their social location) in relation to power, especially girls, is incomplete and will not sufficiently capture the essence of their oppression.

Intersectionality suggests that because GoC experience multiple forms of discrimination (e.g., racism, sexism, classism) simultaneously, an analysis that does not consider the

intersection of these harms is inadequate. Crenshaw (1989) posits that a single axis approach to understanding the cause of discrimination mischaracterizes the biases faced by WoC and GoC in that it often only considers one part of their complex identities as both female and of color (and I add—**specifically for the GoC in this project**—from poor/working class backgrounds). When studying the ways in which GoC become the recipients of subjectivities, which then lead to them being punished at disproportionate rates, the possibility that it is due to the fact that they are discriminated against based on their race, gender, *and* class must be taken into account.

Although Crenshaw established a term around the notion of treating multiple dimensions of identity as inclusive of one another, the concept of intersectionality had been developed and built upon for years prior by her fellow feminists of color (Anzaldúa 1987, 1990; hooks 1984; Moraga and Bambara, 1983). Since Crenshaw's introduction of the term, intersectionality has made its way into numerous academic and mainstream spaces as a useful tool for interrogating oppressive systems by tackling injustices that exist at the nexus of multiple dimensions of oppression. It provides a framework for understanding power and the social location of people at the intersection of historically and politically marginalized identities. The political aspect of intersectionality can be more deeply understood using Patricia Hill Collins' concept of the *matrix of domination*, which "refers to how political domination on the macro-level of analysis is organized via intersecting systems of oppression" (Collins, 2019, p. 171). The matrix of domination provides the backdrop for observing how society or an institution, such as a school operates using four domains of power to maintain the status quo. The four domains are: (1) the hegemonic/cultural, which are made up of ideologies and beliefs that inform and are woven throughout each domain; (2) the structural, which is the organization and institutionalization of power; (3) the disciplinary, which are the rules and processes of regulating power; (4) the

interpersonal, which is how individuals conduct themselves and conform to uphold the structures of power and oppression (Collins, 2000).

This intersectional study is guided by the scholarship of Crenshaw (1989, 1991), Collins (2000), and Isasi-Diaz (1992) in its examination of the positions of GoC within systems of power by situating them within the appropriate socio-historical and sociopolitical contexts (e.g., poverty, racism, misogyny, and xenophobia). I engage in an intersectional analysis of the data, examining the positions of GoC within systems of power by situating them within the appropriate socio-historical and sociopolitical contexts. Cho (2013) argued that an analysis is intersectional when it addresses "the problem of sameness and difference in its relation to power" (p. 795). Therefore, intersectionality as a framework for this research encompasses an anti-racist, feminist standpoint with "perspectives grounded in analyses of systemic dynamics and institutional power" (Chun, Lipsitz, & Shin, 2013, p. 922). Through an intersectional lens, this study examines the power structures that Black and Brown girls from poor/working-class backgrounds encounter throughout their educational journey. Per the guidelines of intersectionality (Collins, 1995; Bowleg, 2008), I assume that the identities of GoC are interdependent rather than summative or separate. This is exhibited in the intentional choice of using "Girls of Color from poor/working-class backgrounds" or, when applicable, "immigrant "Girls of Color from poor/working-class backgrounds," in this dissertation, where "and" is not used. This expresses the joint nature of their social location at the intersection of multiple (historically marginalized) identities.

In this research study, an intersectional framework helps to distinguish the differences among the similarities vis-à-vis the relationship of GoC with various systems of power and oppression. Critically examining, re-centering, and reclaiming power is a significant goal of the struggle of people from oppressed groups and something that ought to be taught to Black and

Brown girls at a young age. To contend with power is to regain ownership of experiences, which is crucial, as power often lies in the acknowledgement that one's experience, perspectives, and worldviews are valid and contribute to the human experience (Narayan, 2004). Pushing this notion further, Collins (1986) elaborates on self-definition as "defining and valuing one's consciousness of one's own self-defined standpoint in the face of images that foster a self-definition as the objectified 'other'" (pg. 18), particularly as it pertains to Black women. In this act of taking ownership of and defining their experiences, these women gain their humanity and consequently, power.

Although I employ intersectionality, I acknowledge that this critical race feminist standpoint exists among and builds on myriad concepts that examines multiply marginalized identities in relation to power (Collins, 1989; hooks, 2015; Harding, 2004). Moreover, the understanding and utility of intersectionality remains fluid to this day and "there is still 'little agreement' on what intersectionality actually means when bringing an 'intersectional lens to the study of power, privilege and subordination'" (Hankivsky & Jordan-Zachery, 2019, p. 8). To date, there have been various iterations and applications of intersectionality as a theoretical framework, methodological approach, and praxis. Yet, there remains to be a widely agreed upon function, which perhaps is representative of the kaleidoscope of issues, ideas, and experiences that are captured under the concept of intersectionality.

With this in mind, I contribute to the plethora of approaches in research in which intersectionality has been utilized by employing intersectionality as a conceptual frame and analytic approach in my study. As previously stated, this dissertation is an intersectional project in its entirety, meaning that I employ intersectionality as a conceptual framework that dictates the development of the research questions, methodological approach, data collection procedures,

and data analysis. Additionally, my own social location and positionality at the intersection of race/ethnicity, gender, class, and immigration also steer the direction of this study. From my epistemological standpoint as an immigrant Woman of Color from a poor/working-class family, I developed the Lavender Girls Project based on an intersectional conceptual framework. Specifically, this study's use of participatory methods developed by WoC (i.e., sister circles and kitchen table talks) among adolescent GoC along with a curriculum and interview protocol that are grounded in intersectionality advances an approach to research where power is redistributed between the researcher and the participants. This work reveals the necessity and impact of participatory methods when working with youth, particularly those who are socially located at the intersection of multiple oppressions, as they are typically not deemed to have the level of expertise and ability to critically analyze their own experiences. Moreover, this dissertation extends the ways in which girlhood (the intersection of age and gender) is understood with respect to other marginalized identities, such as those along the lines of race/ethnicity, immigration status, and class. In this study, the Lavender Girls demonstrate a keen awareness of the how their complex identity shapes the ways they are punished, excluded, and harmed in school.

The intersectionality framework, along with the ways that I have defined GoC, will allow me to better understand the academic experiences of Black and Brown girls while also thinking of approaches that meet the unique ways in which their power has been minimized or taken through punishment and exclusion. Black and Brown girls have a deep-seated history of disempowerment, dispossession, and violence when it comes to fighting for a quality education (e.g., Ruby Bridges integrating William Frantz Elementary School in 1957 and Sylvia Mendez of *Mendez v. Westminster* case). This struggle has made them some of the most academically

compromised students with minimal chances of getting on the postsecondary path of their choice (Leadbeater & Way, 1996; Rollock, 2007). Focusing on punishment and exclusion, this study aims to explore the complex and under-investigated relationship that Black and Brown girls have with power in school settings.

This work moves the conversation, as Cho (2013) suggests it should, towards a political sphere. It is in this space, rather than in the treatment of GoC in disaggregated categories, that critical analysis and re-imagination of educational policies, practices, and procedures can take place. Furthermore, I subscribe to the demands of intersectionality research for researchers to "broaden their analytical scope beyond the collected data to become intimately acquainted, if they are not already, with the sociohistorical realities of historically oppressed groups" (Bowleg, 2008, p. 318). By doing this, my research fulfills what Patil (2013) claims many works invoking an intersectional lens have failed to do—to call to question the ways in which oppressive systems (i.e., White supremacy, the patriarchy, settler colonialism, and capitalism) have historically employed racialized, classed, gendered, and xenophobic ideologies that oppress Black and Brown girls. In the next section, I discuss the intersectional epistemological and feminist frameworks developed by Women of Color that guide my understanding in the analysis phase of this study.

Intersectional Epistemologies: Womanism, Mujerism, and Multicultural Feminism

The womanist, mujerista, and multicultural feminist movements came from a need for WoC to have epistemological standpoints through which to frame their critiques of oppression that stemmed from the intersection of their race, gender, (im)migration status, and class. These feminist standpoints (Harding, 2004a & 2004b) have provided WoC with the theoretical and methodological tools to conduct analyses of power on issues, matters, and phenomena that

pertain to their lived experiences. In addition to this, these epistemologies have also been vehicles of political activism, allowing WoC to interrogate and challenge their oppressors, reclaiming their power and re-centering narratives around them. I use these epistemologies—ways of knowing—to inform my understanding of the ways in which participants in my study come to know what they know about school and their education.

Accompanying intersectionality as the conceptual framework, this study draws from the epistemologies of Women of Color, specifically Womanism, Mujerism, and multicultural feminisms to interrogate the power and oppression at work in the educational experiences of GoC. To be clear, I do not claim these epistemologies as mine, but rather I look to them as guiding frameworks to inform the methodology of this study, specifically during the analysis phase when I examine how the identities of my participants inform their ways of learning and being in school. I draw from these epistemological frames to understand the nuanced ways that race, gender, class, age, and (im)migration status shape the ways in which GoC understand and respond to how they are punished and excluded from the schooling process.

Womanism: A Black Feminist Epistemology

Alice Walker's formative work from 1984, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens,* laid the foundation for the womanist movement that inspired scholars to develop it as an epistemological standpoint. Womanism's Afrocentric roots encompass a humanist perspective while highlighting the practice and traditions of matriarchs, especially among African Americans (Banks-Wallace, 2000). This humanist dimension is concerned not only with liberation and justice for WoC, but for all oppressed groups (Williams, 1986; Phillips, 2006). However, it does not proclaim a singular experience for all; rather, it underscores the diversity of experiences of people who have

been subjugated (Phillips, 2006). In a speech in 1983, Anna Julia Cooper articulated humanist dimension of Womanism in this way:

> We take our stand on the solidarity of humanity, the oneness of life, and the unnaturalness and injustice of all special favoritisms, whether of sex, race, country, or condition… The colored woman feels that woman's cause is one and universal; and that… not till the universal title of humanity to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is conceded to be inalienable to all; not till then is woman's lesson taught and woman's cause won—not the white woman's nor the black woman's, nor the red woman's but the cause of every man and of every woman who has writhed silently under a mighty wrong.
>
> (as cited in Hill Collins, 1986)

Cooper echoes Walker's assertion that womanists are not separatists but are concerned with the wellbeing of humanity. Beyond this, Womanism asserts that WoC have endured oppression that is intersectional, and therefore, they "have a particular vantage point on what constitutes evidence (Collins, 1991), valid action (Welch, 1990), and morality (Cannon, 1995)" (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002, p. 72). This feminist epistemology affirms intersectionality through its acknowledgement of the intertwined nature of race, gender, and class. Because Womanism came from the experiences of Black women with oppression with race, class, and gender, it is inherently intersectional and "views these realities from within the triangle" (Sheared, 2006, p. 271). In the same way, this work puts the experiences of Black girls in the center of the triangle and argues that similar to Black women, Black girls have a perspective that is unique to them as children/young women and potentially beneficial for other students.

Womanist feminism serves to guide interrogations of the status quo and sheds light on the power dynamics and structures of society, making it inherently political. It is a fluid philosophical and cultural approach for WoC, particularly Black women, to challenge the structures that have perpetuated their subjugation as well as the subjugation of others. It is an essential component of feminism as it reserves a space for Black women to theorize and

investigate their distinct experiences with various intersections of oppression (e.g., anti-Blackness, misogynoir, xenophobia, classism, sexism, homophobia, colonialism, ageism, ableism). In this work, a womanist approach centers Black and Brown girls as constructors of knowledge and producers of evidence.

Mujerism: A Latina & Hispanic Feminist Epistemology

In the early 1990s, Mujerista theologian Isasi-Diaz started a movement for Latina and Hispanic women that centered their spiritual, emotional, and everyday experiences as they navigated systems of racial, gender, and socioeconomic oppression. She and her contemporaries describe a mujerista as:

> …a Hispanic woman who struggles to liberate herself not as an individual but as a member of a Hispanic community. She is one who builds bridges among Hispanics instead of falling into sectarianism and using divisive tactics. A mujerista understands that her task is to gather the hopes and expectations of her people about justice and peace. In the mujerista, God chooses to once again lay claims to and indicate the divine image and likeness of women made visible from the very beginning in the person of Eve. The mujerista is called to gestate new women and new men-Hispanics who are willing to work for the common good, knowing that such work requires us to denounce destructive self-abnegation.
>
> (1992, p. 107)

The name "mujerista" was inspired by references to Latina women in songs—a significant expression of art in Latine communities—as *mujer* (woman). This term captures the difficulties faced by Latina/Hispanic women living in a patriarchal society while helping them find solidarity with one another, within their Latine communities, in American society, and internationally (Dyrness, 2008; Isasi-Diaz et al., 1992). Moreover, Mujerism acknowledges the intersectionality of Latinas (Isasi-Diaz, 2009) living in patriarchal societies (i.e., Latine and American) while suffering under the racist and classist ideologies upon which these societies were built.

A mujerista framework "enlightens our understanding of pedagogies that encompass personal, collective, spiritual, and survival undertakings" of Latinas and as a methodological tool, it "takes a holistic approach to self that includes spirit and emotion, and recognizes [Latina women's] individual–communal struggles and efforts to name [them]selves, record [their] history, and choose [their] own destiny" (Galván, 2006 as cited in Dyrness, 2008, p. 27). Mujerism prioritizes the voices of Latina/Hispanic women and girls, acknowledging that through their suffering under the forces of White supremacy, the patriarchy, and settler colonialism, their insights are essential to the collective quest for justice and liberation.

For mujeristas, the community is the site of empowerment—their healing and success as change agents depend on "wholeness and *confianza* (trust)" in one another (Dyrness, 2008, p. 27). Mujerism enhances the feminist canon by adding the voices, experiences, ethics, and traditions of Hispanic/Latina women. In this work, mujerista epistemologies guide the ways that I understand and validate the stories of Latina/Hispanic girls. To do this, I consider the work of Villaseñor, Reyes, and Muñoz (2013), who define mujerista ways of mentoring "as a collectivist, assets-based model that values the lived experiences and multiple ways of knowing of Chicanas/Latinas, focused on the building of communities and reciprocal mentoring relationships, and challenging models of mentoring that re-inscribe hierarchies between mentors and protégés" (p. 50). As a researcher with the intention of demonstrating authentic care for my participants and trouble the researcher-participant power dynamics, this approach is particularly helpful in guiding my strategies during the focus group discussions.

Multicultural Feminism: Epistemologies of Women of Color

In an effort to acknowledge the difference among similarities, I draw from as many perspectives and theories by WoC using multicultural feminism. Maxine Zinn and Bonnie Dill

(1996) conceptualized multicultural feminism to highlight the importance of race as a construct that organizes the oppression of Black and Brown women while also determining the ways in which subjugation by gender is situated within their respective groups/communities. Multicultural feminism asserts that although the plurality between WoC may contribute to "inconsistencies that are born of our different social locations" (p. 326), the intersectional nature of their identities with regards to systems of power and oppression is what brings them together.

However, in Zinn and Dill's assertion of the plurality and expansiveness of multicultural feminism, they also actively resist universalizing or essentializing WoC. Multicultural feminism invokes intersectionality in its positioning of the differences between WoC and emphasis on the necessity to understand the sociohistorical and sociopolitical contexts of their oppression. This section elaborates on the developing bodies of knowledge by Asian, Indigenous, and Pacific Islander women, and how they situate themselves within an intersectional framework. By and large, these epistemologies reinforce and echo many of the dimensions of Womanism and Mujerism with punctuations that are distinct to each respective group. This section will focus on the elements unique to these groups and their contributions to this intersectional study.

Indigenous feminism employs an intersectional framework to move from a politics of inclusion to a politics of re-centering by addressing the "the material conditions that Native women face as subjects situated within a nexus of patriarchy, colonialism, and white supremacy" (Smith, 2011, p. 66). The focus on this nexus puts the gendered violence experienced by Indigenous women within its appropriate sociohistorical and sociopolitical contexts of being brought about by settler colonialism and perpetuated within Native communities (Smith, 2005). Although this violence is central to the experiences of many Indigenous women, some Native women activists do not identify as feminists, critiquing it as a product of colonialism (Jaimes &

Halsey, 1992). Their varied approaches to violence brought about by settler colonialism asserts that Indigenous women are not a monolith in thought, but their search for justice for Native Americans continues to bind them together. Their work—whether feminist or not—is intersectional in that it is driven by the voices and experiences of Native women in a quest to liberate Indigenous people from the stronghold of settler colonialism and the other forms of oppression that have emerged from it (e.g., heteropatriarchy, classism, and xenophobia).

Similarly, native Hawaiian women engage in Indigenous feminism by prioritizing the decolonization of their land and people. The centrality of colonialism—the occupation and destruction of indigenous land—is the driving force behind their activism, which confronts "the ways patriarchal colonialism has been internalized within indigenous communities as well as with [analyzes] the sexual and gendered nature of the process of colonization" (Hall, 2008, p. 278). Many native Hawaiian feminists do this through acts of remembrance in song, dance, language, and stories as forms of resistance against the efforts of colonialism to erase the history, traditions, and cultures of Indigenous people (Hall, 2008). Although native Hawaiian feminism does not satisfy the dearth of theory surrounding the experiences of Indigenous Pacific Islander women, such as Chamorros (my ethnic identity), Samoans, Tongans, and Palauans, it provides a foundation of experiences that most closely resemble the experiences of Pacific Islander women with regard to colonialism (i.e., European takeover of indigenous islands in the Pacific) and heteropatriarchy (i.e., forceful and violent implementation of Christianity and erasure of native islander spiritual practices and traditions).

According to Yee (2009), a significant focus on developing an Asian American feminist epistemology (she includes Pacific Islander as well, but does not actually speak on Pacific Islander culture specifically) ought to be on reexamining the family and community relationships

that keep Asian American women subjugated. With the understanding that Asian cultures are often hierarchical and patrilineal, Yee thinks through the ways in which Asian American families and communities become oppressive spaces for Asian American women, enforcing gender role expectations that are also rooted in generational and (im)migration status. Although Asian American women have been limited in their ability to grow their feminist consciousness due to oppressive forces within and outside their communities as well as "their location in society and social experiences" (Chow, 1987, p. 285), there exists a modest body of Asian American feminist epistemology that resembles the epistemologies of other WoC in that it is highly political and intersectional.

Similar to Black and Latina women, in the late 1960s, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Indigenous women formed their own consciousness as a response to a feminist movement that lacked attention on injustices surrounding race/ethnicity and class. However, it was often the case that the communities that these women built with one another became and continue to be "perceived as a threat to solidarity within their own community," (Chow, 1987, p. 288), thus creating barriers to their political activism. Moreover, the gendered violence against WoC that is perpetuated by sexism within their own racial/ethnic groups as well as the broader society—that manifests in the forms of domestic abuse, desertion, and sexual exploitation—has prevented many women of color from engaging politically. The implications for the absence of WoC in political spaces and the under-theorization of their experiences is indicative of many of the challenges they face as women at the intersections of multiple oppressions. In this dissertation, I assert the epistemologies of WoC as a critical component to understanding the experiences of Black and Brown adolescent girls.

Conclusion

Cohorts of WoC have developed and continue to develop intersectional epistemological frameworks, applying them in areas such as education, law, theology, and art. Together and separately, the theoretical, empirical, and political contributions of these movements to anti-racism and feminist endeavors have been tremendous. In their differences and similarities, Mujerism, Womanism, and multicultural feminism frameworks can help efforts to bring Black and Brown girls into solidarity with one another, providing them with tools to be change agents in society, and emboldening them in their individual and collective quests for liberation and justice.

This intersectional study draws from these various epistemologies to interrogate the power and oppression at work in the educational experiences of GoC. It does so through the design of the LGP curriculum, which contains multiple activities that prompt the Lavender Girls to write about and discuss various aspects of their lived experiences, identity, and epistemology—how what they come to know what they know, value what they value, and believe what they believe. The curriculum is also scaffolded with an interview protocol that explicitly asks the participants to think about their identity as it relates to their experiences in school in order to illuminate how their social locations often place them in vulnerable situations in school because of the ways in which these institutions are historically grounded in oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, xenophobia, and classism). As a result, the epistemologies of GoC are inherently intersectional in that they are feminist, anti-racist, and class-conscious because of the nature of their experiences with power and oppression. The intersectional lens and epistemologies of my participants drive my observations and analyses of the schooling experiences of Black and Brown girls.

To summarize, I began with a review of the literature, specifically around the experiences of Black and Brown adolescent girls in school and their perceptions of their experiences with two schooling policies included in the scope of this dissertation: academic tracking and discipline. I then highlighted some of the areas that warrant further investigation within these areas and discuss how this study aims to meet them. I offered the concept of educational harm as a new frame for considering the joint adverse impacts (i.e., punishment and exclusion/neglect) of tracking and discipline policies from the perspectives of GoC. In the second half of this chapter, I described intersectionality as the conceptual framework that guides the project. I also included epistemological frameworks developed by WoC scholars as a set of lenses through which I examined the individual and collective experiences of my participants. In the next chapter, I detail the methodological approach that I employed to address my research questions and provide profile descriptions of each of the school sites that were included in this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND SCHOOL SITE PROFILES

Bringing Intersectionality into Research

Positionality as Researcher

In this section, I share my story and reflect on my identity as a highly educated, Pacific Islander, Asian, immigrant, cis-gendered woman from a poor family along with my experiences as an adolescent girl that led me to pursue this dissertation. I also do this to recognize how my social location and positionality shape my approaches to this research, the ways that I interact with my participants, and my understanding of the findings (Burawoy, 1998).

The summer before my sophomore year of high school, my mother uprooted me from our small island home of Saipan and moved me *literally* halfway across the world to Alexandria, Virginia. As other immigrant parents and families, my mother did this in pursuit of better educational opportunities for me and my two Deaf siblings. I enrolled at T.C. Williams High School, the inspiration for the movie *Remember the Titans*, which portrayed the city's school desegregation efforts in 1971. In order to attend T.C., I was required to take a placement exam at a testing center to assess my academic capabilities and determine the courses I would take.

Based on my test results, I was tracked in honors classes for subjects in the humanities (i.e., Honors English and Honors Civics) and placed in low-level courses for math and science (i.e., Earth Science, and Algebra I). At the time, I was unaware of what being academically tracked in this way meant for my education and postsecondary trajectory. What stood out to me, however, was the obvious shift in the racial and ethnic make-up between my honors and general education classes. In my honors classes, there were only a handful of Black and Brown students, despite the significant racial and ethnic diversity in the T.C. student body. My honors classes were made up primarily of White students from middle- to upper-class families, who lived in

homes with driveways, garages, and large backyards. In my general education and low-level classes were primarily students like me—Black and Brown, from poor/working class and/or immigrant families, living in apartments or modest homes on the west side of town.

For the next three years that I spent in T.C., I became aware of how my teachers, depending on the course (advanced or general) that I was in, would praise or punish me for almost the same behaviors. In my general track classes, teachers would reprimand me for asking questions without raising my hand, pointing out their mistakes, or disagreeing with something they said. In those classes, I was *sassy*, *talkative*, and *disrespectful*. In my honors classes, I was encouraged to engage in debates, defend my opinions, and speak up without hesitating. Although I was a bookish girl, who loved school and performed well academically, I was also loud, opinionated, and sassy. Occasionally, when I felt that my teachers were being dismissive of me, I would talk back or loudly express my frustration.

One day, in Algebra, I caught a case of the giggles with Ella, a White girl from the west side of town. As he often did, our teacher, Mr. K called me out for being disruptive, ignoring the fact that Ella was giggling alongside of me. He threatened to send me to "crisis" (i.e., detention), which caused me to protest and speak out against what I perceived to be unfair. Frustrated and not wanting to engage further with me, Mr. K told me to go into the storage closet in the corner of the classroom. He said I could either go into the closet or go to crisis but staying in my seat for the remainder of the class was not an option. Equally frustrated, I walked into the closet and sat in a chair. A few minutes later, realizing how distracting it was to my other classmates to have me answering math questions out loud while sitting in the closet, Mr. K walked toward me. Thinking he was coming to let me out, I perked up and began to collect my things. Instead, he

shut the door. As I sat in the closet surrounded by stacks of dusty old math textbooks and broken graphing calculators, I asked myself "*What did I to get myself into this situation?*"

Negative, punishing experiences in my low-track classes like the one that I had with Mr. K juxtaposed with positive, affirming experiences that I had in my honors and AP classes, was the reason I pursued this topic for my research. In many ways, the idea of starting the Lavender Girls Project—a space where adolescent GoC who felt punished and excluded from learning—has lived with me since high school. This study is the manifestation of many years of thinking about my schooling experiences with punishment and wondering if other students felt or went through similar struggles. It is also the pursuit of providing Black and Brown girls with the space that I longed for as a teenager navigating my social location at the intersection of racism, xenophobia, sexism, and American militarization—somewhere to be heard, affirmed, and loved. In the following section, I elaborate on my methodological approach and methods: the data collection process, participant recruitment, and development of the instruments.

Multisite Case Study for Intersectionality

For this dissertation, I employed a case study method (Bassey1999; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018) across multiple sites (i.e., schools, cities, states) to explore the phenomenon of GoC in Title I schools who indicated having negatively experienced school disciplinary practices and who were also tracked in low-level courses. To explore this phenomenon across multiple sites, I centered my investigation on the reports of Black and Brown girls as they described their perceptions of their experiences. Case study method is a research approach that integrates well not only with intersectionality as a framework but is also a common approach of intersectional scholars and feminists (McCall, 2005). The highly in-depth and multi-dimensional nature of case study methods make it useful for conducting an intersectional analysis to uncover how

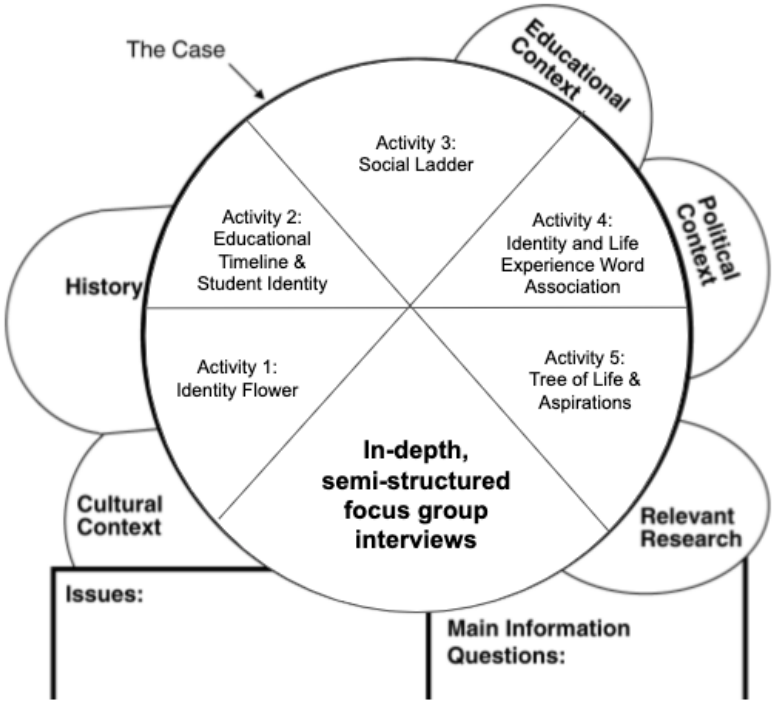
similarities *and* difference among those at the nexus of marginalized identities play out in systems of power (Cho, 2013; McCall, 2005). Case study centers the experiences, perceptions, and accounts of participants, which is essential to an intersectional approach. Clark argues that grounding case study in an intersectional framework "allow us to 'theorize up,' producing theory and understandings from the everyday lives" of GoC in the context of their identities (2012, p. 15). Additionally, in the arena of policymaking and reform, examining the experiences of Black and Brown girls within the broader sociohistorical backdrop reveals "the true impact of current policies and policy processes" (Clark, 2012, p. 135). In this multisite case study, I define the intra and inter-joining of the Lavender Girls in LGP as the case while the individual schools serve as the sites. I examined the feelings, perceptions, and thoughts of the Lavender Girls of their schooling experiences within their schools as well as the ways in which they believed their identities shaped the quality of education and treatment they received.

The multisite design aspect of this research provided me the opportunity to examine how power and oppression play out in the individual and collective identities of my participants within their respective social locations. Additionally, having multiple school sites in a case study made the investigation "more compelling, robust, and instrumental" (Tran et al., 2018, p. 84). From an intersectional standpoint, being able to examine the experiences of GoC from different sites allowed me to better validate, reinforce, and nuance my findings. With all of this in mind, I selected each school site in this study with the intention of encapsulating a variety of contexts with regard to public education while keeping the study within the bounds of Title I schools in urban settings that serve primarily Black and Brown students (Yin, 2018).

I designed the data collection process at each school in accordance with Stake's framework (2006, p. 5) that I modified to fit the goals of my study (Figure 1). In my case study

scheme, I kept the activities and semi-structured interviews (center of the scheme), along with the "issues" and "main information questions," the same across all sites to help me draw data that I could cross-validate between sites. This allowed me to make some generalizations about my participants' identities, schooling experiences, and academic engagement. For the most part, I also focused on the similarities in contexts of each site (outer half circles of scheme) while attending to some relevant site-specific information when I deemed necessary. I elaborate further on the individual sections of the case study scheme in further sections of this chapter.

Figure 1. Case Study Scheme for the Lavender Girls Project



This scheme is derived from Stake's "graphic design of a case study" (200, p. 5). It served as a guide for me to organize and contextualize each LGP school site.

Finally, in accordance with the case study method, I identified the phenomenon of this investigation as *the academic engagement of GoC who learn under conditions of punishment through school discipline and exclusion through academic tracking (out of honors/advanced courses).* In accordance with Yin's guidelines of anchoring the phenomenon on "some concrete manifestation," (2018, e-book), I derived this phenomenon from the pilot study phase of the

Lavender Girls Project. The academic engagement of GoC emerged as not only one of the most salient themes in the pilot study, but also as the apparent essence of the participants' shared experiences in school. In this case study, I identified the commonalities as well as the differences in the academic engagement—and the elements that shape it—of my participants. This mosaic of experiences allowed for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of what school is like for Black and Brown girls subject to similar forms of school policies (i.e., discipline and tracking). Next, I lay out the steps I took to set up the study.

The Lavender Girls Project

For years, I replayed the day that I was locked in the closet in my head along with the entirety of my schooling experience filled with contradictions. And I wondered if I was the only one. The nagging questions were the impetus for starting the Lavender Girls Project in 2015. I created LGP to be a research and mentoring group for and about students like me—GoC from poor/working-class families living in urban areas. Grounded in critical race feminist (Wing, 2000) ethics of love, care, and justice, specifically intersectional justice, I designed LGP to serve as a space for Black and Brown girls who has been subjected to punishments and educational exclusion in school. The participants, whom I call the *Lavender Girls*, discussed and made sense of their experiences, particularly about their identities located at the nexus of multiple oppressions. I named the group after the lavender flower, which has been used across centuries and continents—from the ancient worlds to modern day. I chose lavender not only for its symbolic representation of peace and wellness, but also for its soothing and healing properties along with its fortitude and ability to grow in various conditions and climates.

Like the lavender flower, my participants came from different backgrounds and had the ability to adapt and thrive despite the difficult circumstances in which they grew up. I imagined

LGP to be a space that provided calm and peace for GoC who were lacking this in their lives and in schools where they felt diminished and devalued. I also intended for LGP to be a place of recognizing the various spaces in which GoC grew and flourished, no matter the severity of their environment. My focus was on creating a healing environment for the Lavender Girls as an "act of political resistance" (hooks, 2015, p. 24), where they were safe, affirmed, loved, and protected. As an aspirational project, I designed LGP to be where GoC were encouraged to freely express who they were, their pride in where they came from, and their dissatisfaction with, or contempt for, systems of oppression. I wanted to have their voices heard and for them to heal *on their own terms*.

The aims of LGP were threefold:

1. To better understand the academic experiences of GoC who have been punished in schools and excluded from learning;
2. To create a space grounded in an intersectional justice approach where the lives, narratives, and knowledges of GoC are validated and centered;
3. To develop an intervention that can be utilized by schools and educators seeking to better serve their Black and Brown girls.

LGP sites spanned five Title I schools across major urban cities in the United States: Anaheim, Long Beach, and Inglewood, California; Nashville, Tennessee; Brooklyn, New York. In the following sections, I offer in-depth descriptions of each site along with some relevant contexts of their respective cities. During the 2015-2016 academic year, I launched the pilot phase of LGP at Betty Shabazz High School in Inglewood, where I conducted biweekly focus groups with seven participating GoC. With the guidance of my dissertation advisor and committee members, I made some minor revisions to the project's conceptual framework, aims, and methodological approach. During the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years, I expanded LGP with a concretely identified phenomenon, new research questions, and enhanced

frameworks. The schools in this case study included: Dolores Huerta High School in Long Beach; Gloria Anzaldua High School in Anaheim; Diane Nash Academy in Nashville; and Grace Lee Boggs High School in Brooklyn. The next section details the creation and evolution of this project, beginning with the pilot study phase.

The Pilot Study

I employed Guinier and Torres' Political Race (PRT) theoretical framework (2002) to lay the foundations of my project. In the pilot study, I aimed to provide my participants with an awareness of their identities as political and crucial to understanding the ways in which they were socialized and educated. Per Guinier and Torres' metaphor of the canaries in the coal mines, I viewed my participants as the ones who were best able to diagnose some of the biggest issues with school policies because of their unique social location at the intersection of multiple systems of injustice. Thus, in the pilot study and beyond, I used student voice as an element of doing intersectional research and part of an intersectional feminist approach where power dynamics were disrupted and GoC were seen as the knowledge holders and experts of educational policy effects and issues.

I also sought to establish LGP as an advocacy project as I was aware that my positionality as an insider-outsider (Breen, 2007) critical scholar, who had shared identities and experiences with my participants, made me a member of an outside institution that operated largely under White supremacist, patriarchal, and capitalist ideologies. I reflected regularly on how these institutions contributed and perpetuated the oppression of my participants. These deliberate acts of introspection led me to use my research opportunities to provide knowledge and services to support my participants in further developing their identity and pursuing their aspirations. In light of these aims and considerations, LGP was entirely centered on the experiences and voices

of Black and Brown girls. Therefore, beyond collaborating with me on recruitment and logistical efforts, no educators were a part of this study. This approach ensured that the students were driving the data and were at the center of the knowledge production process.

After the pilot study, the PRT foundations had been laid and LGP had been solidified and corroborated by the data to be a space for GoC to explore their schooling experiences considering the multi-dimensional nature of their identity and the injustices that they faced. The aspirational project that I aspired for LGP to be had come to fruition as pilot study participants were better able to articulate, think through, and interrogate the ways in which the intersection of their marginalized identities shaped how they were educated. As I previously mentioned, in light of findings from the pilot study, I made some modifications to the research, particularly to its conceptual framework and research questions. For the most part, the protocols and study instruments remained the same as they proved to be effective in drawing relevant data for an intersectional analysis. The following section details the recruitment process, describes the research setting, and elaborates on the instruments of the study.

Lavender Girls Project School Sites

In a case study, the context is central to the investigation and understanding the phenomena (Yin, 2018). For this dissertation, the phenomena was bounded to GoC who had experienced punishment (school discipline) and exclusion (tracking into low-level courses) in Title I schools located in urban intensive cities. I brought together different social contexts (i.e., school sites in different cities, states, and regions) that were tied together by the bounds of this case study and illuminated how the history and politics of each site shaped the ways in which the students, specifically the GoC, were educated. All school sites in this dissertation were Title I high schools serving predominantly Black and Brown students living in urban cities, majority of

whom came from poor/working-class families. The goal of this multisite approach was to be able to provide nuance to the environments in which the participants were punished, educated, and socialized in schools. Context was also important when it came to being able to recognize the generalizability of my findings as well as the limits.

This multisite study was situated in five urban high schools in California (Inglewood, Long Beach, Anaheim), Tennessee (Nashville), and New York (Brooklyn). I selected both traditional and charter schools of various student populations to demonstrate that educational policies and practices, despite the school location or type, are often similar in nature and thus have comparable approaches to punishing and excluding students. The schools that I selected in California, including the pilot site, were schools that I worked closely with for three years in my role as researcher for the Achieving Postsecondary Excellence Program (APEP)[1], a large longitudinal project funded by the state of California with the research and evaluation component housed in UCLA.

As a researcher on the APEP research team, I investigated, documented, and supported postsecondary preparation in traditional public high schools across the state of California. Specifically, I served as a site-based researcher, observing and tracking the progress of four schools (two in southern California and two in northern California) in developing their school culture around college-going. Through this work, I gained further insight into the challenges, advantages, and potential of large public high schools in preparing students for postsecondary opportunities. Additionally, my role with APEP allowed me to build relationships with educators and students at each of the sites that I oversaw as I visited each of school regularly, conducting

[1] Pseudonym

focus groups with administrators, teachers, staff, and students, having feedback meetings with the administrators and leadership team, and performing school observations.

For the remaining two sites in this study, I chose to go across the country to explore samples from different regions that fit within the boundaries of the case study in order to understand how GoC made sense of their identity and the sociopolitical contexts of their education. I aimed to understand how the sociopolitical contexts, as well as potentially different influences on racial/ethnic identity might have influenced the outcomes of my study. I selected a charter school in Nashville and a traditional high school in Brooklyn to determine if there were regional differences and/or similarities among my participants. In selecting my school sites, I drew the following hard boundaries for the case study that I applied to each site: (1) a school and/or city in which I have spent significant amount of time, (2) Title I school, (3) majority student population is made up of Students of Color, (4) taken as a whole, the schools represented vastly different regions of the country.

Like the participants, I purposively selected each site with the knowledge that the schools and social contexts would be different—while also similar—enough to provide the breadth and depth to help me understand the phenomenon: the academic engagement of Black and Brown girls who had been punished and excluded in school. The school sites all shared the same characteristics in order to meet the aforementioned criteria; they were all Title I schools that served predominantly SoC from poor/working-class backgrounds living in urban intensive cities. For the most part, the phenomena of Black and Brown girls who had experienced punishment (i.e., school discipline) and exclusion (i.e., tracked out of honors courses) held consistently across each school site. School contacts used the school's discipline records, which typically listed referrals and suspensions, as well as their knowledge of each student's history at the school

and her relationship with her educators. Although each school had different labels and course offerings for their academic tracks, the school contacts all understood honors and advanced courses in the same way (i.e., honors/advanced courses are more rigorous and require teacher recommendation and/or certain courses to be taken prior) and they were able to help me recruit students who were not taking any advanced courses at the time of the study.

Based on these criteria and my findings from the pilot study, I selected four school sites, keeping in mind that the design of my study required that my personal knowledge and experience with each school/city were the primary drivers in this stage of recruitment. Significant to the intersectional feminist and political nature of my work as well as the critical social elements that I wanted to explore with my participants, it was important that I had personal experience and a sense of familiarity with the spaces—either the school or the city in which the school was located—that I entered (Bernal, 1998). This familiarity allowed me to go into the research with a level of prior understanding that not only informed the types of follow up questions I asked my participants but also my synthesis of the findings. In the following sections, I offer brief descriptions of each school site and their respective cities. The names I use for the school sites are pseudonyms and were inspired by Women of Color who—through their work, teachings, and activism—have encouraged and guided my own research and activism. To protect the identity of my participants, all educators and students mentioned in this study have also been given pseudonyms.

Site #1 (Pilot): Betty Shabazz High School

Betty Shabazz High School is a traditional Title I school located in Inglewood, California, eight miles south of where I live in Los Angeles. I worked and spent a significant amount of time at Shabazz as a researcher for APEP. My role as site researcher allowed me to

build close personal relationships with the principal, assistant principal, counselors, and teachers. Although I also worked closely with three other urban high schools across California, I chose Shabazz as my pilot site for the following reasons: 1) the socio-political history of the school; 2) my comfort and familiarity that stemmed from my personal relationships with the school community and its members; 3) the convenient distance from my home and institution.

For the past 25 years, Shabazz's population was predominantly Black and it is located in a majority Black city. Inglewood was part of the same network of communities where prominent Black leaders, along with the Black Panther Party, came to power. The Shabazz community is also proximate to neighborhoods where many affluent Black residents in Los Angeles live. The 1960s and 1970s were marked with White residents' displays of racial animosity towards Inglewood's increasing Black residents. In the 1980s, White residents began leaving the city as Black residents began rising to positions of leadership. In the same decade, Latine people began settling in Inglewood in record numbers due to affordable housing and a more welcoming community. Today, the Shabazz community still maintains one of the highest percentages of Black residents (41%) in the Los Angeles area, alongside an equally sizable Latine population (52%). Although Inglewood's leadership remains primarily Black, the city has seen a decline in its Black residents and this decline is predicted to continue with the rapid gentrification brought forth by urban developments under neoliberal economic policies and politics.

Overall, the student population of Shabazz reflects the Inglewood demographics as most students enrolled at the school live in the community. In the 2015-16 school year, the school comprised 38% Black/African American and 60% Latine students; the remaining 2% was distributed among Asian (1.2%), Pacific Islander (0.2%), and Indigenous (0.4%) students (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Another factor in my decision to launch LGP at Shabazz was

the convenience of being able to travel to the school as it was a thirty-minute drive of my house; It was my intention to ensure that the majority of the project's funding be distributed to the participants and not to my travel expenses. I also suspected that if the LGP pilot was successful, I would be able to make a case for increased funding that would then allow me to travel to other school sites across the country while compensating and providing meals to all my participants.

Finally, because Shabazz was in the same metropolitan area in which I studied and worked, I was more easily able to keep track of political and social events that were taking place in and around the school. I became close to Ms. Bright, the assistant principal of Shabazz, who lived five minutes from the school. I would frequently visit her at her home where we would spend hours talking about her experiences and the complex lives of her students and the Inglewood community. Her insider knowledge helped me navigate the Shabazz community and more deeply connect with the Lavender Girls during the pilot phase. This component of familiarity, proximity, and ability to keep up with school and community happenings was critical to the development of my intersectional approach as it required me to be aware and knowledgeable of the socio-political contexts in which my participants were living and learning.

Site #2: Dolores Huerta High School

In the spring of 2018, I began data collection at Dolores Huerta High School, a school that I also worked in for three years prior as a site-based researcher for APEP. Because of the extensive amount of time that I spent at Huerta in the years leading up to my data collection, I developed a great deal of familiarity and sense of community with some of the educators. I also interacted with the students through regular visits on campus to conduct in-depth focus groups to understand the college culture of Huerta. In the summer of 2017, I had the opportunity to become more deeply involved with the Huerta school community as the school participated in a college

intensive APEP program hosted at UCLA that I helped develop, coordinate, and lead. In the three years that I spent at Huerta, I worked the closest with Mr. Rodriguez, one of the counselors who had been at the school for almost 10 years, who also became a friend. Because of this relationship and Mr. Rodriguez's commitment to and familiarity with Huerta students, I asked him to serve as my school contact to help me recruit LGP participants. Mr. Rodriguez obliged and used school discipline records along with his and other Huerta educators' knowledge of the students' experiences and backgrounds to recommend potential LGP participants.

Huerta is located in the port city of Long Beach, California, 20 miles south of Los Angeles. According to the 2010 Census, the racial and ethnic breakdown of Long Beach is Latine (42.5%), White (28.1%), Black/African American (12.9%), Asian (13.1%), multi-racial (4.7%), and Pacific Islander (0.8%). The median value of homes is $519,300 while the median household income is only $60,551. Reflecting the working-class nature of the city, only 30.6% of residents have a postsecondary degree, but 80% have at least a high school education. Like many major U.S. cities, the high cost of living in Long Beach and low median income means that there is a large socioeconomic gap and a significant low-working class population. Additionally, leading up to the 1990s, the Long Beach Unified School District saw a spillover of gang activities rooted in racial/ethnic and socioeconomic tensions into its schools (Blancarte & Azeka, 1992; Lopez, 2003). To this day, the Huerta community experiences gang activities and violence that affects its student population and the perception of outsiders around the safety of its schools.

One of my LGP sessions at Huerta took place the two days after the Lavender Girls' male classmate was shot to death due to what was speculated to be gang rivalries. Here, my field notes of my visit that day captured my observations of the aftermath of the tragic event.

> "When I arrived at Huerta today, I noticed a memorial of flowers, candles, and signs set up in front of the gate of the school. My heart sank when I saw them

> because these makeshift sidewalk memorials have become all too familiar with the last decade of mass shootings and senseless violence. I knew immediately that someone from Huerta had passed, but I didn't know who, and I said a little prayer that it wasn't a student. I was feeling the usual rush and nervousness of having to set up LGP, so I quickly glanced at the memorial and kept walking. When we began the session, I could feel that the girls were a little tense. It was then that I realized they were dealing with the senseless killing of a classmate, and to some of the girls, a friend. They speculated it was gang-related, but no one could really say for certain. There wasn't much for me to say, so I just let the girls have the time and space to process their feelings. On a day like today, I wonder how kids are expected to come to school with this kind of loss and trauma, let alone learn anything." [Field notes, May 15, 2018]

Reflecting on this field note, I recall pulling up to the school for the first time as part of my APEP visit. Mr. Rodriguez opened the gate for me to park in the faculty lot, which remained gated and locked at all times. At the end of the day as he walked me back to the faculty lot, Mr. Rodriguez instructed me to never drive down or park in an alley adjacent to the school because it was contested territory between rival gangs. It is worth noting here that I never felt unsafe while at Huerta—or any of my school sites—or in the Long Beach community. Also, it is likely that my experience with having brothers who were affiliated with gangs informs how I conduct myself in unfamiliar neighborhoods, my lack of conventional fear of gang members, and my perception of what counts as dangerous.

Dolores Huerta High School is a Title I school with 81% of its students qualifying for free or reduced lunch (FRL), often used as a metric of socioeconomic status used to understand the number of students living in poverty or conditions of poverty. In 2015, Huerta served predominantly Latine students (68.5%), followed by Black/African American (13.9%), Asian (12.8%), Pacific Islander (2.1%), White (1.5%), muti-racial/ethnic (0.9%), and Indigenous (0.3%) students (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The school tracks students academically into to institutes, which are smaller school models within the larger school. Of the four school sites, Huerta was the only school to track its students at this scale and this explicitly. Although

the institutes were not named using typical tracking labels such as "honors," "advanced," and "college preparatory," students were unequivocally aware that there was an honors and advanced institute and the rest of the institutes generally lacked rigor and a focus on postsecondary preparation. Per the recruitment criteria for this project, the Lavender Girls at Huerta were not enrolled in the honors/advanced institute.

Site #3: Gloria Anzaldua High School

Also during the spring of 2018, I conducted data collection at Gloria Anzaldua High School. Similar to Huerta, I was introduced to Anzaldua through my work with APEP. However, I did not serve as a site researcher for this school. Instead, I became familiar with the Anzaldua and its community through the APEP college preparatory summer program at UCLA in which its students also participated. During the time leading up to the program, I developed a friendship with Ms. Perez, the lead teacher at Anzaldua with whom I worked alongside to recruit and select incoming freshmen students for the APEP UCLA summer program. In the fall of 2017, I proposed bringing LGP to Anzaldua and asked Ms. Perez if she would serve as my school contact. Although I did not spend as much time on the Anzaldua campus leading up to data collection, I had a great sense of familiarity with the members of its community through the APEP UCLA program. In the same three years that I worked with Shabazz and Huerta, I extensively analyzed Anzaldua data for APEP and was heavily involved in the writing of annual feedback reports for the school. I visited Anzaldua, which is located in Anaheim, California, a couple of times to meet and plan my LGP visits with Ms. Perez and familiarize myself with the school campus prior to beginning data collection.

Like Inglewood and Long Beach, Anaheim is part of the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area, located 30 miles southeast of Los Angeles. According to the 2010 Census,

Anaheim residents are majority Latine (54%), followed by White (25%), Asian (17%), multi-racial (3.3%), Black/African American (2.5%), and Pacific Islander (0.4%) residents. The median value of homes is $538,700 while the median household income is $69,443 with 15% of the city's population living under the federal poverty line (Census, 2010). Anaheim, the home of Disneyland, is known as a popular tourist attraction and has regularly come under critique for the amusement park's low wages that have contributed to its Anaheim and Orange County-residing employees from being able to afford housing.

Anaheim and the greater Orange County are widely known for the high costs of housing accompanied by a significant population of homeless people (Lansner, 2020). One of the Anzaldua Lavender Girls shared that she had experienced homelessness at one point in their life. Like Inglewood, Anaheim had its history with hate groups, specifically the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), occupying positions of political and social power during the 1920s (Cocoltchos, 2004). Also similar to other urban cities in the U.S., police killings of unarmed individuals, specifically Latino men, have sparked outrage in the Anaheim community in the form of peaceful protests and riots (Medina, 2012).

Anzaldua serves predominantly Latine youth (73%), followed by Asian (10%), White (9.5%), Black or African American (3%), multi-racial (3%), Indigenous (1%), and Pacific Islander (<1%) students. About 77% of students enrolled in Anzaldua qualify for free and reduced lunch (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The school's history is a reflection of its community's struggle with the KKK as remnants and symbols of racial terror can be found throughout the Anzaldua. Although battles were fought by school and community members to rid the school of the visual representations of White supremacy and change certain names that

honor racist figures, the Anzaldua campus still maintains some symbolic elements, such as its mascot, of its troubled and problematic past.

Site #4: Diane Nash High School

In May 2018, after wrapping up data collection in Southern California, I travelled to Tennessee to bring LGP to Diane Nash High School, a charter high school located in East Nashville. My school contact was Lindsay, an old friend of mine who was a special education teacher at Nash and had been at the school since it opened in 2014. Throughout the 10 years that we had been friends, I had come to know Lindsay as a dedicated, hardworking teacher who cared deeply for her students. She shared with me on numerous occasions that as a middle-class White woman, she was aware of the privileges that her identity afforded her. It is the knowledge of her privilege, the inequities in schools, and her passion to see a more just society that moved Lindsay to eventually commit to a career in public education, specifically in schools that served significant numbers of Black and Brown students from low-income backgrounds. When I brought up the idea of including Nash as a school site for my dissertation, Lindsay enthusiastically agreed to help me recruit participants and coordinate my visit.

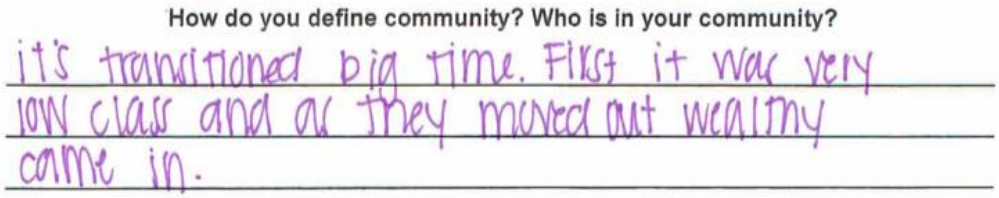
Nash opened in 2014, data for the school. As such, data is not yet available in the U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection database. However, according to the Tennessee Department of Education, in the 2017-2018 school year, Nash served 329 high school students, 68% are Black/African American, 28% are Hispanic/Latine, and 4% are White (2019). A Title I school, 88% of Nash students qualify for free and reduced lunch (TN Department of Education, 2017; Nash Charter Application, 2015).

Nash is located in East Nashville, an area that has been gentrified, primarily by White musicians and artists in the last decade. During the time I lived in Nashville (2011-2014), I

witnessed the rapid boom of its economy with chic boutiques, hip coffee shops, and specialty dessert bars cropping up all over the city. A major consequence of this economic growth was the pushout of many of Nashville's Black and Brown residents, many of whom were longtime residents of neighborhoods in which they could no longer afford to live. Gentrification made way for businesses, new residents with greater financial means, luxury housing with price tags to match, and charter schools that promised families a better choice for their children. In 2012, I worked for Nashville Mayor Karl Dean's education advisor and learned about his administration's fervent support for charter schools and belief in the possibility that it would be the way to serve some of Nashville's most disenfranchised students. In the three years I lived in Nashville, I witnessed firsthand the same economic developments and divestments in communities of color that occurred in Chicago that began in the 1990s (Lipman, 2011) and the role that charter schools played in encouraging neoliberal urban renewal.

In the socioeconomic ladder activity, Kayla articulated the significant gentrification that her community underwent, pointing to the socioeconomic shift in its makeup when the "very low class" members left and the "wealthy came in" (Figure 2). It is worthwhile to note that the chronological order of this "transition," as Kayla called it, began with the flight of her community's poor residents. Kayla's account aligns with my observations of the patterns of gentrification throughout Nashville where one of the first changes that often occurred was in the housing sector with companies and real estate increasing rent to push out poor tenants. This would then be followed by the opening of businesses that reflected the interests, aesthetics, and tastes of middle- and upper-middle class White communities.

Figure 2. Kayla's SES Ladder



In her SES ladder, Kayla describes the gentrification of her East Nashville community.

Site #5: Grace Lee Boggs High School

In November of 2018, I caught a red-eye flight from Los Angeles to New York City to visit my final school site. Grace Lee Boggs High School is located in Brooklyn, New York. Although I had not spent any time in Lee Boggs, I was familiar with Brooklyn as I had spent long stretches of time and temporary residence in the city, particularly between 2011 and 2014. On the first day or data collection, I got off the train and walked the few short blocks to Lee Boggs, taking in the stillness of the cool autumn morning and the buzz of a city that I had come to know and love. Lee Boggs, like Nash, was a school that I was not familiar with, but was located in a city in which I had spent a great deal of time enough to understand some of the social contexts that enveloped the school, and thus, fit within the boundary that I set for each school site (i.e., a school I had spent time in or a school located in a city with which I had a deep familiarity). However, unlike the Shabazz, Anzaldua, and Huerta, I had to learn about Lee Boggs and Nash prior to data collection as well as collect field notes during my visits to gain a better understanding of each school's context.

I was introduced to Lee Boggs through a friend, Ciara, who was a Spanish teacher at one of the schools that shared a building with Lee Boggs. Connected through a mutual friend, Ciara and I were not particularly close. However, we had a great deal of trust and respect for one another; she had sought my advice when she was at a professional crossroad and wondering if she should apply to a doctoral program. I had always admired her commitment to her students

and generous spirit. When I asked her about bringing LGP to her school, it came as no surprise that she was immediately supportive. However, Ciara was afraid that we would have trouble with recruitment at her school because its health focus attracted primarily male students. Following her lead, we approached Ms. Kimpton, her friend and principal of Lee Boggs, a school that was located in the same building as Ciara's. Lee Boggs had more female students due to its focus in the arts. Ms. Kimpton gladly obliged to letting me bring LGP to Lee Boggs and helped me coordinate data collection and recruit participants.

After each session, I walked around the Lee Boggs neighborhood to familiarize myself with the area and felt a sense of ease with the atmosphere and among the people. The school is situated within Sandy Point[2], a predominantly White community of Brooklyn made up of 75% White residents, 9% Asian, 7% Latine, and 4% Black (Brooklyn Community Foundation, 2012). However, the immediate neighborhood surrounding Lee Boggs includes Duke Manor, a large public housing section with over 25 units occupied primarily by Black tenants. Throughout the 1980s, the community of Sandy Point experienced racial tensions between its White middle class residents and Black as well as poor residents (many of whom lived in Duke Manor). These tensions heightened during two separate instances of racially charged violence where White youth attacked Black residents, killing one. As the overt racial and class-based animosity died down in the early 1990s, a northern neighborhood in Sandy Point saw major housing redevelopments that further increased the class divide between the more affluent areas surrounding Duke Manor. The Lee Boggs student body did not reflect the middle-class White population of Sandy Point; instead, it was more aligned with the makeup of the nearby Duke Manor residents.

[2]All names associated with the Brooklyn neighborhood and building in which Lee Boggs is located has been changed so as to not reveal the real name of the school.

The Grace Lee Boggs student body is made up primarily of Students of Color: Black (49%), Latine (29%), Asian (6%), Indigenous (1%), Pacific Islander (1%), and multi-racial (1%) (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). It is a small Title I public high school that is located on the third floor of the Buckingham Building, a large building it shares with four other schools. The Buckingham complex was formerly Buckingham High School. In 2010, Buckingham was closed as part of Mayor Michael Bloomberg and New York City Department of Education Chancellor Joel Klein's aggressive education policy reform to close large failing schools and replace them with smaller schools of about 500 students (Klonsky, 2008; Shiller, 2011).

Lee Boggs and the four other small schools in the Buckingham Building have specific foci and curriculum offerings. Lee Boggs focuses on the arts while the other schools in the building are geared towards college readiness and access, global citizenship, and health. Although the schools are their own separate entities, being in the same physical building means that there are certain overlaps in resources and sharing of facilities. These overlaps have contributed to students' awareness of the racial segregation and academic tracking that is taking place in the building, between the schools. In chapters four and five (findings), I examine the perceptions and observations of Lee Boggs participants, who note that the college readiness school in the Buckingham Building enrolls more White students and visibly has better resources, educators, opportunities, and privileges. With no advanced courses offered, a majority Black and Brown student population, and over 86% of its students qualifying for free and reduced-priced meals (U.S. Department of Education, 2015), LGP participants at Lee Boggs recognize that they attend a poorly resourced and low-quality school that is located only one floor above a high quality, White, and well-resourced school, Success Academy.

Purposive Recruitment Process

To recruit LGP participants, I used a purposive sampling method (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). I invited five to eight GoC at each school based on the recommendations of my school contacts, who were teachers, staff, and/or administrators at the school sites. All students who were invited agreed to participate in the project. Based on my research aims and questions, I developed the following criteria to recruit students who: (1) identified as a Black and/or Brown girl, (2) had been subjected to various forms of punishment and exclusion, (3) had been excluded from advanced learning environments, (i.e., honors, AP, and college-bound courses), (4) were in their junior or senior year, and (5) attended school regularly. I compensated the Lavender Girls with a $20 cash, Amazon, or Target card for each session that they attended and provided them with meals at each session. Funds for this project were provided by a research grant that I received from UCLA's Institute of American Cultures.

During the recruitment process at each of the respective schools, it was important for me to find the balance between relying on the insider knowledge of my school contacts and ensuring that we were identifying students who would be able to trust each other enough to potentially share extremely personal and sensitive information. My school contacts and I went over categories of age, racial, and ethnic background, community, and experience with educational punishment in addition to more subjective, fluid factors (such as how the educators perceived the students based on prior incidents and interactions with them). At the end of the recruitment phase, I had 32 participants (Table 1) whose identities were located at the intersection of multiple oppressions along dimensions such as race/ethnicity, class, immigration status, and sexuality (e.g., Asian, Black, Latina, and Indigenous, immigrant and/or daughter of immigrants, foster youth, formerly homeless, LGBTQ, and poor/working class).

Table 1. Lavender Girls Project Participants and School Sites

Betty Shabazz *Inglewood, CA*	Dolores Huerta *Long Beach, CA*	Gloria Anzaldua *Anaheim, CA*	Diane Nash *Nashville, TN*	Grace Lee Boggs *Brooklyn, NY*
Chrissy	Alana	Evelyn	Kiki	Jenny
Ellie	Blanca	Ambar	Shakeia	Seema
Jada	Candace	Nina	Kayla	Eileen
Vanessa	Taliah	Rita	Cherissa	Shawna
Rihanna	Alicia	Felicia	Charmaine	Nadiya
Angela/Lalo	Ashlee	Anna	Shya	Dionne
Danni		Malia		

Table 2 includes the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of participant selection for the project to show the factors that I prioritized during recruitment (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). All of these criteria had to be met in order for the participant to be eligible for the study, which I communicated with my school contacts to help guide their recruitment efforts. LGP was approved by the UCLA Institutional Review Board (IRB) in the winter of 2016 and granted an extension through to continue the study beyond the pilot stage. Participation in LGP was voluntary; students and their parents were informed that they had the right to end their participation in the project at any point without consequences and were entitled to receive the compensation for all of the sessions in which they took part.

Table 2. Prioritized Selection Criteria for Participant Recruitment

Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Race/ethnicity	Behavior reputation	Attendance
Gender	School discipline record	Postsecondary goals
	Academic tracking record	Relationship with other girls

Data Collection: Focus Groups as Intersectional and Collective Praxis

> ... focus groups become sites of and for collective struggle and social transformation. As problem-posing formations, they operate locally to identify, interrogate, and change specific lived contradictions that have been rendered invisible by hegemonic power and knowledge regimes.
>
> (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011, p. 6)

As part of the case study design, I held five to seven semi-structured focus group interviews at each school, including the pilot site. All sessions were video- recorded then the video files were sent to a third-party vendor for transcription Focus group protocols were designed with each discussion dedicated to exploring a theme from the perspective of an urban GoC. In the following section, I will describe in further detail the interview and activity protocols that made up the instruments of the study. Each focus group session was structured with three components: (1) a brief overview and positionality statement that I gave in order to provide the participants with background information and a common language for the topic; (2) a prompt that the participants answered through some form of creative work—writing, drawing, questionnaire, acting, or creative thinking, which produced artifacts for analysis; and (3) semi-structured questions for discussion.

Each LGP session began with five to ten minutes of me explaining the topic of discussion and holding space for the Lavender Girls to share whatever they were thinking or feeling even if it did not always have to do with the topic. This choice was informed by a tenet of Womanism—everyday experiences and problem-solving (Phillips, 2006)—as well as my goal to provide a space of wellness through dialogue, listening, and feedback. Based on my findings in LGPI, I knew that the Lavender Girls would often be able to arrive at their own solutions, healing, and wellness if they were given the space and opportunity to be heard. In fact, many times, they already identified the solution and simply needed to say it out loud for confirmation or validation from their peers. With this in mind, I typically began LGP sessions with a general check-in, a simple "how are you?" that often led to Lavender Girls sharing about their general well-being and detailed accounts of recent accomplishments, traumatic events, or frustrations they were facing.

I elected to conduct focus group sessions as opposed to individual interviews based on Kamberelis and Dimitriadis' (2011) assertion that this setting can serve as a space for historically marginalized people to collectively engage in the inquiry of their experiences as political and promote/develop critical ways to understand systemic oppression. For LGP, the focus groups had a political *and* pedagogical purpose—to promote intersectional justice in support of societal change and the collective liberation of GoC. Using the focus group method, I aimed to draw out "unique insights into the possibilities of critical inquiry as deliberative, dialogic, democratic practice that is always already engaged in and with real-world problems and asymmetries in the distribution of economic, cultural, and social capital" (e.g., Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) as well as allow my participants to speak about their experiences as a collective and as individuals (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011, p. 3). Analyzing the LGP pilot data prior to conducting the rest of the study helped to confirm the methodological function of the focus group setting and confirm its appropriateness for an intersectional study that involved Black and Brown girls.

WoC have historically been at the forefront of utilizing focus groups as a way to theorize and enact social change. Black women in the South came together to organize after emancipation (Gilkes, 1994); Mexican women congregated in kitchens and around dining tables in solidarity over their labor conditions (Behar, 1993; Dill, 1994); and Chinese women who worked in garment factories used focus groups to organize a labor strike (Espiritu, 1997; as cited in Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011, p. 6). More broadly, focus groups have been instrumental in pushing forward antiracist and feminist agendas in the form of consciousness-raising groups that serve as arenas for political mobilization and liberation for feminists from different backgrounds (Madriz, 2000). The WoC frameworks and methodologies that I used to develop LGP inherently

lent themselves to focus groups as the most appropriate setting for discussions around the collective liberation of GoC to take place.

The focus group setting, along with my intersectional justice pedagogical approach helped to deemphasize my presence as an authority figure and allow me to enter into conversations on a collective plane with the Lavender Girls. As a researcher who is a WoC, playing the role of adult educator and mentor to the Lavender Girls, I carried with me a level of power that I worked to redistribute through the focus group method. Although our roles were never truly the same—or equal—engaging in conversation with my participants in a student-led focus group setting allowed for democratic participation, and more so than other qualitative methods, such as individual interviews and participant observations. Because focus groups have been central to the epistemological developments for and solidarity building among WoC, this approach enabled me to design a space where my participants and I could dream, strategize, and act on the futures to which we aspired *together*.

From Kitchen Tables to Sister Circles

As part of my intersectional framework, I used the kitchen table focus group method. This practice has been used by WoC—in the academy and their interior lives—to unpack, contend with, and dismantle issues of gendered racism as well as theorize about the liberation of Black and Brown women (Kohl & McCutcheon, 2015). Additionally, I drew on the kitchen table method (Tracy & Robles, 2013) as I imagined, with the Lavender Girls gathering together around a meal, sharing stories, and engaging in everyday talk—albeit in a classroom or library, not in an actual kitchen—would resemble a familiar and comfortable environment that existed when they were with their mothers, grandmothers, aunties, siblings, cousins, and other girls/women in their families and communities. For the LGP sessions that I held near my home

in Los Angeles, I cooked and prepared each meal, taking food requests from the Lavender Girls, and introducing them to new types of cuisines.

Preparing meals and eating together, as I did with my participants, was part of my intersectional epistemology taught to me by the WoC who raised, fed, and nourished me. By cooking meals, I was able to provide the Lavender Girls with food that they liked and prepare nutritious meals with the grant support of limited funds I was awarded. I recall my relief when the Lavender Girls asked for food like beef and broccoli with white rice, spaghetti, and tacos, knowing how fairly inexpensive these dishes were to make at home while being simple to prepare, delicious, and healthy. For the LGP sessions that I held in Nashville and Brooklyn, I ordered food from local restaurants and asked the Lavender Girls for their preferences or types of new food that they wanted to try.

At the heart of the kitchen table focus group—and critical to centering girlhood—was the sister circle, support or therapy groups historically rooted in the practice of Black women coming together to discuss and address matters that have impacted their lives (Giddings, 1984). This long-standing practice has evolved in various ways, formally and informally, among Women and GoC seeking knowledge, liberation, and wellbeing through various ways, such as building political solidarity, discussing their mental, sexual, and physical health, advancing their education, and developing their spirituality (Neal-Barnett et al., 2011; Williams et al., 2012).

Based on my findings from the pilot phase and guided by the liberatory goals of this project, I incorporated the use of sister circles—where we sat in a circle during each session—to foster a warm, caring, and safe collective space where the Lavender Girls were allowed to be vulnerable and express themselves in liberating ways. The study also revealed that being punished and excluded in schools perpetuated latent emotional duress nearly every day that the

Lavender Girls were in school, at times exacerbating traumatic experiences with which they were dealing. These painful experiences that they associated with school and their educators often made it difficult for them to open up and trust adults. Being afforded the space to co-lead and co-create within (not just be a contributor to) their sister circle helped mitigate the reluctance to share difficult experiences with others in the circle. Having power and ownership of the group also helped to create a level of intimacy among the Lavender Girls that allowed them to share specific details about the hardships that they faced in school.

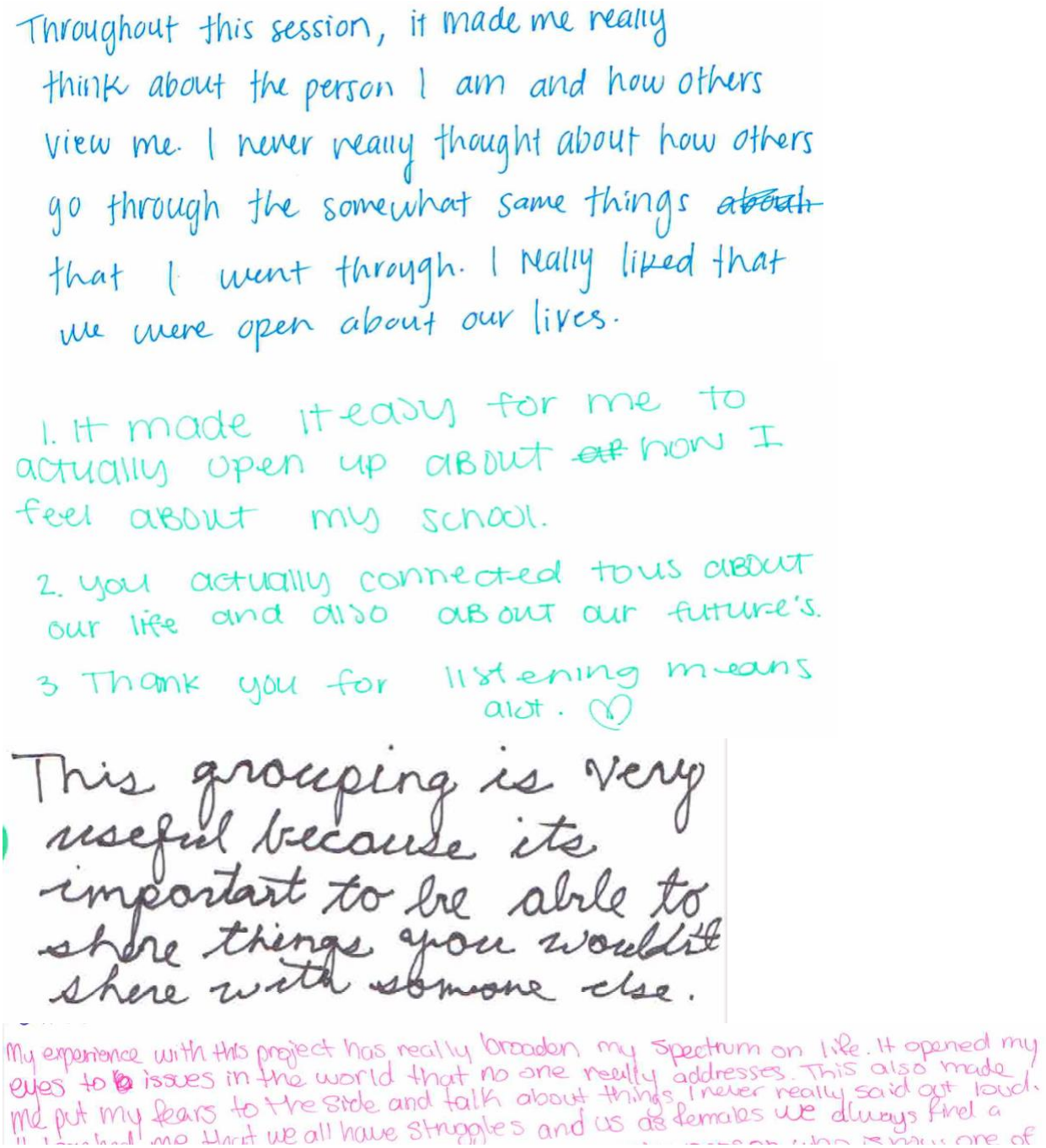
Because the Lavender Girls saw themselves as co-owners of LGP through their sister circle, they were able to feel less timid when speaking up about the injustices and harm they experienced, as well as give one another advice on how to face hardships. Their sense of ownership over the space made them feel protective of our time together, jokingly telling passersby and uninvited visitors to leave so we can continue our conversation. Each LGP site had its own unique sister circle that reflected the unity, solidarity, and diversity of its Lavender Girls. Across all sister circles, participants discussed, contested, and nuanced their schooling experiences, and described what it would look like for their schools and educators to prioritize their wellbeing, joy, and liberation. They reflected on what it meant to be a GoC and how the intersectional identity shaped their schooling experiences. They also engaged in self-directed healing and wellness by taking care of themselves and working to undo some of the harm that resulted from being punished and excluded in school.

Over time and with each session, I observed that the Lavender Girls, especially those who were quieter and more reserved, increasingly shared more about their experiences. The intimacy with each group deepened and the types of stories that were shared became more personal and detailed as we spent more time together because each participant had the power to decide when

and how she would share her story. Having the agency and being provided the space to determine how one's story is told is a crucial element to the type of participatory research and relationship grounded in Critical Race Feminisms that I was attempting to build. It was also important that the Lavender Girls had opportunities to refuse to share or remain silent so I did not ask anyone specifically to speak/share unless they volunteered.

Towards the final session, I asked the Lavender Girls to complete a free writing activity their LGP experience. To avoid influencing or driving the free flow of their thoughts, I offered very little as far as the prompt went. I simply asked them to write about their thoughts and feelings about LGP. This activity served a two-fold purpose: (1) it allowed me to extend my evaluation of how the Lavender Girls were experiencing LGP overall, which I began after the pilot phase; (2) it demonstrated the potential impact of a participatory project that centered student voice. Through the free writing activity, I found that the Lavender Girls, across all school sites, felt safe to express their thoughts and emotions with the group, which helped them to talk about more personal matters (Figure 3). They wrote things such as "This grouping [sic] is very useful because its [sic] important to be able to share things you wouldn't share with someone else" (Blanca, Huerta). Furthermore, considering the fact that this activity was completed towards the last session, I was able to get a sense of how intimate the group had become and how much solidarity they had formed with one another as Black and Brown girls who shared similar experiences of punishment and exclusion in school. The Lavender Girls often provided each other with support and encouragement when they were having a difficulty or feeling intense emotions of sadness and anger. They were also able to comfort one another in a way that was unique to sisters—they rubbed each other's' backs, hugged, and made sure that their makeup was intact.

Figure 3. Lavender Girls Free Write Activity



Rita (Anzaldua), Shakeia (Nash), Blanca (Huerta), and Shawna (Lee Boggs) write about how they felt being able to share personal matters in the Lavender Girls Project.

LGP Instruments

Each LGP session was themed around a topic that addressed my research questions. In this case study, I used two instruments to facilitate thinking and engage discussion among my participants: activities that later became research artifacts and semi-structured focus group interview questions. The instruments were guided and informed by intersectional ways of communicating, primarily from bell hooks' *Sisters of the Yam* (2015) where she provides a framework for discussion among Black women to facilitate wellness and self-discovery. I implemented a creative communication approach, which "is what allows us to experience a sense of belonging to others. It is the force that limits the destructive potential in our lives and what promotes the growth aspects" (2015, p. 26). Creative communication required me to scaffold an intersectional approach not just to the interview and activity prompts, but to every aspect of each session—from the types of the activities I selected, to the order of the topics we tackled, and my pedagogical approach to the co-construction of knowledge in which we engaged.

Following our check-in, I officially began each focus group session with a brief explanation of the topic for our session and an overview of the experiences that informed my knowledge, interests, and thoughts on the subject at hand. The sessions revolved around the following themes: (1) Intersectional Identity, (2) Academic Self and Engagement, (3) Social Class, (4) Discipline and Tracking, (5) Effects of Punishment in School. I gave a background of each topic to provide the Lavender Girls with clarity around our discussion as well as to offer some common terms that they could use when sharing their experiences. From the pilot study, I became aware of the difficulty I had when explaining complex academic terms such as "intersectionality" to teenagers, but also that once I found a way to break it down, their understanding of these terms was incredibly rich due to their lived experiences. It took little time

for the Lavender Girls to grasp concepts such as gendered racism and the punishing effects of policies because these were issues that they felt they confronted every day.

LGP Instruments: Drawing, Writing, and Discussing the Experiences of GoC

Once we had a common understanding of terms and the topic of our discussion, I would hand out an activity that each Lavender Girl would do independently (Table 3). These activities allowed for a different mode of communication that was crucial to my understanding of my participants' lived experiences. I learned from the pilot study that there were certain topics or experiences that the Lavender Girls were more willing to share if they were able to write or draw about it. Additionally, I would be able to gain a better understanding of their thoughts and perceptions of certain topics if I engaged them in an activity that encouraged them to think about the topic in a different way. I designed each activity with the goal that it would allow me to teach while I learned about their experiences; in a way, I shaped my pedagogical approach after my own teachers and femtors (female mentors) who embodied intersectional feminist qualities.

Several of the activities that I used came from online sources that were aimed towards healing, wellness, and understanding structures of power. I modified all of these activities to fit the intersectional aims of my study. When I could not find an activity that adequately addressed my research questions, I created it. The goal of each activity was to get the Lavender Girls to think about the topic introspectively as they were instructed to do them individually, without talking to one another. The pilot study revealed that the activities I used were appropriate and provided adequate data for understanding the academic engagement of my participants. However, due to the lack of an intersectional conceptual framework for the pilot study, I found that some of the activities were limited when it came to eliciting information about how participants' identities shaped their academic experiences and engagement. To address this issue,

I replaced the tableau activity with two activities that explicitly mapped out elements of intersectionality with regard to their identities: the identity flower and the tree of life.

Table 3. Lavender Girls Project Interview Questions and Materials

Session	Activity-based Component	Source	Sample discussion question(s)
(1) Intersectional Identity	Identity flower	Modified - (CCDI, n.d.)	How do you identify/what is your identity? What does it mean for you to be a [identity]?
(2) Academic Self	Educational high-low timeline Student identity chart	Created; built on (Annamma, 2018)	How are you being prepared or not prepared for your post-high school goals? How do you describe yourself as a GoC student?
(3) Social Class	Social ladder	Modified – (MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status – Youth Version, n.d.)	What does being a [CLASS] GoC mean for your education? What are your fears and hopes with your education and graduating from high school?
(4) Discipline and Tracking	Word association	Created	How does being a GoC influence the way you get in trouble or the way you are treated in school?
(5) Effects of Punishment in School	Tree of life Aspiration	(Denborough, 2008)	How has being punished in school affected your education? What do you do to overcome the challenges that you face in school?

I allotted 15 to 20 minutes for the Lavender Girls to complete each activity and when they completed it, they could choose to share something with the rest of the group, but it was never a requirement. Sometimes we would engage in further discussion of the activity, but most of the time, we would move to the focus group questions I had prepared. I found that one of the biggest contributions of activities was that they provided me with information and insight into the experiences of the quieter Lavender Girls, who were often more reluctant to speak or share out loud.

As part of the participatory element of the sister circle approach, I also asked the Lavender Girls to do a free writing exercise about LGP as a way to obtain feedback about the group and ways to improve it. Additionally, feedback from the Lavender Girls helped me to determine if having the sessions had any effects on their academic experiences and life, in general, as a way to understand how a group like LGP could potentially be expanded into a service or intervention for adolescent GoC. Each activity worked in tandem with the focus group questions and provided context for the discussions. Like the activity, the semi-structured focus group interviews revolved around the topic of the session. Although I asked intersectional questions in the pilot study, the first phase itself was not entirely intersectional as it was guided primarily by a PRT framework (Guinier & Torres, 2002).

After analyzing data from the pilot study, I came to the realization that I needed a different approach if I were to get to the heart of the epistemological foundations and developments of my participants as well as the mechanisms of oppression that dictated their education (from their perspectives). I sought the guidance of my committee member, Dr. Jessica Harris, who advised me to develop the next phase using an intersectional framework. I then set forth to revise the interview protocol to ask questions in intersectional ways. I scaffolded the protocols with prompts and follow up questions that asked the Lavender Girls to think about their social location at the intersection of multiple dimensions of oppression and how it shaped the event, perception, or experience that they shared. The main follow-up question for the interview protocol was "how do you think being a Black/Brown girl influenced what you just told me?" This question allowed me to reach a level of clarity with my participants about their identities that I was not always able to in the pilot study. As I will demonstrate in later chapters,

my findings revealed that the revisions I made to the activities and interview protocols allowed me to conduct analyses that were grounded in intersectionality.

LGP Curriculum

During the pilot phase of this study, I found that it was necessary for me to develop the instruments into a curriculum that was cohesive and aligned with intersectional, *womanist*, and *mujerista* principles. For this study to encompass a participatory and action-oriented approach, it had to go beyond simply gleaning information from the participants. Rather, it needed to serve a much greater purpose—one that Critical Race Feminists advocate for in scholarship—it needed to be a space for Black and Brown girls to take ownership of their experiences and make sense of it on their own terms. I provided some of the structure with the data collection protocol, but the LGP curriculum that I designed was the vehicle for the Lavender Girls to navigate their schooling experiences.

The Identity Flower. The first activity that we do is the Identity Flower, which includes two flowers with inner and outer petals. This activity prompts Lavender Girls to list and think about the identities that are assigned to them and those that they choose for themselves. They complete two Flowers; the first one is blank and they write down words in each petal that they would use to describe yourself in the inner layer followed by words that their teachers, staff, and administrators would use to describe them in the outer layer. The second Flower is similar and they are asked to do the same thing, but each petal has labels that must correspond with the description/word that they choose **(**Appendix C**)**.

Educational Mapping. Next, I ask the Lavender Girls to complete a timeline of their schooling experiences, plotting the highs, mediums, and lows, of each school year (PK-12th) **(**Appendix C**)**. Like the other activities, I provide only guidance from completing their

educational map, but not a rigid set of rules so that they may take more ownership of their timelines and define for themselves what their highs, mediums, and lows mean. This openness led to a diverse set of maps where some participants interpreted highs as positive experiences and others interpreted them as intensely negative/traumatic experiences. Moreover, because I did not require the Lavender Girls to only use words to describe their experiences, some of them used symbols such as dots, lines, and graphs. Although the symbols made the activities more difficult to analyze, the goal of providing students with the freedom and space to choose for themselves how they wanted to engage with the activity was achieved.

Student Identity. In order to understand how the Lavender Girls thought about their identities as students and the messages they received about what the ideal student represented, I asked them to complete a student identity activity. The first page of this activity had two columns: the left asked "How do you describe yourself as a student?" and the right asked "How do you describe the ideal (perfect) student?" They were able to answer the questions in whatever ways and modes (e.g., writing, drawing) they wanted. The second page of the student identity activity was a questionnaire that aimed at understanding who the sources of the messages were and what messages were being communicated to the Lavender Girls about who they were as students. The first question was: "Who has told you what kind of student you are?" and the second question was: "What are some things that this person or these people have said to you about the kind of student that you are?" **(**Appendix C**).** The purpose of the student identity activity was not only to understand the Lavender Girls as students, but to be able to triangulate their descriptions and definitions as well as they messages they received with their identities as GoC from poor/working-class backgrounds.

Social Ladder. The social ladder is a four-part activity that I modified from the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status to illuminate the sensemaking of the Lavender Girls around their socioeconomic status (SES). It also prompted them to share their socioeconomic aspirations for themselves and their families. This activity required a greater deal of explanation and discussion prior to the Lavender Girls starting as it was important for them to have a similar understanding on the main components that made up SES: education, occupation, and income. During the socioeconomic session, we went over the differences between each part of SES and examples of occupations that have varying levels of each component, such as some professional athletes having a high salary and a well-regarded profession, but often low education levels compared to physicians who enjoy high levels of education, salary, and societal regard. In order to determine if/how their social ladder and aspirations changed with their social location, I broke up the activity into the following parts: (1) their family's overall status among people in the U.S.; (2) their family's individual status—education, profession, and salary—among people in the U.S.; (3) their family's overall status among people in their community; (4) their family's individual status—education, profession, and salary—among people in their community. The Lavender Girls place their families along different points on the ladder based on (1) the current status of their family, (2) where they think their family should be based on how hard they work, (3) where they would like the status of their family to be, and (4) where they would like themselves to be. Finally, they answer the following questions: (1) "How do you define Americans? Who lives in the United States?; (2) "How do you define community? Who is in your community?" **(**Appendix C**).**

Word Association. I designed the word association activity to elicit the first three thoughts/ideas that came to the minds of the Lavender Girls when they heard words associated

with the aims of LGP, such as identity (e.g., race, ethnicity, class, and gender), school discipline, and their education. There were a total of 24 word prompts, including "girl," "Latina," "Asian," "Black," "detention," "poor," "life," "teachers," and "dreams" **(**Appendix C**)**. As is common with word association activities, I gave the Lavender Girls a short amount of time (about 5-8 seconds) to list the first three thoughts that came to mind, but it was not a requirement that they had three or that they only had three (some listed more than three for certain words).

Tree of Life. As the final activity that we do together, I modified Denborough's (2008) Tree of Life to serve as a representation of their lived experiences and the different topics that we discussed throughout our sessions. It is a holistic visual of the various aspects of their lives, such as their values, loved ones, origin stories, and struggles. We go through the Tree one section at a time and after a brief explanation of what each part symbolizes, the girls take a couple of minutes to fill in their answers. The components to the Tree are as follows: (1) The roots are where they come from—the hometown/community, country, culture they grew up in, people who raised them, and other places they call home; (2) The ground signifies the things they choose to do for themselves on a weekly basis rather than those they are made or forced to do; (3) The trunk represents their skills and values; (4) The compost heap stands for any labels they have been given or experiences they have had that they do not want to be defined by, such as trauma, abuse, standards of beauty, normality, and intelligence, and/or anything that contributes to negative thinking about themselves; (5) The branches symbolize their hopes, dreams, and wishes for themselves, their families, communities, and/or the world, both short and long term; (6) The leaves signify those who are important to them in a positive way; (7) The fruits represent the legacies that have been passed on to them, material items or personal attributes; I ask them to look at the leaves to help them think of these legacies; (8) The flowers and seeds stand for the

legacies they wish to leave to others; again, I ask them to look at the leaves as reference points **(**Appendix C**)**. The Tree of Life activity serves as a focal point for triangulation as it offers a multi-faceted data point for the lived experiences of the Lavender Girls.

Data Analytic Process

I began data analysis by scanning and labeling all of the artifacts, categorizing my field notes, and organizing all of the data that I had according to each school site. As I mentioned previously, all focus group sessions were videotaped and sent to a third-party vendor to be transcribed. Upon receiving the transcriptions, I conducted a deep and thorough cleaning of the transcripts, ensuring that each participant had been identified correctly and what they said was captured accurately. I then re-labeled each transcript and artifact with participant and school pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. During this step, I also pre-coded the data (Layder, 1998) to make note of the passages that stood out to me as significant, and I anticipated would be important for coding. During the pre-coding cycle, I was also able to begin developing some of the emerging themes that I would solidify in the next phase of the analysis.

Once all of the transcripts and artifacts were cleaned and pre-coded, I began the first cycle of coding on 28 transcripts and over 250 pieces of artifacts. I used the ATLAS.ti analytic software to conduct all of my coding and followed Saldaña's (2013) guidelines of creating categories and subcategories, followed by codes under each subcategory. During the first cycle of coding, I used a set of codes from the pilot study that addressed my current research questions, particularly those around identity and school discipline. I employed an intersectional framework to narrow down and refine the pilot codes to address the nexus of the Lavender Girls' marginalized identities, specifically during instances when they talked about being GoC from poor/working-class and/or immigrant backgrounds. As I coded the transcripts and artifacts, I

continued to use an intersectional lens to add more codes and frame the themes emerging from the data, such as the ways that the Lavender Girls perceived they were being villainized and pathologized as GoC. The intersectional lens allowed me to develop new codes by illuminating the ways that LGP participants were making sense of their social location as GoC from poor/working-class (and sometimes, immigrant) backgrounds in their respective schools. The updated protocol that I developed also asked specifically about their identities at the intersection of their race/ethnicity, gender, class, and immigrant status, which allowed the Lavender Girls to more deeply talk about the complexities and nuance of their identity. For example, I used an intersectional framework to code the following excerpt using the codes under the category of *identity* and subcategory of *intersectional*: self-identity and stereotypes.

> " I'm sorry. But even when we speak our minds or we get ratchet a little bit. [crosstalk 01:04:38] Whenever black people get a little rowdy, even men look at us as like, this is what it is with the colored. You're acting like a black woman. Like it's a bad thing?"
>
> (Cherissa, Nash, Session 1)

Throughout the first cycle, I also coded for areas where I observed the participants discussing their epistemological developments (how they come to know what they know) as adolescent Black and Brown girls. To do this, I used the tenets of Womanism, Mujerism, and multicultural feminisms that I outlined in Chapter Two along with their lived experiences that they shared. For example, I mapped Anna's experience as a Mexican-American girl who had experienced houselessness with bullying and stereotypes to code the following vignettes of her epistemological development and how her epistemology helped inform her perseverance and academic engagement:

> “ Sometimes if I'm going through a tough time, I just think about everything that I've been through already. If I can make it through that, then I can make it through a tough time in school.”
>
> (Anna, Anzaldua, Session 1)

> “ Sometimes I care, but sometimes I don't, because they [girls who stereotype her] don't really know me. They just know my color and they see that only my dad's at my games. For me, like I said, it all motivates me to be better, prove them wrong.”
>
> (Anna, Anzaldua, Session 2)

> “ For me, I feel like, dark-skinned and black people, we deserve to be in a higher class, but we're not, because of who we are. I think it's because we have a different kind of work ethic than other people do, like we [crosstalk 00:05:44], if we want something we work hard for it. And, nothing's handed out to us, like we work for what we have.”
>
> (Anna, Anzaldua, Session 3)

After the initial cycle of coding, I whittled down, renamed, and defined the codes to once again better focus on my research questions and ensure that my analysis was grounded in intersectionality. This process resulted in 165 final codes and subcodes in total.

During the second and final coding cycle, I re-coded the transcripts and artifacts using the final set of codes and with a more finely tuned intersectional lens. Some of the areas that these codes covered included the key dimensions of the Lavender Girls’ identity (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, class, immigration status), the components of their academic engagement, the various types of school punishment and academic exclusion that they reported, and the strengths-oriented aspects of their epistemologies and perspectives. Here, I offer two categories along with the subcategories and some of the associated codes:

Category: Identity

Subcategory: Race
- Code: Asian
- Code: Black
- Code: Latina

Subcategory: SES
- Code: poor/working-class
- Code: middle-class
- Code: wealthy

Subcategory: Intersectional
- Code: self-identity
- Code: power
- Code: harm

Category: Academic Experience

Subcategory: School (general)
- Code: educators
- Code: policies
- Code: curriculum

Subcategory: Punishment
- Code: effects
- Code: humiliation
- Code: carceral

Subcategory: Aspirations
- Code: career
- Code: college
- Code: family

Throughout the coding process, I used an intersectional framework to code sections of data where LGP participants talked or wrote about their experiences and being at the nexus of racism, sexism, classism, and/or xenophobia. I also coded data that demonstrated when power dynamics were at play, particularly during instances of punishment, exclusion, and harm in school. The intersectional subcategory, which also served as its own code, often overlapped with other codes that had to do with punishment and harm that the Lavender Girls experienced in school.

Once all of the data were coded, I reviewed coding results and analyzed the high impact codes (appeared 50+ times) to identify the most prominent themes. I then moved to medium (appeared 25-49 times) and low (appeared 1-25 times) impact codes to identify themes that may not have been captured in the main themes. I employed an explanation building approach (Yin, 2018) to triangulate the focus group interviews with the artifact data to deepen my understanding of each of the major themes of the study. At the end of the analysis, I identified five major themes and multiple sub-themes that related to the experiences, perceptions, and academic engagement of GoC. I elaborate on these themes in chapters four and five.

Conclusion

To summarize, I began this chapter with a statement of my positionality, sharing some of the experiences and scholarly interests that led me to pursue this dissertation topic. I also

described some of the considerations that I took as an insider-outsider researcher to consider how my positionality could inform and shape my approach to the study. I then I described the profiles and some relevant sociopolitical contexts of each school site in order to better situate the experiences and claims of the LGP participants. Next, mapped out the research design and methods, highlighting the significance and appropriateness of the multisite case study approach for an intersectional framework. Finally, I outlined the development of the Lavender Girls Project, selecting the school sites, recruiting the participants, as well as my data collection process and data analytic procedures. In the next chapter, I discuss the findings that address the first research question: What is the essence of the schooling experiences of Black and Brown girls who have been punished in school and excluded from advanced courses?

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS, PART 1

Learning (Even) When Pathologized and Villainized

> I feel like us (Black and Brown girls)—I don't wanna say these type of girls—but like, we kinda don't tolerate disrespect. Like people disrespect us and expect us not to say anything back, but we stand up for ourselves.
>
> (Anna, Anzaldua, Session 3)

Anna, who identified as a Mexican girl, was athletically built and spoke with a firm gentleness. Upon meeting her, I got the impression that she was uncertain about participating in LGP and I sensed that she had her guard up, watching me intently to see how I would react to the stories that her peers shared. Like the other Lavender Girls, I knew that I had to earn Anna's trust, but with her, I may have to work a little harder. As I learned more about her life, it made sense that Anna would be distrusting of adults in her school; she did not receive the best support from her educators when she was experiencing homelessness or when she had been a victim of sexual abuse. According to Anna and other Lavender Girls, their educational experiences had been marked largely by perceptions of disrespect from educators, school staff, and sometimes, even their peers. They claimed that their identities as poor Black and Brown girls often made them the target of disrespect, mockery, and maltreatment. The intersectional approaches that I utilized in LGP that centered the collective and community, particularly mujerism through kitchen table talks, created a certain level *confianza* (trust) between us that allowed me to elicit these accounts of humiliation and pain that they were often reluctant to share with other adults or even each other.

The students in this study reported feeling disrespected when they are doubted, picked on, singled out, and embarrassed, especially in front of their peers. On the other hand, they indicated that the experiences of being respected by their educators took the form of being

validated, genuinely listened to, having their unique circumstances taken into consideration, privately corrected (when needed), and provided opportunities to maintain their dignity during emotionally elevated moments. According to the Lavender Girls, respect, support, and care were key when it came to helping them engage academically. Yet the girls reported that they were often deprived of what the literature on students' social/emotional needs (Lawson et al., 2019) suggests are the necessary components to their learning. Lacking these, the girls found themselves having to figure out how to participate in the schooling process in isolation. They reported feeling that instances of disrespect often went hand in hand with the ways they believed that they are perceived by their educators, specifically perceptions of stereotypes and pathologizations that were rooted in their identity as poor/working-class GoC.

In this chapter, I address the first research question: *What is the essence of the schooling experiences and academic engagement of adolescent GoC who have been punished and excluded from advanced courses in Title I high schools?* In the first half, I elaborate on my primary findings that indicate that the Lavender Girls believe that they are presumed incompetent, caricatured as lazy and unintelligent, and villainized as hostile and aggressive due to, what they perceive of as multiply marginalized identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, class, and/or immigrant status). The latter half of this chapter focuses on the strengths-based question that follow each of the main research questions: *In what ways do their intersecting identities define the academic engagement of Girls of Color?* Here, the primary findings lay the foundation for what I conceptualize as the roots of Black and Brown Girl ways of knowing and being that provide them with the inspiration, support, and direction to attain their academic and postsecondary goals. I demonstrate how their love for self, their families, and each other inform

their aspirations, beliefs on what they are capable of achieving, and work ethic to pursue their dreams.

Doubted and Presumed (Academically) Incompetent

During my first session at Diane Nash, I looked at Kayla's broad face, caramel skin, and cascading long black hair and felt a deep sense of familiarity—I thought "she could be one of my nieces." With softness in her voice, she told me that she lived with her three siblings and immigrant parents; her mother was a homemaker and her father worked construction in Kentucky during the week and was home only on Saturdays. Kayla planned to attend Tennessee College of Applied Technology and someday work in pharmacy. When I asked Kayla how she felt her educators treated her as a Latina/Hispanic girl, she replied, "They just feel like I need that extra help compared to other students in the class. They feel like I need that extra boost and that extra help for everything when I usually understand the context" (Nash, Session 2). According to Kayla, she felt that she was often seen by her educators as intellectually inferior because she was a Latina girl with immigrant parents; in her view, it did not matter how much she actually knew, she was still assumed to be academically lagging behind her peers.

Despite her high postsecondary aspirations and being a hardworking student, Kayla felt that her teachers frequently underestimated her. The lack of faith from her teachers created the backdrop for Kayla being excluded from higher level classes, which were offered to Diane Nash students at the discretion of the teachers. Kayla explained to me that rather than being given the option to take advanced math classes like her peers, she was placed in a lower-level math class, which was the equivalent of Algebra II, during her senior year. In the following excerpt from our first conversation, I attempted to understand how Kayla made sense of this experience:

> Kayla: Yeah, and ninth grade and 10th grade, I was really good in math. I would always be the first one done and then help students… But I

saw, as you know, how math advances? Like the more you learn, it gets added on? So, that's what like, if I miss one thing, it messes the whole thing up. So, when I started making little mistakes, that's when I would stop doing my work and stuff like that. So, I think that teachers thought I wasn't capable of keeping up. So, I guess that's the reason.

Shena: … what was happening there when you would stop?

Kayla: I would just get frustrated. And I hate starting over.

Shena: Did [teachers] ever try to get to understand that about you? Did they ever try to talk to you about it?

Kayla: Didn't talk about it. They just tried to find a mistake, but [I] really wouldn't understand. I mean, they wouldn't explain exactly what I needed to work on. It was like just go back and fix it. And yeah, just like that.

(Nash, Session 4)

Kayla reported that she eventually began to disengage from her schoolwork because of the constant doubt and lack of support to complete the assignments that she knew she was capable of doing. For Kayla, academic support was different from being given an "extra boost," as she put it. Kayla's differentiation of the two terms signaled an astute connection, in her mind, between nomenclature and perceptions of competency. Whereas an "extra boost" looked like help based on presumed incompetence, academic support looked like not being dismissed when she had a question or a difficult time working through a concept. More importantly, academic support meant that her educators did not give up on her even when it seemed to them that she herself may have given up.

I frame the ways in which the intelligence and abilities of GoC are doubted using y Muhs and her colleagues' conceptualization of *presumed incompetence* (2012), which captures the struggles of Women of Color in academia who are undermined, questioned, and reprimanded in ways that diminish and belittle their intelligence and abilities. Similarly, I find that GoC are

consistently made to believe that they are not capable of or will not achieve high levels of academic or professional success, which these students often perceived as having to do with their identity of being Black and Brown girls from a poor/working-class—and for some, immigrant—background.

Ashlee was a sinewy, quiet Black girl with deep dark brown eyes and long braids that draped down her back. She described herself as "quiet and misunderstood" (Huerta, Session 1) and appeared to have a keen understanding of how her identity as a Black girl, juxtaposed with a quiet demeanor, often led her to being misunderstood by others. Because Black girls are often stereotyped as loud and aggressive (Blake, et al., 2010; Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; E. W. Morris, 2007), Ashlee perceived that her quietness—with a lack of demureness and submissiveness that girls are expected to demonstrate, normed to the standard of the White, Christian, middle-class (Welter, 1976; Williams, et al., 2004)—make her more of a target for suspicion and punishment. When I asked Ashlee to elaborate on her personality, she responded, "I'm quiet… because I really don't speak unless spoken to… Then I feel like I'm misunderstood because people view me as mean based off of my facial expression" (Huerta, Session 1).

Ashlee also connected being a Black girl from a poor background with how she was often presumed incompetent. In her analysis, she included her Mexican peers in her awareness and experience of being misunderstood, saying:

> Because people automatically assume, oh she's Black, oh she's Mexican, she this, she that. She's not going to make it, she's not going to do that thing, she's going to be working at McDonald's and Taco Bell for the rest of her life. She's never going to have money, she's going to be broke, she's going to be driving a busted car. All that.
>
> (Huerta, Session 5)

In a Womanist way (Walker, 1984), Ashlee included poor Mexican girls in her explanation because she understood that her struggle as a poor Black girl—although, not universal—was

often shared by her Latina peers (Vaz in Philips, 2006). She recognized that there are elements that exist at the intersections of their race/ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic status that connected the experiences of Black and Latina girls at her school. Her statements suggest her awareness of these markers of identity and her recognition that assumptions around who was competent or incompetent were formed around them. As a young Black woman, Ashlee was developing an intersectional and Womanist epistemology that reflected an understanding of the shared struggles of other poor GoC based on their multiple marginalized identities. LGP participants across all school sites demonstrated the same keen awareness of the essence of the experience that they shared as Black and Brown girls.

Dumb, Lazy, and Destined to Fail: The Pathologization of Girls of Color

Similar to their perceptions that they were presumed incompetent, the Lavender Girls reported feeling that their educators believed they were unintelligent, unmotivated, and lacked the potential to succeed. Across all school sites, LGP participants wrote "dumb" and "lazy" in their identity flower as words that others—often their educators—used to describe them (Figure 4). Not only were words like these identified as hurtful to the Lavender Girls, but these words also suggested a level of anti-intellectualism that have historical meaning for People of Color, specifically for the ways in which they have been used to pathologize those who are poor and from immigrant backgrounds to justify their oppression (Horton, et al., 1999; Reyna, 2000).

Figure 4. Educators' Descriptions of Lavender Girls as Dumb and Lazy

Nina, Felicia, Anna (Anzaldua), Kiki, Charmaine (Nash), Eileen (Lee Boggs), and Ashlee (Huerta) write "dumb" and "lazy" as words that their educators use or would use to describe them.

Specific to GoC, scholars have demonstrated how Black and Brown girls are uniquely subjected to this pathologization, especially with regard to school discipline and the juvenile justice system (Annamma, 2018; M.W. Morris, 2015; Nanda, 2011). The labels of dumb and lazy serve a dual purpose in creating the narrative that GoC are "beyond reach" that is, having a strong work ethic or achieving academically is outside of the capacity for these GoC. While dumb is a fixed description associated with unintelligence (i.e., one is born dumb), lazy is an active choice (i.e., one decides to be lazy). Therefore, by being dumb and lazy, GoC reported that their experiences were such that they were both destined to fail academically *and* chose to fail academically.

"He be trying to make me feel like I'm dumb"

Unlike the presumption of incompetence where the Lavender Girls indicated that they received covert messaging in the form of being given less rigorous work or were assumed to need academic handholding to succeed in school, LGP participants reported that they were overtly pathologized as dumb and lazy by the ways that their educators talked to them about their academic abilities and progress. For example, Kiki, Shakeia, and Shya—Black girls who were students at Nash—shared a story about a time when their math teacher, Mr. Andrews, told them that they were failing his class:

Kiki: He be trying to make me feel like I'm dumb. We'll be doing simple stuff and he be like, "you don't know how to do this" and say I'm failing. "You don't know how to do this." He just trying to make me feel like I'm slow… 'Cause I'm Black.

Shakeia: He *do* be trying to make us feel like we slow.

Shya: The same dude that was like, "I'm teaching this to my ninth graders."

Shakeia: …he'll say something slick like "some of y'all failing my class." I be the first one to speak, like I ain't. 'Cause I hate when he do that.

> Like he's gonna call us out… I just be like, "who fail your class?" And he just be looking at… like he'll look in the back corner. So, in the back it be me, Shya, Cherissa, Charmaine.

(Diane Nash, Session 4)

For Kiki, who identified as a poor Black girl, Mr. Andrews' comments that she did not know how to do "simple" schoolwork not only made her feel targeted for her Blackness, but also made her feel pathologized as having intellectual disabilities ("slow").

Cherissa, who was a part of this group of Black girls in Mr. Andrews' class, spoke to this intersectional pathologization of poor Black students as dumb:

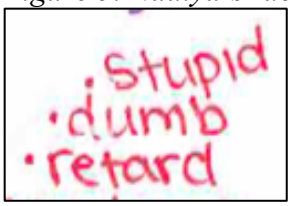
> in a public school, being Black and poor, the teachers are predominantly White. The teachers look at you like even if they teach you or don't teach you, you're still not going to understand… And being black and being poor, it's like I... I feel like I'm talked to like I'm slow sometimes.

(Nash, Session 1)

Similarly, Dionne, a Black girl from Lee Boggs, said "I feel like my teachers really do think I'm slow… and they think I'm special ed, 'cause of the way they treat me. (Session 1). I argue that Kiki, Shakeia, Chantel, and Dionne's use of the word "slow" to describe how the language that educators use can feel when they hear it demonstrates the fixed and intersectionally pathological elements of dumb and its associations with disability. Along with the word "retarded" (Figure 5), "slow" has traditionally been used to colloquially describe people with intellectual disabilities. These labels are historically rooted in a time when a system to put students who were considered "slow or mildly retarded" in "special classes" were implemented in educational institutions in the U.S. during the 1950s (Osgood, 2005). By the 1970s, as schools were being integrated across the country, poor students of color were disproportionately assigned to special education programs (DeMatthews, 2020; Dunn, 1968)—a trend that continues to this day (Ford & Russo, 2016;

Morgan et al., 2017). Dionne made the connection between "dumb" and the pathologization of disability when she said that teachers treated her like she was in "special ed."

Figure 5. Nadiya's Identity Flower (Educator Descriptions)



Nadiya (Lee Boggs) writes the words that she believes her educators use (or has experienced them using) to describe her intellectual ability.

Black girls, like many girls in STEM classes (science, technology, engineering, and math) are systematically discriminated against in and excluded from STEM courses (Collins et al., 2020; Farinde & Lewis, 2012; Ireland at al., 2018; Stearns et al., 2016). The experiences with Mr. Andrews that the Nash Lavender Girls described reflect this vicious cycle of academic harm on Black girls in STEM (McGee & Bentley, 2017). Mr. Andrews aimed his comments at the Black girls—Shya, Cherissa, and Charmaine—when Shakeia asked him to tell them who was failing his class. The Lavender Girls perceived that Mr. Andrews exerted his power as an educator over them by diminishing their intelligence, which reified the stereotypes of Black girls' inferiority in math.

Across all LGP sites, I find that when participants talked about being stereotyped as dumb, they sometimes did so with feeling a type of tension from being treated as if they were at the same level of maturity as their educators (i.e., adults) while simultaneously feeling that their educators looked down on their academic abilities. Research shows that Black and Brown girls often learn in environments of contradiction as students—they are adultified and perceived as more emotionally, socially, and sexually mature than their peers (González, 2018; Epstein et al., 2017) while being educated as intellectually inferior (Andrews & Gutwein, 2017). I find that no matter their personality or disposition—gregarious, loud, shy, or quiet—the Lavender Girls

reported feeling this tension and often felt provoked by their educators as a result of it. In latter sections of this dissertation, I elaborate on what these provocations look like for Brown and Black girls (e.g., intense scrutiny, policing, and silencing) as well as ways to better and more caringly approach them with critiques.

Lazy and Destined to Fail

Another stereotype that the Lavender Girls reported facing in school was the caricature of poor Black and Brown people as lazy—a pervasive bias that is steeped in the meritocratic ideology of American society that presumes People of Color are poor because they rely on government support and do not work hard enough (Gorski, 2012). As I have previously mentioned, the characterization of laziness-as-a-choice socializes poor/working-class GoC to believe that they are destined for failure not only because they are perceived to have been born to fail, but also because they are perceived to actively *decide* to fail. Another conversation with the Diane Nash Lavender Girls provides an example of one way that they perceived their educators implying that they were lazy, and thus, destined for failure.

Shakeia: I had a teacher compare us to White students saying that he had never seen as many absences as he had seen from our school, which is basically Blacks and Hispanics.

Shya: He taught at Elite Academy.

Shakeia: It's a private school. He basically compared us to that school.

Cherissa: Yeah. Veering off of Shakeia and Shya… Me and the teacher was talking about college one time and she was making it seem like I couldn't afford to go to college or something. I'm just like, I can go to college. I know my momma can pay for it and stuff. She was like, downing me and I don't really know why she was downing me because she don't really even know me like that. And then it's like, statements like the teacher had said about the absences and stuff. At Elite Academy, it's not many Black people there. It's mostly White people that go to that school and they have to pay for

> tuition and stuff. Everybody at Elite Academy and St. Mary's School, they have a lot of money...
>
> (Diane Nash, Session 1)

In this excerpt, the Diane Nash girls critiqued their teacher's comparison between them (Black and Hispanic/Latine students from low-income backgrounds) and rich, White students at Elite Academy.

By centering absences as the point of his critique, their teacher leaned into the stereotype of poor People of Color as lazy and uninterested in their education. Studies have shown that student absences and/or lack of parents' active participation in the school (based on conventional White, middle-class norms) are often highlighted by educators to imply that students are lazy and that their parents do not care about their child's academic success (Crozier, 2001; De Gaetano, 2007). Cherissa talked about how another teacher assumed her family could not afford to send her to college in a way that added nuance to the conversation around the intersection of race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Here, she implied how their backgrounds of poverty in addition to their race/ethnicity exacerbated the ways that they were treated by their educators and contributed to their beliefs that they were not receiving the appropriate support to pursue their postsecondary goals.

As Cherissa suggested, racially classist stereotypes have adverse implications for GoC being educated *as if they will fail* and/or not achieve postsecondary success. During session four, Chantel described the same incident, adding a layer of critique of the way that the Nash (charter) school system evaluated and academically tracked students:

> …this is the system that Nash has made us believe, that that's right. That's okay. Your grades and the classes you take determine how smart of a person you are. You know what I'm saying? And I had a college meeting with the teacher and I was gonna go to... first, I was considering going to TSU 'cause I got into TSU.

> And she was like "I don't really think you're gonna make it in TSU and I don't think you can afford TSU…" and she was just like "let's be realistic."
>
> (Cherissa, Diane Nash, Session 4)

Despite the fact that Cherissa was already accepted into Tennessee State University (TSU), a Historically Black University (HBCU), her teacher continued to express her doubts by citing Cherissa's academic abilities and financial means as points of concern.

Other LGP participants reported experiencing similar instances where educators encouraged them to "be realistic," which they perceived as subtle messages that fed into broader stereotypes about their intellectual abilities and families' priorities. It was typically within these conversations that notions of poor People of Color as dumb, lazy, and destined to fail emerged and the Lavender Girls offered their critiques about how these festering stereotypes contributed to their educators' low expectations. Additionally, they suggested that their academic engagement was also adversely affected because they were not provided with adequate resources and support to obtain their postsecondary goals.

The Academic Consequences of Pathologization

According to LGP participants, being pathologized as dumb and lazy contributed to the lack of guidance and attention they received when it came to their learning as well as the ease with which their educators gave up on and dismissed them. They indicated that they were being encouraged to believe—often by the way they were singled out—that because of their identity (i.e., their background of poverty, race/ethnicity, and immigrant status), they inherently had these character traits, which guaranteed their inevitable failure. These findings extend scholarship on the impacts of stereotypes on the academic engagement and achievement of students of color from poor and/or immigrant backgrounds (Reyna, 2000, 2008; Solorzano, 1997; Steele, 1997) to highlight the intersection of race/ethnicity, class, and girlhood. I argue that because they were

prevented from developing healthy relationships with their educators that could have led to better support, higher expectations, and greater access to opportunities, the academic engagement of the Lavender Girls was often diminished. I find that LGP participants did not seem inclined to establish relationships with their educators because they perceived that their educators had low expectations and opinions of their academic abilities.

Like Cherissa, Jenny from Lee Boggs High School in Brooklyn reported that educators often redirected GoC to lower their postsecondary aspirations for goals that were more "attainable" or "appropriate" for their academic ability, achievements (or lack thereof), and status. To justify their recommendations, the Lavender Girls indicated that their educators would highlight their discipline records or past misbehaviors to put the responsibility of failure on them. Jenny claimed that educators often brought up the fact that she was a single, teenage mother as the reason for her inevitable postsecondary failure. In this excerpt, she gave an account of a recent interaction that she had with an administrator where this phenomenon played out:

> Like yesterday, we were doing our SUNY (State University of New York) applications, and I was putting down my six schools—my seven schools—and then Miss Valentine is reviewing. She's like, "you don't have the averages for that." I was like, "yeah, but I have the SAT." She's like, "but your average." I was like, "yeah, but for all these schools I'm not gonna have one or the other…" She's like, "well, I told you ahead of time, that's your fault." But I'm like, you kinda knew my situation… And there's other things, 'cause she had, like the administration has to know… And then she was like, "I already told you." I was like, "but clearly I was going through things..."
>
> (Lee Boggs, Session 4)

Jenny was a Puerto Rican and Indonesian girl who was born and raised in New York. When I looked at her, I was often reminded of a quote, "Though she be but little she is fierce" (Shakespeare, 1922, p. 46). With her petite frame and sweet face, Jenny moved with levity and poise unlike any teenage girl I had ever met. When I learned that Jenny became pregnant during

her freshman year and decided to keep her baby, Jai, I understood much better the maturity with which she carried herself.

According to Jenny, she endured a great deal of ridicule and shaming for being a teen mother from many people, including educators like Miss Valentine. As a Latina and Southeast Asian teenage mother, Jenny's experience is supported by extant research on the educational implications of racist and classist portrayals of teenage mothers of color (Pillow, 2004). Studies show that schools sort teen mothers into programs by race and ethnicity "with White girls most often being served in the regular public school or offered at-home tutoring until the birth of their child at which point, they return to school" and "African American and Latina teens [being] overrepresented in separate school placements" (Pillow, 2006, p. 71).

Although Jenny was allowed to remain at Lee Boggs, she reported feeling that her educators ostracized her from the school community and made her feel as if her pregnancy was her fault and a big misstep in her education rather than supporting her to reach her postsecondary goals while being a caring mother. Despite Jenny's high aspirations to one day start a nonprofit organization for women in the Global South, she felt that the way she was perceived by her educators for being a Brown girl *and* a single teen mother hindered her from getting access to the information, resources, and guidance that she needed. For Jenny and other Lavender Girls—all of whom were from poor or working-class families and some of whom were immigrants or daughters of immigrants—internalized beliefs by educators that they were destined to fail had severe implications for how they were cared for and educated in school.

However, despite being discouraged and excluded from the academic process, the Lavender Girls maintained high postsecondary aspirations (e.g., going to college and becoming a business, pediatrician, public defender, artist, etc.), were steadily motivated, and found ways to

engage academically on their own terms. Here, Jenny described how she pushed back when Miss Valentine discouraged her from applying to the university of her choice:

> Then [Miss Valentine] was like, "you're not gonna apply." … She would just keep saying these different things like "oh, you can't apply because of this, you can't—" I'm like, "so, what do you expect me to do?" I'm like, "I'm gonna apply." She's like, "but you don't have the averages." I'm like, "I'm not gonna apply to the other schools that I do have the averages for when it's schools of technology. That doesn't have me picking my interests. I'm not even gonna do nothing at that school. Then I'm gonna attend the school for two years and waste my money and my time."
>
> (Lee Boggs, Session 4)

Jenny's experience with Miss Valentine pushing her to apply to a technical college is supported by research on the overrepresentation of students of color in open access institutions (i.e., technical college, vocational schools, and community colleges) (Field, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2020) as well as the disproportionate counseling of Black and Brown high school students to refrain from applying to four-year colleges and universities (Radford, 2013). Despite Miss Valentine's insistence that Jenny not apply to the college of her choice, Jenny asserted that she still would. Jenny also demonstrated a clear understanding that the schools Miss Valentine was pushing her towards would not provide her the opportunity to pursue her interests and actualize her professional goals. In the following section, I discuss how the Lavender Girls reported feeling villainized in school based on their identity and how these depictions of them as unruly, mean, and unfriendly shaped the ways that they engage in the academic process.

Loud, Hostile, and Aggressive: Villainizing Girls of Color

In this section, I extend the literature around the criminalization of Black and Brown girls in school by mapping how LGP participants reported and nuanced the ways that they had been villainized by their educators for innocuous, adolescent behaviors (Henning, 2012), or worse—for who they were (i.e., poor Black and Brown girls). I draw from literature, LGP artifacts, and

focus group interviews to illuminate the backdrop, details, and nuances around the villainization of Black and Brown girls in school. For GoC, especially those who have experienced school discipline, the stereotype of criminality is not a new phenomenon (López & Chesney-Lind, 2014; Slakoff, 2020). The Lavender Girls appeared to have an acute understanding of how the intersection of their marginalized identities was framed to cast them as villains who were angry, hostile, and emotionally volatile. They claimed that these stereotypes often informed the severity and frequency with which they were punished and excluded from the learning environment.

"You're way too loud"

The Lavender Girls reported that their educators often called them loud, which sometimes aligned with the way some of them described themselves. However, rather than view their loudness as a negative trait associated with troublemaking behavior, as their educators did, the Lavender Girls indicated that they embraced this trait and they saw it as a positive attribute that coincided with being outspoken. LGP participants seemed to value their ability, courage, and situational awareness to speak up, especially when they felt that they were being dismissed, mistreated, or disrespected. This finding is congruent with extant scholarship (Evans, 1980; Koonce, 2012; E. W. Morris, 2007), specifically what Murphy, Acosta, and Kennedy-Lewis (2013) found in their study of middle school GoC who were reprimanded for being loud while they were socialized at home "to use their voices to stand up for themselves and others (Fordham 1993; O'Connor et al. 2005)" (p. 600). The GoC in my study embraced their loudness and used it as a means of protecting themselves and calling out instances of harm, unfairness, and injustice that they—and other GoC—experienced.

Alicia, who identified as a Mexican girl, walked into every session boisterously with a huge smile and a story to tell or a question to ask. She described herself as "loud," along with a

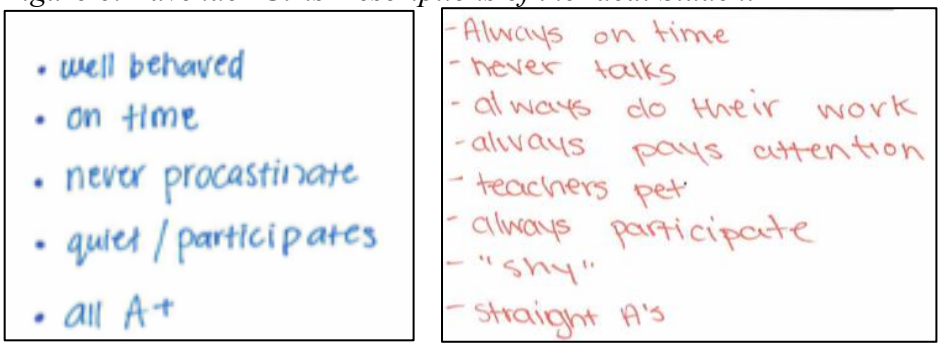
string of positive descriptions, such as “funny,” “very humble,” and “good-hearted” (Dolores Huerta, Session 1). Like other Lavender Girls, Alicia embraced and owned her loudness and considered it part of what made her a wonderful person. When I asked her about her relationship with her teachers, she responded, “teachers never like me because they say I’m too loud and I distract the class and I disturb the class and I’m defiant” (Session 1). Here, Alicia juxtaposed “loud” with negative words that she claimed her teachers used to describe her and her behavior. She spoke specifically about one teacher whom she reported punished her by constantly humiliating and singling her out even when she believed that she was not misbehaving:

> I just like whisper or say, “bless you” across the room and he’s like, “Alicia, don’t be screaming across the room.” Like, “Dang, I can’t even bless him? You’re just mad because I don’t bless you, get out of here.” I know he doesn’t like me for a fact, that’s why he always is picking on me and stuff. And I just feel like, not to sound stuck up or nothing, but I feel like I do stand out more than the other girls, because of my personality and how I am as a person. And I guess he just doesn’t like how I am, that’s why he’s always picking on me, because he’s just like, “This girl is way too loud.” Even when I don’t talk, he’s like, “You’re way too loud.”
>
> (Alicia, Huerta, Session 4)

Other LGP participants shared similar anecdotes where they claimed that they were punished and/or excluded (e.g., humiliated, put out of the classroom, or sent to detention) for being loud even when they were not engaging in what would they considered loud behavior (e.g., yelling, talking loudly, disrupting the class). It is particularly troubling that the Lavender Girls suggested that they were villainized for being loud even when they reported exhibiting positive (i.e., joyful) behaviors such as laughing, giggling, and engaging in teenage banter. My findings suggest that the punishment that the Lavender Girls received for being loud resulted in these students being further isolated or excluded from the learning environment. Educators frequently responded to what they perceived as disruptive behavior by removing the Lavender Girls from the classroom, causing these students to miss precious instructional time.

I also find that even though the Lavender Girls embraced their loudness, some of the girls had come to internalize and perceive it as an undesirable quality for a good student to have. LGP participants demonstrated awareness of the ways in which their loudness contradicted the hegemonic expectations of what students, especially female students, ought to be—quiet, passive, and obedient (Figure 6). This standard for the ideal female student to be docile, quiet, and ladylike is normed to White, Christian standards of femininity (Hill Collins, 2000). As a result, the LGP participants, who did not conform to the gendered expectations of Whiteness (Jones, 2010; E. W. Morris, 2007), felt that they experienced humiliation and punishment.

Figure 6: Lavender Girls Descriptions of the Ideal Student



Rita (Anzaldua) and Nadiya (Lee Boggs) list "quiet," "shy," and "never talks" as characteristics of an ideal student.

These unrealistic and unfair standards lead to the Lavender Girls living and learning in contradiction. In AP and honors classes, students are often encouraged to verbally engage—and even debate—their educators as the ability to perform in a back-and-forth discussion, defend their opinions, question authority, and be critical of the status quo is deemed to be a sign of intellectual curiosity and academic prowess (Yonezawa & Jones, 2006). Yet, for GoC who have been excluded from advanced courses and relegated to low level courses that they claimed lacked rigor and high teacher expectations, debating or expressing a different opinion was not acceptable behavior. Here, Alicia recounted an event that captures some of these elements.

> I can't really see 'cause my vision ain't all that great. And so, I moved to the seat where it's right in front and I was doing my work and he (teacher) was

> taking attendance walking around class and stuff. And then he came back to his desk, and he's like, "Oh, Alicia, you can go back to your seat now." And I told him like, "Oh yeah, I'm almost done, I'll go back when I finish." Like that, no attitude, no nothing, politely.
>
> And then I don't know, I guess he didn't hear me, and he was like, "Did you hear me? I said you could go back to your seat." And I was like, "I said I'll go back when I'm done, can you let me finish? I'm almost done… I can't see from over there." He's like, "You can see perfectly." And I was like, "How are you gonna tell me? Like they're my eyeballs. My cornea, right?" And then he was like, "Well you know what? You can see perfectly down at the administrator's office."
>
> (Alicia, Huerta, Session 6)

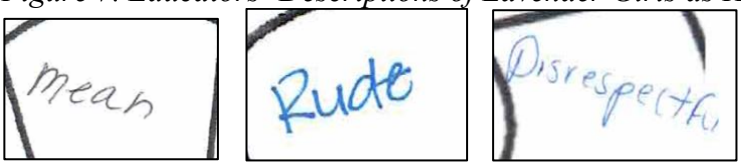
My findings indicate that when Black and Brown girls in low-level courses do not immediately comply with their teachers or when they expressed their thoughts and disagreed, they were met with punishment. The Lavender Girls also suggested that expressing their opinions or standing up for themselves is sometimes exacerbated because they have had previous disciplinary issues or disagreements with their educators.

The sanctioning of debate with peers and instructors in high level courses, like Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Honors, as well as respect for a student's independence, is not a value held across all school course tracks. I find that for GoC, like Alicia, who have been excluded from advanced courses and relegated to low level courses that often lack rigor and high teacher expectations, their ability to argue and stand up for themselves, was typically marked as rude, disruptive, and defiant. Such behavior often led to punishment and further exclusion from the learning environment. Alicia and other Lavender Girls reported that when they expressed their opinions or questioned authority, rather than having their thoughts heard and addressed respectfully, they were often punished and made to feel inferior. Further, they suggested that educators often escalated the situation by humiliating or dismissing them rather than addressing their concerns.

"People assume when we wake up in the morning, we're just mean"

While "dumb" and "lazy" were the most commonly used words that the Lavender Girls included in their artifacts, descriptors like "rude," "mean," and "disrespectful" (Figure 7) also regularly appeared. Across all LGP sites, the participants believed that they were viewed by educators as hostile and perceived by other members of their school community as unfriendly and mean.

Figure 7. Educators' Descriptions of Lavender Girls as Hostile and Loud



Candace (Huerta), Cherissa (Nash), and Dionne (Lee Boggs) write "mean," "rude," and "disrespectful" as words that their educators use or would use to describe them.

Here, Anna and Felicia from Gloria Anzaldua talked about Black and Brown girls having a "resting face" and how this was construed as having an attitude or looking mad. They discussed how their "resting faces" might have appeared to indicate that they were angry or had "an attitude," but, they argued that they may have been deep in thought or simply minding their business.

Shena:	What do you think about you being a Mexican girl and plus the tone in your voice?
Anna:	They think I have an attitude. I don't know. It's just… And a lot of times too, I would just look normal and people think I'm mad dogging them or something, or think I'm giving them attitude but it's just my face.
Felicia:	I feel like colored girls, we have resting faces.
Shena:	You have resting faces?
Felicia:	I think a lot of the Mexican and Black girls I look at, they look mad, but they're not.
Shena:	Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Felicia: Like they're just going on with their day.

(Anzaldua, Session 6)

Similar to other instances of internalizing the stereotypes and biases against them, Felicia admitted that she also thought "a lot of the Mexican and Black girls" she saw "look(ed) mad." However, she immediately followed this up by saying they were not mad, but rather "just going on with their day," which corroborates what was happening for many Lavender Girls who had these shared experiences (Anzaldua, Session 6). In the following excerpt, Ashlee, from Dolores Huerta, spoke to the same things that Felicia and Anna discussed.

Ashlee: Because people think, we just mad all the time.

Shena: Right.

Ashlee: Like we're automatically mean. People assume when we wake up in the morning we're just mean.

Alicia: We're just mean. Right.

Ashlee: I promise you, when I get to school, it be like 7:50 something, somebody be like "dang, Ashlee, you already mad, bro."

(Huerta, Session 5)

Black and Brown girls are far too often stereotyped as angry and emotionally volatile. The Lavender Girls attributed these perceptions to their physical appearances. Specifically, the girls often discussed the ways that their physical appearances were often misconstrued as being unfriendly and cold. Ample research exists on the sexist nature of women and girls being told that they should ought to smile more or have a friendlier demeanor. The patriarchy and White supremacy require girls and women to be sweet and docile. It is not uncommon for girls and women to experience being told to smile because it makes them more approachable and likeable. For GoC, this sexist demand is racialized as they regularly experienced being presumed mean and angry simply based on their appearances.

"When we decide to be outspoken and we decide to take initiative on our education, we sound upset, we sound angry"

Related to presumptions of meanness, the Lavender Girls consistently reported being perceived as angry and they spoke to the negative effects that this stereotype had on their agency to participate in their education. During a session at Grace Lee Boggs, Shawna elaborated on how they, as young WoC, became constructed as angry when they took control of their education and attempted to engage academically.

> …as a Woman of Color, when we decide to be outspoken and we decide to take initiative on our education, we sound upset, we sound angry. Then no one takes our perspective into account. So, I say that's why I see us as angry. Because then I decide to do more for myself, especially considering this building they're kinda overreacting. You're being emotional, you need to put your feelings on the side. It's kinda like, I'm not putting any bias emotions in front of me. I wanna take initiative. I wanna be able to have an education I deserve as a student and that shouldn't be stopped just because of my gender or what my nationality is.
>
> (Shawna, Lee Boggs, Session 2)

Similar to the contradictions with respect to outspokenness that is encouraged among middle-class White students in advanced courses but punished among GoC tracked to low-level classes, the Lavender Girls reported being discouraged, dismissed, and punished when they advocated for themselves and their education. In their comments, they noted that when GoC advocated for themselves, it was equated with anger and "talking back." Additionally, LGP participants claimed that being cast as angry Black or Brown girls contributed to educators extinguishing or obstructing their academic engagement as well as adding to their distrust of their teachers.

For example, Shakeia at Diane Nash described a time when her teacher—a Black woman—corrected the way she expressed her frustration and tied it to a negative trait of her Black girlhood.

Shakeia: This one teacher, when I was upset, you know, I tend to talk [with] my hands or whatever. She was like, "don't do that because you'll be classified as ghetto." She was like, "I was just like you when I was young."

Shena: She was saying it as if it were a bad thing?

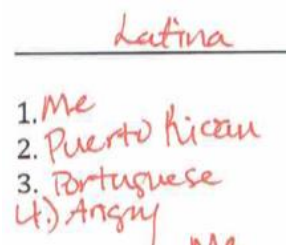
Shakeia: Yeah. She was like, "I was just like you and you will be seen as a Black angry little girl." So, it's just, I don't know. Yeah. It's weird.

(Nash, Session 1)

I find that the Black and Brown girls in this study often went through their school days preoccupied with the concern that they would be misunderstood or that their actions would be perceived as hostile. The compounding experiences of being villainized by their educators and being made to feel as if they were constantly in the wrong weighed heavily on their ability to engage academically. Equally important, it had an impact on their mental and emotional wellbeing. One major consequence of these daily struggles was a sense that they needed to regularly protect themselves against this stereotype and mitigate its effects.

Similar to Wun's (2016) finding that GoC fight in order to show that they are able to protect themselves, the Lavender Girls reported feeling that they must be angry in order to prevent maltreatment in school. GoC in this study used anger as a tool to protect themselves from and overcome the day-to-day injustices that they faced in school while being punished for displaying this emotion. In the word association activity, Jenny from Grace Lee Boggs, who was Puerto Rican and Indonesian, associated Latina with "angry" (Figure 8) and said, "I feel like I have to be angry… To make myself bigger. I seem like a angry little Brown girl because if I don't then I'm going to be harassed and I'm going to be oppressed… I'm not willing to belittle myself to please somebody else." (Lee Boggs, Session 3).

Figure 8. Jenny Word Association for "Latina"



Jenny (Lee Boggs) associates Latina with her ethnicity (Puerto Rican) and adds angry as a fourth word.

Jenny claimed that she regularly had to advocate for herself when she was not receiving the proper academic services and resources that she needed and that she was often dismissed by her educators when doing so.

The Lavender Girls reported that one of the factors that contributed to their frustrations and anger was being disregarded by their educators. However, the expression of anger was often the cause of much of the punishment that LGP participants experienced. In essence, if the girls self-advocated and spoke up, they said that they would be penalized for being angry and argumentative. However, if they stayed silent or acquiesced, they worried that they ran the risk of being "harassed" or "oppressed" (Jenny, Lee Boggs, Session 3). Up to this point, I have discussed how the Lavender Girls felt they were followed by presumptions of anger and combativeness throughout their school days. This awareness led them to refute and protest the ways in which they have been characterized as mean, unfriendly, and hostile, especially with regard to their appearance. In the following section, I discuss the ways in which GoC perceived that being deemed violent and aggressive would often lead to being harshly punished.

"She can defend herself. Oh, but the White girl can't."

In addition to being angry, the Lavender Girls reported being portrayed as aggressors and punished based on assumptions that they were violent. During the final session at Dolores Huerta, Blanca, who identified as Mexican and Cambodian, recounted a story about a time when she was suspended for fighting with a male classmate. She claimed that she was defending herself after a classmate hit her, but the administrator did not believe her and suspended the both of them. Here, Blanca shared her thoughts on how being a GoC shaped her suspension, taking on what she imagined as the voice of the administrator.

> Blanca: I bet you if I was White, [the administrator] would've just suspended him. I'm just saying. Like, "you ain't heard? She's White? You're suspended."
>
> Candace: Like, "why would you do that? She's so little."
>
> Blanca: "Oh, she's Asian? She knows karate. She can defend herself. Oh, but the White girl can't."

(Huerta, Session 6)

Candace, who identified as a Black girl, asserted that "[educators] see Black girls as these mean, aggressive animals" even though Black girls know "how to cope with other people" and "how to talk to other people" (Huerta, Session 6).

Like Alicia, who described herself as "good-hearted," Candace emphasized the abilities of Black girls to connect with people and how this is at odds with their educators' perceptions of them as "mean, aggressive animals." This finding aligns with extant literature on the ways in which Women and Girls of Color, especially those from poor/working-class backgrounds, are often constructed as violent and aggressive, thus justifying the punishment and harm to which they are subject in school and other spaces (López & Chesney-Lind, 2014; Slakoff, 2020). In this study, GoC reported perceiving that they were often preemptively punished under the assumption that they were the aggressors or that they were more capable of defending

themselves than their White peers. However, unlike the ways that they have described internalizing or acquiescing to other stereotypes that have been imposed upon them (e.g., lazy, unintelligent, loud), none of the Lavender Girls characterized themselves as aggressive or prone to violence. Rather, as I have indicated earlier in this section, they saw themselves as loving individuals, who were generous, kind, and caring.

In the instances when the Lavender Girls reported acting violently or engaging in physical fights, they claimed to do so as an act of self-defense when bullied by peers or as a response to perceived disrespect and humiliation from educators. Here, Candace explained how although she is able to engage in what would be considered violent behavior when she feels belittled, she is not a violent person:

> Yes, I can get ghetto or ratchet or whatever they want to call it when I feel disrespected. Yes, I sure can, but that's not the type of person that I am… I try to remove myself from the situation, but it's hard when it's constantly behind you, when it's constantly following you. Like, I can't do anything without getting attacked by a staff member here.
>
> (Candace, Dolores Huerta, Session 7)

Like many teenage Black and Brown girls, Candace knew how to put on a tough exterior and—when she deemed necessary—engaged in what would be perceived as aggressive behavior in order "to negotiate for safety and respect in her everyday life" (Jones, 2010, p. 99). In Candace's case, she reported feeling perpetually targeted by the staff at her school, whom she described as "constantly following" her. Further in this dissertation, I discuss how the surveillance that GoC reported experiencing in school contributes to their perception of school as an unsafe and carceral space.

Liberatory Academic Engagement: The Lavender Girls' Ways of Learning

Thus far in this chapter, I have addressed the first research question of the dissertation by examining the essence of the schooling experiences of GoC who have been punished and excluded from advanced courses in school. I find that the Lavender Girls feel that stereotypes and pathologization of them as unfit students are some of the most significant factors that deprive them of the opportunities and freedoms to engage academically. Additionally, punishment (both formal and informal) also hinders them from participating in school, take away their opportunities to learn, and strip them of their dignity. In this section, I explore the ways in which LGP participants perceived the positive ways that their intersecting identities defined their academic engagement, specifically how it helped them take ownership of their education in spite of the hardships that they faced in school. For the students in this study, the frequent punishment and exclusion that they experienced often forced them to develop unconventional ways to participate in school, ways where they felt validated and free.

I conceptualize the Lavender Girls' ways of learning and academically engaging as *Liberatory Academic Engagement (LAE).* This concept is inspired by and builds on the scholarship of Delgado Bernal on race-gendered epistemologies (2002), Walker (1984) and Banks-Wallace (2000) on womanism, Isasi-Díaz (1992, 2004), Villaseñor et al. (2013) on mujerism, and Zinn and Dill on multicultural feminism (1996). I define LAE as the frameworks and lived experiences that help Black and Brown girls feel confident and free to participate in and navigate the schooling process independently and on their own terms. There are three elements that make up LAE: (1) love for and protection of self; (2) familial responsibilities; and (3) commitment to sisterhood (i.e., other GoC). Taken together, these three elements create the backdrop for the Lavender Girls' enthusiasm for school and commitment to their postsecondary success, which are shaped significantly by their families, each other, and their identities as GoC

from poor/immigrant backgrounds. In the following sections, I elaborate on each of the three dimensions of LAE and how they bolster the Lavender Girls' ways of engaging in the academic process and thriving in school.

Love for Self: The Source of Strength

For the Lavender Girls, central to LAE is the belief that their identity is an asset and a positive influence that helps them engage academically (Figure 9). LGP participants indicated that their love for their multiply marginalized identities and desire to protect themselves often served as a source of strength, knowledge, and power to navigate the daily challenges that they faced in school. The Anzaldua Lavender Girls talked about the knowledge and traits that they gained from being GoC from poor and/or immigrant backgrounds that their wealthy, White peers did not have.

Malia: I think it's cool to be who we are, not starting off rich, because we know how to survive on our own, and then when their (wealthy, White peers) parents die or whatever, they're just going to survive on money. They don't know how to live on their own. They've got like personal chefs, and we can keep ourselves.

Felicia: They can't handle certain situations that we can handle.

Shena: Like what?

Malia: Like family problems.

Felicia: Stuff like that, or problems with people, they don't really know how to act. They just think everything can go their way.

Anna: I just feel like we have tougher skin.

Malia: Yeah. I think we have tougher skin because of the things we face, and how we grew up.

Shena: Hardship really makes you tougher a lot of times.

Anna: When we grow up, I feel like we see what reality really is, but for them, it's just like rainbows and unicorns.

(Anzaldua, Session 2)

In this conversation, Malia described embracing her low-income background and identity, recognizing that it gave her the knowledge "to survive" and take care of herself. This assertion, made by other Lavender Girls, demonstrates that GoC gained a sense of confidence and independence from growing up in financial hardship.

Figure 9. Lavender Girls' Positive Self-Descriptions from Identity Flower

Chantel, Kiki, Shakeia, Shya (Nash) describe themselves as caring, responsible, loyal, and loving individuals.

Felicia followed up by claiming that Black and Brown girls have the ability to navigate life's challenges, such as those related to family or relating with people. I find that LGP participants often felt that they were more socially adept because they were used to diffusing situations where they were misunderstood or accused of wrongdoing. Additionally, they were adaptable and capable of adjusting due to their experiences with things not going their way or as they planned. Finally, the Anzaldua students claimed that, in some ways, they were more resilient because of their exposure to "reality" and hardship at an early age compared to their White, wealthy peers whom they imagined to be protected and sheltered from such realities.

Between extreme poverty and homelessness to sexual abuse and neglect, Anna explained that she had her fair share of life's hardships and considered herself strong because of it. When I asked her how the strength she drew from her identity and experiences helped her in school, she answered, "sometimes if I'm going through a tough time, I just think about everything that I've been through already. If I can make it through that, then I can make it through a tough time in

school" (Anzaldua, Session 1). Like other Lavender Girls, Anna assessed her experiences in relation to the hardships that she had endured, along with her confidence in her ability to overcome, in order to provide her with the motivation to keep going. I find this perspective to be harmonious with the epistemologies of WoC when Black and Brown feminists theorize about the struggle for liberation in relation to other struggles that they face (Isasi- Díaz et al., 1992; Walker, 1984; Zinn & Dill, 1996). As young WoC, the Lavender Girls demonstrated their keen insight of this reality and conducted themselves with this knowledge so that they were able to engage academically in spite of the obstacles put in their way.

Familial Responsibilities: Inspiration, Motivation, and Reason to Succeed

The love, cultural richness, and support of their families are also at the heart of LAE. Lavender Girls reported their familial responsibilities being the other significant motivator in their academic engagement. I argue that it is crucial for educators to have a deep understanding of the contexts of the families of their Black and Brown girls as many of these students come from families that have suffered greatly under systemic injustices, generational poverty, domestic violence, and un/undertreated mental illness. In these contexts, Black and Brown girls are often left to care for hurt, struggling, and vulnerable members of their family—older and younger—and often bring these responsibilities to school with them. The Lavender Girls never expressed anger or resentment for their family members for whom they cared because they seemed to understand the systemic nature of their families' struggles. Instead, they saw their responsibilities to their families as positively influencing their academic journey and informing their LAE by adding purpose and value to their lives as well as direction and motivation.

One of Blanca's goals was to make her Cambodian, immigrant mother "happy" and to "show her that she came to this country for something" (Huerta, Session 7). Like other Lavender

Girls from immigrant families, Blanca's academic goals were anchored in ensuring that the sacrifices that her mother made to come to the U.S. were not in vain. Additionally, Blanca claimed that her siblings also motivated her to do better in school and to pursue a postsecondary education.

> (I want to show my mom) that her oldest can graduate because growing up I was smoking weed. She was talking crap saying, "You're not going to be anything in life. Look at what your siblings are looking at. You want them to do the same thing you are?" That really like changed me and I want them to live a positive life. I don't want them to grow up in Long Beach and be in and out of jail and stuff, get into gangs. I want to go to college, get a good job, be able to afford something to move my family out of here.
>
> (Huerta, Session 7)

Blanca's college and career goals were inspired by her mother's sacrifices and revolved around her obligations to be a good role model for her younger siblings. She also aspired to move her family to a different city to prevent her siblings from getting entangled in gangs and the criminal justice system.

According to the Lavender Girls, their familial commitments, especially to the younger members of their family, were a central and motivating factor in their future. When I asked the Lavender Girls to write about the most important people in their lives and their goals for the future, many of them included younger family members for whom they wanted to "be a good role model" (Figure 10).

Figure 10. The Lavender Girls' Young Family Members on Their Tree of Life

In the Tree of Life, Nadiya and Shawna (Lee Boggs), Anna (Anzaldua), Shakeia (Nash), and Blanca (Huerta) write about the young people in their lives for whom they feel responsible.

Therefore, when they thought about college, they did not treat it as an opportunity to leave home and give up their obligations. Rather, getting a college education meant, for them, a shift into greater responsibilities, where they played larger caretaking roles in their families, which they claimed to embrace.

Another shared goal that emerged as salient in the Tree of Life artifact was LGP participants' desire to be able to provide comfort, support, and protection for their loved ones, particularly their parents (Figure 11). The Lavenders Girls expressed an awareness that their family arrangements involved circular/reciprocal responsibility where they would end up taking care of those who once took care of them. Ashlee's description of wanting to financially support her mother and her grandparents, is an example.

> So, another fear is like not to be able to give my mom everything that wanna give her. 'Cause I said that once I get enough money, I'll buy her a house and she don't have to pay for it. She don't have to pay mortgage and that. I can buy her own whip she don't have to pay the car or none of it…. And then like for my grandparents too 'cause they have the church so I… (want to) give them enough money so they can renovate it and have it how they want it and stuff like that.
>
> (Ashlee, Huerta, Session 3)

Figure 11. The Lavender Girls' Caring for Their Families on Their Tree of Life

In their Tree of Life, Kim, Cherissa (Nash), Nina (Anzaldua), Alicia (Huerta) write about supporting and taking care of their families.

With respect to the familial dimension of LAE, the Lavender Girls had an expansive view of the family members who fell under their care and responsibilities, which goes against the traditional Western make up of nuclear families.

Like Ashlee, when thinking about and planning for who they would support in the future, many of the Lavender Girls included people outside of their nuclear family, such as grandparents, cousins, aunts, and uncles. This intergenerational and broad perspective on family is aligned with the epistemologies of women of color where family—beyond its nuclear members—serves as a significant system of support and source of motivation (Bernal, 2001; Collins, 2000). Congruent with research on the protective factor of familial obligations for GoC (Milan & Wortel, 2015), the Lavender Girls found that their responsibilities to their families gave their lives meaning and was a generative force in their LAE. In the next section, I discuss the third dimension that bolsters the LAE of the Lavender Girls—sisterhood—and how it offers them a place of solidarity, kindness, and love.

Sisterhood: A Soft Place to Land

Across all LGP sites, I witnessed the Lavender Girls, regardless if they were friends prior to participating in the study, give each other a soft place to land and help one another develop their LAE. They offered a word of comfort and encouragement, made each other laugh, held one another accountable, and listened without judgement. They demonstrated not only the potential of the Lavender Girls' space for their wellbeing and academic engagement, but also the unspoken commitment they had to seeing their collective academic success. I realized that the sisterhood that formed during LGP did not occur by happenstance or solely because of my efforts. Rather, the shared experiences of financial hardship, the untimely death of loved ones, various struggles, and punishment in school created a bond between the Lavender Girls even before they became "the Lavender Girls." These experiences helped them develop a deep sense of empathy, which allowed them to support one another in ways that were respectful and loving.

Although I consider myself an empathetic person, I was often ill-prepared for the crying and sadness that accompanied the stories that the Lavender Girls shared during our sessions. Fortunately, I never felt like I had to do the comforting alone as the Lavender Girls had such a profound sense of empathy for one another. In this excerpt, the Nash participants demonstrated sisterhood through the way that they supported Kayla as she had difficulty talking about her experience of losing her cousin.

Kayla:	…that cousin was from my stepdad's side of the family. And he was the only guy I would call cousin and stuff like that and he passed away…. And then in tenth grade... *(begins to cry)*
Shakeia:	Oh lord. Cry, cry. It's okay.
Shya:	Don't mess your eyelashes up.
	(Lavender Girls, including Kayla, laugh)
Shakeia:	Shya!
Shya:	That glue gonna start comin' off.
Cherissa:	It's okay, booboo.
Shena:	Lashes aren't cheap! Yeah, somebody get her a tissue, please.
	(Kayla grabs a napkin from lunch)
Shakeia:	Don't use that!
Cherissa:	Don't use that. Grease on it!
	(Kiki gets up to get a tissue and gives it to Kayla)

(Nash, Session 3)

The Nash Lavender Girls saw Kayla through a difficult moment of talking about losing her cousin by speaking to her gently, attempting to make her laugh, and looking out for her physical appearance.

This multi-layered support with which they embraced Kayla helped her to smile and continue to share her story. Lavender Girls at other school sites approached supporting one another in similar ways—through softness, humor, and attention to each other's physical state. As I sat there and watched the Nash Lavender Girls care for Kayla, I imagined them in class, perhaps attempting to make each other laugh to keep from crying and being reprimanded for being too loud and disruptive. And I wondered how often the gentleness with which they treated one another was overlooked by their educators whom they reported only saw the worst in them.

I find that in addition to emotional comfort, GoC also provided one another with academic encouragement and accountability. This peer support that is grounded in a sense of sisterhood has been shown to positively influence the academic success of Black and Brown girls (Jones et al., 2018; Shin et al., 2007). In this excerpt, Shakeia wondered how hard she would work in college, admitting that she was not always serious about her schoolwork in high school.

> Shakeia: The college that I'm going to, it don't cost a lot, but it's still money that my momma has to take out just so I can pay for it. So, it makes me want to go extra harder than what I already did. In high school, I be playing around, I'm not even going to lie, but I know in college I'm actually paying for it, so it's like ... I don't know if Imma be different. I'm probably going to act the same.
>
> Shya: No, you not. Not with me.
>
> (Nash, Session 2)

Shya quickly responded to say that she would hold Shakeia accountable. With Shya and Shakeia planning to attend the same college, Shya had taken it upon herself to ensure that her friend committed to her postsecondary schoolwork.

I found that having one another go through the process of applying and getting into the same college offered Shakeia, Shya, and Cherissa the support that they claimed they did not receive from their educators. In many ways, their LAE was shaped by the guidance, help, and

encouragement that they gave to and received from one another. This collective approach to academic success and postsecondary pursuit is informed by epistemologies of Women of Color that prioritize collective liberation and wellness in the pursuit of each individual's goals. Understanding this is critical to understanding the ways in which GoC engage in the academic process on their own terms.

Finally, as part of the sisterhood element of LAE, I find that GoC provided each other with a soft place to land by listening to one another without judgement. When Eileen, who identified as a bisexual Korean girl, recounted her experience with being bullied in school and described becoming depressed as a result of it, the girls offered support and empathy. Eileen indicated that she brought four razor blades to school to protect herself as she stated, "I did not feel secure at all" (Lee Boggs, Session 2). When school administrators discovered the razors, Eileen reported that she was expelled for bringing weapons to school. As she was going through her story, Eileen hesitated a couple of times when I probed deeper and asked for details. In this vignette, Eileen admitted that she had never "come out" to anyone other than Jenny (fellow LGP participant).

> This is actually the first time I came out. I only told her *(points to Jenny)* cause she's like, my closest, best friend. But then, to this *(indicates the LGP circle)*, is like the first time. The reason I brought (the razor blades) is also because I was depressed, very depressed. I cut myself.
>
> (Lee Boggs, Session 2)

It was unclear whether Eileen was coming out to a group as bisexual for the first time or sharing for the first time that she battled depression and self-harm. However, what was clear—as I replayed the videotape multiple times to watch the reaction of each LGP participant—was that the Lavender Girls gave Eileen their undivided attention. They each looked at her with compassion and gentleness. Unlike other conversations where they would typically talk over one

another, the Lee Boggs students seemed to recognize the weight of this moment for Eileen and gave her all of the space that she needed to hesitate, think, and share. While I am not suggesting that White girls are not empathetic or sensitive, society fails to portray Black and Brown girls in this light. The GoC in this study were uniquely attuned and sensitive to these types of moments and equipped to attend to one another's need for a warm, loving, and safe place. I find that this type of authentic sisterly support for GoC was not only an important aspect of LAE but was crucial for the overall wellbeing of these adolescent students in general.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed and elaborated on the essence of the schooling experiences and academic engagement of the Lavender Girls—GoC who have been punished and excluded from advanced courses in school. For the most part, LGP participants reported that their academic engagement was negatively impacted by the ways that they were presumed incompetent, pathologized, and villainized in school. Focus group and artifact data revealed that the Lavender Girls—Black and Brown girls from low-income and/or immigrant backgrounds—viewed both their education (or lack of educational support) and their punishment in school to be largely influenced by their educators' negative assumptions of their multiply marginalized identities.

Yet, despite (or perhaps, as a response to) these challenges and the adverse effects on their academic engagement, the Lavender Girls demonstrated that they had developed, what I have termed, *Liberatory Academic Engagement.* I have defined LAE as the ways in which students, who have been marginalized from the schooling process, find motivation to and equip themselves with the knowledge and skills to obtain their academic goals. In this chapter, I described how I conceptualized the LAE of the Black and Brown girls in this study based on

three dimensions: (1) love for oneself, (2) familial obligations, and (3) commitment to the collective success of sisterhood.

Although the GoC in my study were specifically those who experienced punishment and exclusion, I argue that these findings can be expanded to GoC who may not share the same experiences in school. Extant research shows that Black and Brown girls, despite their levels of academic achievement are subject to multiple types of inequities, such as being disproportionately disciplined through suspension and expulsion, punished for more subjective infractions, and tracked out of honors courses and into general, remedial, and/or vocational classes. Moreover, there is a growing body of literature that suggest that GoC engage in the schooling process in a way that centers their familial obligations and that their approach to academic success typically includes consideration of their roles and responsibilities to their families. Thus, the findings in this dissertation have broader implications for how GoC (in general) are educated and cared for in schools beyond those who are included in this study.

In the following chapter, I offer recommendations for how educators can tap into the LAE of Black and Brown girls to guide and support these students to achieve their academic goals.

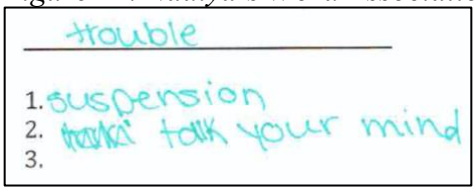
CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS, PART 2

Learning (Even) When School is an Uncaring and Unsafe Place

> Shena: So that's why (school) feels like jail? Because you don't feel free?
>
> Nadiya: No, school's supposed to be a place where you feel safe and where you feel like you can express yourself willingly. It's like, you know, [at] home, but it feels like home feels like a better place to be than here because obviously, they (educators) not doing they job then. Especially those teachers and administration and the principal and the person above the principal, they just wanna make every call for you. You can't sit there and stand up for yourself.
>
> (Nadiya, Lee Boggs, Session 5)

Nadiya, who identified as a poor Black and African American girl and a daughter of immigrants from the African continent (Guinea, Senegal, Sierra Leon, and Nigeria), had a gregarious spirit and a sharp tongue. Her incisive critiques of her school—and society, broadly—often left me speechless. Nadiya's remark about how school should be "a place you feel safe and where you feel like you can express yourself willingly" is a reflection of how she associated her experiences of often getting in trouble for saying what she is thinking (Figure 12). As I have previously mentioned, behaviors that would typically be encouraged in advanced courses, typically among middle-class White and high tracked students (Kelly & Carbonaro, 2011; Yonezawa & Jones, 2006), such as expressing one's opinion and engaging in debate, were often punished when displayed by Black and Brown girls who are in low track courses.

Figure 12. Nadiya's Word Association for "Trouble"



Nadiya associates speaking her mind with getting into trouble.

As an adolescent, Nadiya was demonstrating her epistemological leanings that aligned with Black Feminisms and Womanism. Engaging in LAE, Nadiya prioritized her wellbeing and success as a Black girl and deemed her existence in school as a form of protest. Perhaps because of her experiences living a life of resistance, Nadiya saw her lack of freedom in school as similar to the lack of freedom of those who were incarcerated. For Nadiya and other Lavender Girls, it seemed that being deprived of the freedom to express themselves and share their ways of knowing and being was as unbearable as having their physical freedom taken away.

In this chapter, I address the second research question, *"How does being tracked out of advanced courses and discipline shape the academic engagement of GoC?"* Additionally, I continue to explore how the Lavender Girls' use their identity to shape their academic engagement in light of being punished and excluded, further developing LAE as part of their approach to learning. I find that the Lavender Girls perceived discipline and academic tracking policies as animating school-imposed stereotypes which often forced them to experience learning in a state of contradiction. This state of contradiction was a result of LGP participants viewing themselves as targets of humiliation, neglect, and severe punishment rather than defiant, misbehaving, and violent students—as they reported that their educators perceived them. Additionally, I explore how GoC made sense of and responded to being denied certain opportunities, resources, and services that they deemed critical to participating in the academic process. I find that the Lavender Girls regarded these policies, along with other elements of schooling, as reproducing carceral logics and spaces that made school an uncaring and unsafe place to learn.

Deprived of an Education: Punishing Effects of Pathologization and Villanization of GoC

Previously, I examined the ways in which the Lavender Girls reported to being frequently pathologized as dumb and lazy as well as villainized as mean and hostile in school. Extant scholarship demonstrates that such negative and deficit beliefs about students impact the ways in which they are educated, cared for, and punished (Cooper, 2003; Harklau, 2000; Gorski, 2012). The findings in this chapter around school discipline are consistent with literature and demonstrate that the Lavender Girls endured what can arguably be characterized as a double-punishment, experiencing what Wun (2016) calls formal school punishment (e.g., detention, in- and out-of-school suspension, and threat of expulsion) along with informal practices that punish (e.g., humiliation, neglect, and disrespect).

My findings suggest that GoC who were disciplined and excluded from high-level courses were not only punished severely by being frequently removed from the learning environment, but when they were permitted to remain in school and/or the classroom, they reported that they were excluded from rigorous coursework, high teacher expectations, and certain postsecondary opportunities. For the Black and Brown girls in this study, being punished by being deprived of opportunities to learn *while also* being excluded from high-level or -quality education resulted in feelings of humiliation, disrespect, and disregard. LGP participants reported that they experienced low expectations from their educators and perceived that they were deprived of quality and rigorous instruction.

Pushed Out, Singled Out, Ignored and Neglected: "They don't have much expectations for us"

When the Lavender Girls reported being doubted and pathologized as unintelligent, their accounts were often accompanied by descriptions of what they perceived as low teacher expectations and lack of support. This finding aligns with literature on academic tracking that

shows that teachers not only expect less of their students who are in low-level courses, but also shape their expectations around ascriptive characteristics: the race, gender, and class of their students (Boutte & McCoy, 1994; Davis & Haller, 1981; Oakes & Guiton, 1995). When asked about their perceptions of their educators' expectations of them as GoC in low-tracked courses who have been punished, Dionne's comments encapsulated the essence of the shared experiences of other Lavender Girls across school sites. Here, Dionne described how being a Black girl had shaped her academic experiences, particularly around working towards graduation, by highlighting what she considered as her educators' lower expectations of her because she was a Black girl.

> … not saying [educators] just expect Black people not to succeed, but they don't really put us on a pedestal. So, it's like we're all being doubted. I feel throughout my school years, I have a couple—my teachers, they was bomb diggity. But, I'm just saying, like, the other ones, they were so degrading. Even these teachers in this school, they're really degrading. They just look over us. They won't really talk with us.
>
> (Dionne, Lee Boggs, Session 2)

According to Dionne, although her educators did not explicitly indicate that they did not expect much from their Black students, their seeming lack of interest in communicating with these students signaled to GoC their low expectations. The Lavender Girls reported that there were three essential states of being for GoC who were not held in high regard by educators. First, they were consistently ignored or neglected by their educators, which they then internalized as low teacher expectations and lack of support (Andrews & Gutwein, 2017). Second, they reported being punished with in- or out-of-school suspension or related punishments. Third, they were singled out unfairly for their (mis)behavior. Dionne's description of being disregarded as "degrading" is indicative of the effects and power of the instances when Lavender Girls claimed that they were ignored by their educators.

With respect to teachers' expectations, Black and Brown girls reported similar perceptions of their teachers. For instance, although Dionne's sentiments around teacher expectations spoke specifically to the experiences of Black girls and students, they were shared by non-Black Lavender Girls as well. Her schoolmate, Jenny, who identified as Indonesian and Puerto Rican, claimed that the Lee Boggs educators lacked high expectations for Brown girls, and said "they don't have much expectations for us and it's really noticeable throughout the teachers in the building" (Lee Boggs, Session 2). In this excerpt, she explained her perceptions of her educators' low expectations from their lack of follow through on or interest in her ideas.

> … they don't see like there's much for us. But like for example, I present a lot of my ideas and my opinion and they're kinda like 'oh yeah, sounds like a good idea,' but they never wanna take action. Cause they didn't believe in us.
>
> (Jenny, Lee Boggs, Session 2)

Jenny, as I have previously described, was a strong-willed and independent young woman who was highly motivated to succeed. Much of her determination came from being a young mother, but as I got to know her, I came to understand that Jenny's ambition had been a part of who she was long before she had her baby. Jenny indicated that her eagerness to engage in her education, address issues in her school, and take the lead on student activities was regularly met with disinterest and a lack of support by her teachers.

For Jenny and the other Lavender Girls, their educators' dismissal of their ideas and lack of interest in engaging them in conversation, coupled with feeling pathologized as dumb and slow, led them to feel that they were not receiving adequate support in order to engage academically. According to research, for students like LGP participants who are tracked out of college-bound and advanced courses (Kelly & Carbonaro, 2012; Yonezawa & Jones, 2006) and those who have been disciplined (Gershenson & Dee, 2017; Gregory et al., 2011), perceptions of

low teacher expectations and a lack of support from teachers are a common experience. In the case of LGP participants, the findings suggest that their anticipation of lower teacher expectations and being disregarded had a negative impact on their academic engagement by leading them to avoid seeking the help of educators because they assumed that they would be denied. As a result, they were arguably twice-denied academic opportunities and resources that could have helped them actualize their postsecondary goals.

As I described in chapter three, academic tracking in Lee Boggs primarily manifested in the form of segregated schools that occupied the Buckingham Building. According to the Lee Boggs participants, Success Academy, the predominantly White school in Buckingham, had more supportive and attentive educators, better resources, and greater academic opportunities, such as school trips. They reported that some of these opportunities were available to Lee Boggs students only with the permission of their principal. When the Lee Boggs Lavender Girls discussed the possibility of their principal, Ms. Kimpton, allowing them to participate in Success' programs, they nearly unanimously agreed that she would "say no" (Dionne, Lee Boggs, Session 2). The Lee Boggs participants assumed, based on their experiences of being dismissed and unsupported, that Ms. Kimpton would deny them from participating in the Success programs. Additionally, they speculated that Ms. Kimpton would likely consider the request itself to be ridiculous, with Nadiya suggesting, "Kimpton would definitely look at us like we got five thousand heads" (Lee Boggs, Session 2).

What Dionne, Nadiya, and the other Lee Boggs Lavender Girls were doing, in this conversation, was a form of "labeling," which occurs when students "pick up overt and subtle cues and labels and use what they learn to assess themselves and their abilities… and shapes their future behavior" (Broussard and Joseph, 1998, p. 114). Dionne and Nadiya's comments

indicated that they were resigned to the idea of Ms. Kimpton not permitting them to participate in Success Academy's opportunities. Jenny, who typically asserted and advocated for herself, also demonstrated the power of self-labeling. She joined the discussion about Ms. Kimpton's likely responses and did not interrogate this subtle form of inequity that they experienced. She noted, "it's (opportunities offered at Success Academy) open to the whole school, but I guess they don't really announce it to us. Yeah" (Lee Boggs, Session 2). However, Jenny, like the Lee Boggs Lavender Girls seemed resigned to this reality and did not then express their usual indignation at this perceived inequity. Although the Lavender Girls were generally vocal in demanding that their schools provide them with a quality education, they also were most emotionally vulnerable to their educators' (low) expectations and lack of support. I find that this emotional vulnerability would then hinder them from engaging academically (e.g., asking their principal if they can participate in an opportunity).

Deprived of Instruction: "We get our education taken away from us because we're not in class"

According to the Lavender Girls, a common form of punishment and exclusion that they experienced was being removed from class for what they described as innocuous behaviors (e.g., sitting with their head on the table, talking too much, being perceived as having an attitude). They reported that when they were removed, they were typically sent to stand outside of the classroom, to the principal's office, or to classroom detention/in-school-suspension. In a conversation with the Anzaldua Lavender Girls, they described what generally happened when they were put out of class as well as the effects that this punishment had on their education.

Shena: How long are you usually out there for?

Felicia: The rest of the period.

Nina: Until the teacher decides to go out there and get you.

Malia: Or just let you do what you want.

Felicia: They take their time, and by the time you go back in class, what they were working on, everyone's already done, so you don't get to do it.

Nina: Or the bell rings, and then that's when—

Malia: Or they'll just let you do whatever, like they'll send you outside and they'll forget about you and let you do what you want to do.

Shena: How does that affect your education?

Anna: We get our education taken away from us because we're not in class.

(Anzaldua, Session 4)

Here, Felicia and Anna highlighted their recognition that, in being removed from class, they were also being deprived of an education. Their comments indicate that they recognized that they were losing valuable instruction time and the opportunity to complete their assignments. Much of the literature around loss of instruction as it is tied to school discipline is centered in discussions about suspension, which I will address further in this section. However, the Lavender Girls' reports shine a spotlight on how being sent out of the classroom whether for five minutes or for the entire class period, is another way that Black and Brown girls are punished and lose out on instruction time.

The Lavender Girls' comments also highlighted what might be described as opaque if not arbitrary deployment of discipline. Typically, and based on my observations as a school-based researcher in this and prior research, administrators encourage their teachers to resolve the issue inside the classroom before resorting to kicking a student out (Wiley et al., 2018). Yet, the specific policies and decision-making about such policies are not known to, or understood by, the Lavender Girls. When they were put out of the classroom as punishment, they reported that the

decision, including the perceived infraction and its severity, was entirely under the discretion of their teacher. In their discussion, the LGP participants did not describe any specific disciplinary policy around sending students out of the class. Instead, as demonstrated in the discussion with the Anzaldua students, they described their experiences with the power and discretion that their teachers had to decide what types of behaviors were punished through exclusion from the learning space.

When I asked the LGP participants about the infractions that led to teachers removing them from the classroom, they reported behaviors that can be described as "something small," according to Malia. In this conversation, they gave examples of such behaviors:

Shena: What do you get sent outside for?

Malia: Probably talking too much or disrupting class. Something small.

Felicia: Or if you say your work to the teacher [inaudible 00:31:06] They think you're giving them attitude or something.

Anna: Or sitting like Malia is. *(Malia sits with her chin resting on the table)*

Shena: You get sent outside for that?

Anna: Because you're not paying attention.

Malia: Put your head up. If you're going to fall asleep, you can fall asleep outside.

(Anzaldua, Session 4)

To date, there is limited scholarship on the process and circumstances around why teachers send their students out of class. Perhaps even more frustrating, Lavender Girls reported when they were removed from class, they also described feeling a general sense of neglect by their educators (Malia: "they'll send you outside and they'll forget about you"), which has negative implications for their academic engagement. Using a critical race feminist lens to analyze this reality that the Lavender Girls face, I assert that the ways that school discipline policies are

designed within a structure of power—where the GoC have the least power—contributes to the oppression of Black and Brown girls (Wing, 2003).

I find that many of the behaviors that the Lavender Girls reported as infractions that led to them being sent out of class were also the stereotyped characteristics and pathologized behaviors that were ascribed to these students—they were too loud, too hostile, too lazy. Extensive scholarship on how GoC are disciplined reveal the same troubling trend of these students being punished for subjective infractions, largely at the discretion of their educator (Morris & Perry, 2017; E.W. Morris, 2007). These stereotypes have historical roots in the intersection of the multiple marginalized identities of poor/working-class Black and Brown girls. However, it was in the ways that the Lavender Girls reported being punished and excluded based on these stereotypes that I observed the negative consequences of their multiply marginalized identities take shape.

Research is available on how punishment through school suspension and expulsion results in a severe loss of instruction for Black and Brown girls as well as the academic disparities between these students and their White counterparts (Gregory et al., 2010; Losen, 2017; Pearman et al., 2019). As the conversation with the Anzaldua girls continued, we examined how they viewed suspension affecting their education and academic engagement. Malia began by saying, "sometimes it (suspension) slows it (education) down." When I asked her to elaborate, the following discussion took place:

Malia: Like if I get suspended, then I miss four or five days of school and then when I get back, I have to catch up.

Shena: Mm-hmm *(affirmative)*.

Malia: And I might not catch up in time because I have to move on to the next thing, you know?

> Rita: I feel like if you get suspended, or a lot of suspension or stuff, and you try to apply for college they will look at it and be like "Oh, we don't want you here because."
>
> (Lavender Girls, Gloria Anzaldua, Session 4)

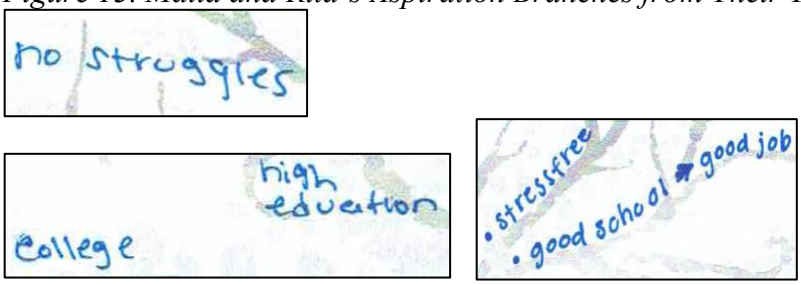
Specific to this dissertation, I find that GoC were keenly aware of the long-term, negative impacts of frequent punishment (often for harmless, adolescent behaviors) on their academic goals.

Malia, who had been expelled from her previous high school then sent to an alternative school, followed by juvenile hall prior to enrolling at Anzaldua, explained that suspension caused her to inevitably fall behind with her schoolwork. This experience is supported by a recent study that found that Black students who were suspended missed critical assignments and had difficulty catching up academically, thus putting them further behind (Bell and Puckett, 2020). Rita, who claimed that she was rarely punished, suggested that suspension may negatively impact postsecondary opportunities because colleges may not want to admit students who had been suspended. To this point, Rita's concerns are valid as research reveals that students who have discipline records often face limitations to college options and opportunities (Weissman & NaPier, 2015).

In Figure 13, Malia (Black) and Rita (Mexican), who both identified as low-class (poor), indicated the relationship between obtaining a college education and achieving a life that is free of (certain) hardships. In the branches of their Tree of Life, Malia and Rita wrote similar goals around obtaining a postsecondary education. Additionally, they stated in their educational ladder that they wished to achieve the highest level of education available to people in the U.S. (Figure 14). Across LGP sites, even among participants who claimed that they did not particularly like or do well in school, the Lavender Girls indicated that they aspired to achieve high levels of

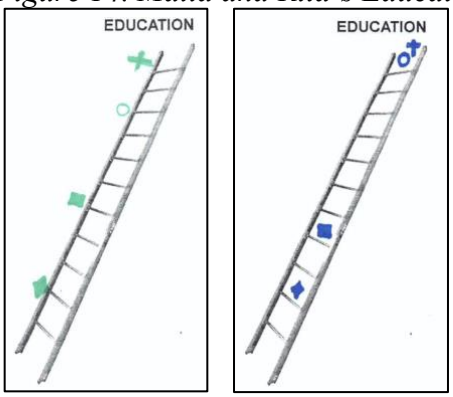
education. This finding contributes to research on the high academic aspirations of students who have been subject to school discipline and prevented from making their postsecondary goals a reality because of a lack of opportunities, resources, and support (Flower, 2015; Madrigal-Garcia & Acevedo-Gil, 2016).

Figure 13. Malia and Rita's Aspiration Branches from Their Tree of Life



Malia and Rita's (Anzaldua) aspire to obtain high levels of quality postsecondary education and live lives free of hardship.

Figure 14. Malia and Rita's Educational Attainment and Aspiration Ladder



Malia and Rita's (Anzaldua) aspire to obtain the highest levels of education among people in the United States (indicated by the +).

Deprived of Dignity: "You preparing us for college, but you still treat us like a child."

A topic that the Lavender Girls brought up frequently during our LGP sessions was around valuing respect and experiencing disrespect from their educators, especially with regard to punishment. They reported feeling overly scrutinized and stripped of their dignity whenever they were subject to school discipline regardless of the extent or severity of the penalty that they received. For a group of students who expressed deeply valuing respect from and for others (Figure 15), the consequences of feeling disrespected by educators, whom they expected to

educate and nurture them, was demonstrably severe. In this section, I focus primarily on how the interpersonal instances of discipline and punishment experienced by the Lavender Girls (e.g., castigated, called out in front of others, and sent out of the classroom) led to them feeling deprived of dignity. For LGP participants, I find that feeling a loss of their humanity in the process of punishment contributed to their continued exclusion and marginalization from the academic process as well as negative effects on their academic engagement.

Figure 15. Lavender Girls Values from Tree of Life

Shakeia's, Charmaine, Kiki (Nash), Nadiya (Lee Boggs), and Malia's (Anzaldua) shared values of respect from their Tree of Life activity.

One of the prominent themes that emerged in my analysis around the essence of these dehumanizing experiences was that LGP participants perceived that they were held under close scrutiny by their educators because of their identity as Black and Brown girls. This often led to feelings that were associated with surveillance and having their agency threatened. Here, the Nash Lavender Girls discussed feeling constantly policed and threatened by their educators for harmless behaviors.

Kayla: They always trying to threaten us with number two and ISE.

Shakeia: Detention is ISE, basically.

Shena: Does that go on your school record?

Shakeia: No.

Cherissa: No, they think it's discipline. They think it's helping us grow. We keep telling them, "you preparing us for college, but you still treat us like a child." Everything we do, we have our shirt un-tucked and

> it's like level one. We look at them wrong, level three for disrespect.
>
> (Nash, Session 2)

Although the Nash Lavender Girls claimed that ISE was detention and the ways punishment was meted out reflected formal discipline (i.e., with levels), the process through which students reported getting sent to ISE was often more reflective of interpersonal discipline for subjective infractions (e.g., perceived non-compliance and disrespect).

Additionally, because ISE referrals did not appear on students' disciplinary record, it seemed that this punishment was more aimed at teachers having the discretion to remove students, whom they may have deemed disruptive, from the classroom. Here, the consequence of this obscure discipline policy is not an official derogatory mark on a student's record, like a suspension or expulsion, but rather, and according to the Lavender Girls, it is further exclusion from the learning environment as well as humiliation. With regard to their perceptions of disrespect from educators, Cherissa who attended Nash, described feeling infantilized—a common dehumanizing experience during punishment also reported by other Lavender Girls. According to the Lavender Girls, examples of infantilizing treatment from educators included being talked down to, reprimanded like a child, and not being given opportunities to explain themselves or be heard. These experiences contributed to GoC feeling dehumanized and deprived of dignity in school.

Similar to Wun (2016), I argue that infantilization is a form of social control (Crenshaw, 2011) that dictates to Black and Brown girls their place in the hierarchy of power within the school and classroom. This exploitation of power by educators, as Cherissa suggested, leads to Black and Brown girls' being constantly surveilled rather than academically prepared for postsecondary opportunities. Like other findings in this chapter, I observed that rather than

spending their time in school primarily focusing on their academic goals, the Lavender Girls were often preoccupied and worried about being scrutinized for behaviors that they feared would lead to their educators disrespecting or scrutinizing them in front of their peers.

Another common sentiment that the Lavender Girls reported feeling when they experienced interpersonal punishment was humiliation. The following conversation with the Nash participants took place when I asked if they had ever felt embarrassed by an educator while they were being punished:

> Shakeia: I do. And that's when I just start going off on them, because I feel like if I'm embarrassed, then I'm finna make you feel embarrassed by going off on you. You ain't going to know what to say, because I have something else to say, because I be coming up with comebacks like that… And then, the teachers, they like to call you out. You can be all the way across the room, and teacher see you, "Shakeia, you don't need to be doing—" I hate when teachers be doing that. Do not do that, just come to me and tell me what I'm doing wrong because then the whole class just get quiet and look at you. I'm like, "oh, my goodness."
>
> Cherissa: And they have a little group chat. They don't think we know about it.
>
> Shakeia: Oh yeah, I be reading it. I be reading it.
>
> Shena: Who?
>
> Shakeia: The teachers.
>
> Cherissa: They group chat about us.
>
> Shakeia: It be popping out, I be like... on Mr. Baker's phone, I be straight looking, because they be talking about us.
>
> (Nash, Session 2)

This experience shared by the Nash Lavender Girls confirms Koonce's finding that Black girls "live in an environment of disrespect," where they are repeatedly berated, talked down to, and

yelled at by their educators, and thus, rely on the speech practice "Talking with an Attitude" (TWA) to stand up for and assert themselves (2012, p. 42).

Using an intersectional lens and examining the nature of power within these instances of interpersonal punishment, I find that when Lavender Girls felt humiliated and powerless, one way that they attempted to reclaim their power was by TWA and attempting to embarrass their educators in return (Amemiya et al., 2020). Moreover, like participants from the other LGP sites, the Nash students reported that their educators engaged in behaviors that often made them "a site of spectacle" (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010, p. 20) and fodder for chatter (see: Nash participants talking about teacher group chat). Instances when they perceived that they were at the center of negative discussions amongst teachers contributed to GoC in this study feeling dehumanized and disrespected. In the next section, I discuss the ways in which the Lavender Girls felt that they were once again learning in a state of contradiction, but this time, they reported that they were punished while trying to be responsible and carry out adult responsibilities as teenagers.

Learning in Contradiction: Adult Responsibilities and Lack of Awareness in Schools

In this study, I find that Black and Brown girls were often given or took on adult homemaking responsibilities that were unique to them due to certain cultural norms that were tied to their race/ethnicity, gender, and age. Other times they also provided financial support to their families or were the sole financial provider for their own personal needs. However, in schools, these responsibilities were likely unknown by administrators and regularly went unacknowledged. In the worst cases, the Lavender Girls reported that educators disciplined them without knowledge of the context of their responsibilities at home or the circumstances that surrounded their acts of rule breaking, particularly those around attendance. LGP participants

indicated that because administrators and teachers were likely unaware, and certainly did not acknowledge the girls' external responsibilities, the Lavender Girls felt that their lived realities were being punished by their educators and their schools rather than being supported and understood.

Their home responsibilities to their families were roles that they claimed to take on with pride, purpose, and joy. Yet, the Lavender Girls also viewed these responsibilities as contributing to the ways that they were punished and excluded in school. At home, the Lavender Girls viewed themselves as helpful, caring, and responsible daughters, granddaughters, older sisters, mothers, and aunts while at school, they reported being made to feel as if they were irresponsible, rule-breaking, and defiant students. Living within these contradictions contributed to the Lavenders Girls' frustration and sense of being overly treated as children in school.

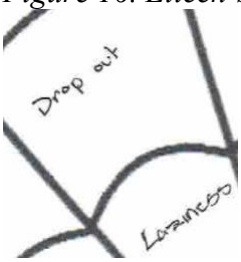
Financial Responsibilities: "I want to be dependable, be responsible with my own money"

As a Korean girl with an extensive discipline record and taking low-track courses, Eileen did not meet many conventional expectations of East Asian girls—to be demure, meek, and academically high achieving (Li, 2014; Perez, 2003). She was boisterous, outspoken, and admitted to having a temper. In the time that we spent together, I came to know Eileen as a soulful, generous, and loving young woman, who was always eager to help friends, family, and even me, a complete stranger. For the ability petal in her Identity Flower, Eileen described herself as "lazy" while she thought her educators saw her as a "drop out" (Figure 16) and said, "I think teachers—all of them—tell me that I'm a dropout, because I hardly come to school" (Lee Boggs, Session 1). When I asked her why she missed school so much, Eileen clarified that she actually did go to school, but she was often late because she worked after school. Her job at a retail store required her to commute to Times Square from Brooklyn via the subway. Although

she did not close the store on school nights, Eileen typically clocked out at 10 PM. She would then arrive at home around midnight or by 11 PM at the earliest (Lee Boggs, Session 1). This schedule left Eileen tired and getting little sleep each night, resulting in her constantly being late for school.

Eileen's commute to Times Square was at least one hour each way. During data collection at Lee Boggs, I stayed with a friend in Manhattan and had a similar commute time. It was grueling, exhausting, and—when trains were delayed or I was caught in heavy rain—extremely frustrating. As with other stereotypes that the Lavender Girls had begun to internalize, Eileen, when characterizing herself, would occasionally agree with her educators about her being "lazy." However, having a job as a teenager, especially one that required an hour-long commute late at night, arguably demonstrated motivation and a good work ethic. I find that Eileen's identity—poor, gender non-conforming, and raised by a single mother—made her uniquely visible and vulnerable to stereotypes of laziness in a majority Black and Brown school where the myth of the model minority did not apply to her.

Figure 16. Eileen's Ability from her Identity Flower



Eileen writes laziness as her (dis)ability.

When I asked Eileen why she worked, she responded, "I don't want to keep asking my parents[3] for money. I want to be dependable, be responsible with my own money… if I keep asking them for money, and at the moment they don't have it, then I feel regretful" (Lee Boggs

[3]Although Eileen lived with her mother, it seemed that she had a relationship with her father, who provided for her financially.

Session 1). She also mentioned the price of the events and materials associated with being a senior (e.g., prom, pictures, yearbook, and the senior trip), which the Lee Boggs Lavender Girls calculated to adding up to approximately $1,000 that they had to pay for on their own. Lee Boggs High School either failed to see (or did not address) that school events and the costs of school paraphernalia meant to reward seniors for completing high school actually created a financial burden for their poor/working-class Black and Brown girls. Because Eileen had to work to be able to afford to participate in her senior year without financially imposing on her parents, she was unable to maintain a healthy sleep schedule and was regularly late to school. Rather than figure out ways to support her dilemma, Eileen claimed that her educators often humiliated and reprimanded her for being late.

It was common for the Lavender Girls to describe interpersonal punishment via humiliation as being "picked on" or "bullied" by their educators. Eileen offered an example of a day when she and other students arrived late for school. Eileen claimed that she was the only one in the group who was punished, informally by being "picked on" by her teacher.

Eileen:	I came in around 4th, 5th period, but that's just because I'm just like, I woke up late again… but it wasn't even me that also wakes up late, all these other kids are waking up late.
Nadiya:	People purposely came late, but they decided to pick on Eileen.
Eileen:	They picked on me, so I'm just like, that made no sense. But I didn't want to call out names, and I was not gonna snitch, I was not gonna do any of that.
Shena:	Why do you think they picked on you?
Eileen:	They always have a problem with me… I don't know, but every school I go to, apparently, I'm a troublemaker, I'm a troublesome child, like troublesome.
Shawna:	Felt!
Shena:	What do you think about that?

Eileen: I mean, what I feel about that is like, just because they're telling me that, I don't believe it at all, because they don't know my other good sides whenever like, when I'm like taking care of someone, where they don't see that side. They'd never see that side of me!

(Lee Boggs, Session 4)

Other LGP participants described similar instances of punishment where they felt that they were targeted by their educators because of their past discipline record.

The assumption that they were prone to misbehavior, along with their perceptions of educators pathologizing them as hostile, made the Lavender Girls feel that there was a lack of leniency or understanding around the circumstances that influenced them breaking school policy. Despite schools making strides toward eliminating Zero Tolerance in formal discipline policies (Lacoe & Steinberg, 2018; Ritter, 2018), my findings reveal that GoC experienced the residual effects of Zero Tolerance during interpersonal and informal discipline when they were given little opportunities to explain or redeem themselves. Equally important, they claimed that they were continually deprived of their education, and thus, they were prevented from having the opportunity to engage academically because their schools did not accommodate or take into consideration their unique responsibilities as poor/working-class GoC.

Although Eileen occasionally agreed with her teachers characterizing her as lazy, she rejected being called a troublemaker. I find that the stereotypes that GoC internalized the most were the ones that pathologized their intellectual abilities and motivation (i.e., dumb and lazy). This lack of protest when they were labeled unintelligent and unmotivated seemed to be a reaction to who in the classroom/school had the power to determine their intelligence (i.e., their educators). However, the Lavender Girls consistently resisted labels that depicted them as violent, defiant, and hostile, often citing (as Eileen did) how helpful and caring they were

towards others. This finding is particularly relevant for understanding the circumstances under which Black and Brown girls feel that their character is constantly under attack and they are villainized in school. Being portrayed as bad or "troublesome" students often resulted in the Lavender Girls feeling frustrated, angry, and defensive, which led them to become further disengaged from the academic process.

Familial Responsibilities: "I'm stuck because I just can't tell my little brother he can't go to school"

I resonated with many of the stories of personal family responsibilities shared by the Lavender Girls. At the age of 15, my older sister dropped out of school and gave birth to my niece, Nadine. Raising Nadine was a shared family journey and at eight years old, I was changing Nadine's diapers with confidence. In our family, there was no shame over my sister being a teenage mother and dropping out of school. Our baby Nadine was a gift and it was the responsibility of each member of our family to ensure that she was loved, cared for, and protected. Being Nadine's keeper and auntie made me swell with pride, a pride that I recognized among LGP participants when they spoke about the caretaking roles that they had at home to look after their younger siblings, cousins, nieces, and nephews. When they told me about having to help raise the younger members of their family, the Lavender Girls spoke with confidence. They also emphasized the financial hardships and lack of opportunities that necessitated them having to take on these caretaking roles. Although the circumstances that surrounded most of their familial responsibilities were difficult, I observed that the Lavender Girls, in line with the family dimension of LAE, fulfilled them with joy.

Candace was a tall soft-spoken Black girl with broad shoulders and kind eyes. She walked with poise and grace and described herself as "big hearted," "respectful," and

"dependable" (Figure 17). During our time together, Candace brought up her college goals every chance that she got, demonstrably excited and serious about her plans. She was one of the few Lavender Girls who aspired to go to college out of state and was taking steps to achieve her postsecondary goals. She took courses at the local community college and worked with her dad to put together a budget to help her plan for college and the bills that she would have to pay on her own. At the time of her participation in LGP, Candace, who identified as poor, had two jobs: one in retail and the another one in a restaurant. Like Eileen, Candace worked hard to ensure that she did not contribute to the financial burdens of her family. She also did this by caring for her two younger brothers (first and eight grade) and shared, "I have to take him extra, extra early to go play on the playground like an hour before school so I can get to school at least not 30 minutes later" (Huerta, Session 3). Candace juggled her priorities of getting her little brother to school safely while also not being excessively late to school since being tardy was unavoidable due to Huerta starting earlier than her brother's elementary school.

Figure 17. Candace's Identity Flower

In her identity flower, Candace describes herself as big hearted, respectful, and dependable.

When I asked Candace to elaborate further on how getting in trouble for being tardy affected her, she responded:

> My first period teacher would have an attitude with me because I came to school late for like two weeks straight because I have to drop my little brother off at school… She gets irritated with that because it's like I miss the whole class and then I come in trying to get the work that I need to make up. Then she doesn't

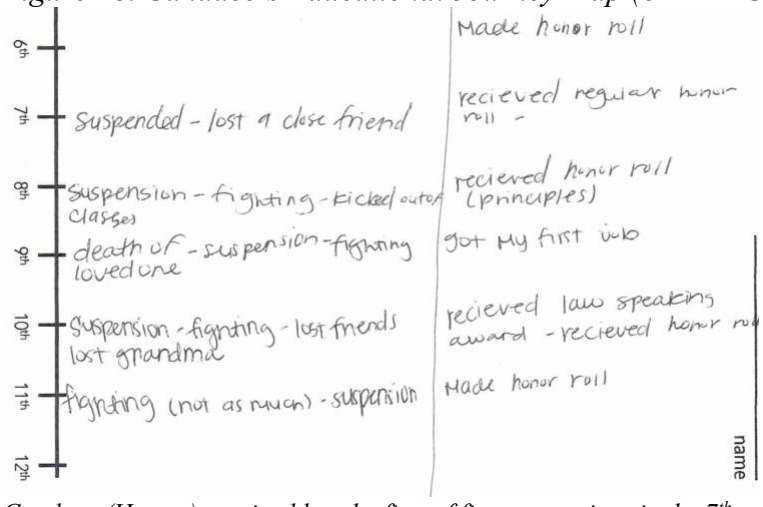
> want to give it to me because I wasn't here. I still want to make it up. I just can't just forget about it. I have to be responsible. That took a toll on me because it's like, I don't know what to do. I'm stuck because I just can't tell my little brother he can't go to school. Then I'd have to stay home and watch him, so that doesn't benefit neither of us. I'd rather be late and actually go to school. It's like, they don't encourage us to do that either. They say, "If you're going to be late, you might as well not come."
>
> (Huerta, Session 7)

Similar to other Lavender Girls, Candace described the impact that being punished had on her academic engagement, specifically her ability to complete her assignments. Unwilling to compromise on her obligations to her family while also wanting to ensure that she completed her schoolwork, Candace felt stuck and saw her educators as further excluding her from the academic process rather than supporting her. Like many GoC with familial obligations (Milan & Wortel, 2015), Candace was learning in an environment of contradiction where she was being punished while attempting to carry out responsibilities that she had to her family and participate in the academic process (Figure 18). Rather than feel supported by her educators for doing the best she could in light of her family's circumstances and needs, Candace reported that her educators told her that they preferred she not come to school at all. In this study, I find that sentiments of neglect expressed by the Lavender Girls often led them to feeling resentful of their educators, whom they felt should care more about their academic success and overall wellbeing.

It is evident in this study that GoC, especially those who had financial and caretaking responsibilities at home, saw themselves both as young adults and as students who deserved the respect and kindness of their educators. Thus, when they stood up for themselves in times when they felt derided by their educators, they were not doing so thinking that they were children; they did so while identifying as young women. Annamma's (2018) study revealed a similar trend. Her participants, who had adult responsibilities outside of school, felt that "school was a battlefield

where being grown was unwelcome" (p. 31). For the Lavender Girls, the contradiction of having adult responsibilities at home and financially supporting themselves—as an adult—then coming to school where they perceived that their educators infantilized them through punishment, created a dissonance that disrupted their academic engagement. Rather than be acknowledged for the selfless and responsible behaviors that they displayed by caring for younger family members and helping their parents, the Lavender Girls reported that not only did they feel that their lived experiences went unacknowledged, but that they were being punished for having such significant familial responsibilities.

Figure 18. Candace's Educational Journey Map (6th-12th Grade)



Candace (Huerta) received her the first of five suspensions in the 7th grade while also excelling academically and getting a job to support herself and help her family.

The literature suggests that the experiences of other adolescent GoC from urban contexts (George, 2015; Leadbeater & Way, 1996 & 2007; Morris, 2007; Rollock, 2007; Wun, 2016), regardless of their academic backgrounds, are often similar to the Lavender Girls when it comes to their educators' lack of understanding and school's support of their obligations to their families. In this regard, it is important to consider the ways that GoC, generally, are poorly understood in school as well as how GoC who have been punished are put at a greater disadvantage because their discipline and academic records have characterized them as difficult

students. Although the accounts of the Lavender Girls come from a specific group of GoC, they share many characteristics with other GoC, especially with regard to how their identities shape their academic experiences.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Education for and by Girls of Color: Intersectional Girlhood, Pedagogy, and Policymaking

The Essence of Schooling for the Lavender Girls

Embarking upon this study, I wrestled with many insecurities about my ability to connect with teenage GoC and concern about being able to respond to the painful experiences with school that I anticipated they would share. I had a sense that some of their stories would be difficult to hear, but I did not want this dissertation to solely be about the suffering of Black and Brown girls. After all, research had already made it clear—and my study confirmed—that these students experienced school in uniquely violent, harmful, and troubling ways (Annamma, 2018; Crenshaw et al., 2015; E.W. Morris, 2007; M.W. Morris, 2016; Wun, 2016, 2017). My dissertation revealed that the Lavender Girls perceived stereotypes as contributing greatly to the ways in which they were pathologized, punished, excluded and expected to fail. Consequently, these GoC did not feel safe or cared for in school, which exacerbated the adverse impacts of punishment and exclusion on their academic engagement.

As I have detailed throughout this study, the essence of the Lavender Girls' schooling experience—GoC who had been punished and excluded—was one of pathologization, degradation, and deprivation. However, I also found that these experiences were juxtaposed and mitigated by their *Liberatory Academic Engagement (LAE)*—the ways in which the Lavender Girls took ownership of their education and thrived because of their love for, and pride in, themselves, their familial responsibilities, and their commitment to sisterhood. In this chapter, I offer a discussion on the contributions that my dissertation makes to the current scholarship and conversations around the lived and schooling experiences of GoC. I also offer recommendations for pedagogical approaches and policymaking that center the lives of Black and Brown girls in

their education. Finally, I discuss limitations of this study and how I plan to address these limitations, as well as extend my current efforts, in future research.

Contributions to Theory and Recommendations for Praxis

This dissertation sits at the nexus of research that examines the lives and schooling experiences of poor/working-class GoC and scholarship that offers theoretical perspectives on their ways of knowing and being. My theoretical and methodological perspectives related to this dissertation are grounded in the work of intersectional feminists: Alice Walker (1983), Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989 & 1991), Cherríe Moraga and Toni Bambara (1983), Ada María Isasi-Díaz (1992, 2004, & 2009), Maxine Zinn and Bonnie Dill (1996), Venus Evans-Winters and Jennifer Esposito (2018), and Tamara Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2002). These scholars guided me in thinking about the ways in which students, who are learning at the intersections of multiple oppressions, make sense of how they are educated, punished, and excluded, as well as how they resist, navigate, and thrive in school. Equally important, intersectional feminist scholars spurred me, as a WoC researcher, to examine my own lived experiences alongside the Lavender Girls in order to understand the persisting and sustained nature of these multiple forms of subjugations. In this section, I discuss the contributions of my dissertation to theory, praxis, and research. As an overarching framing, I argue for employing an intersectional approach in these areas to improve the quality of education for Black and Brown girls.

Intersectional Girlhood in the Schooling Context

The main epistemological contribution of this dissertation is in the exploration of *intersectional girlhood* in the academic context. Within the arena of girlhood studies, there has been important and timely theorizing around Black (Butler, 2018) and Latina (Fernández-García, 2020) girlhoods, which has situated the theory primarily within, rather than across, the domains

of their respective racial/ethnic groups. In this dissertation, I add to the scholarship around girlhood by bringing together a mosaic of experiences that can serve to inform educators, researchers, and policymakers about how to think about girlhood intersectionally. I also trouble the existing ways that race and ethnicity have been traditionally discussed and constructed as mutually exclusive (e.g., Blackness apart from Latinidad) by bridging the essence of the epistemologies of adolescent girls from across racial/ethnic groups with the shared socioeconomic status of being poor- or working-class. Additionally, I carve out a space to understand the experiences of GoC, who are the daughters of immigrants or immigrants themselves, to include girls from African and Asian diasporas as well as from Latine communities to understand how their academic engagement is informed by their lived experiences at the intersection of xenophobia, racism, sexism, and classism.

I offer a conceptualization of intersectional girlhood as LAE which, I argue, is the Lavender Girls' ways of knowing and learning, which emphasizes their sources of knowledge, inspiration, and motivation to succeed academically. Methodologically, my research aligns with the intersectional approaches of Monique Morris (2015 & 2016) and Subini Annamma (2018a & 2018b), whose scholarship focus on students with similar backgrounds and academic profiles as the Lavender Girls. Although Morris and Annamma often touch on the strengths and assets of GoC, their contributions stop short of engaging a more fulsome conversation about the funds of strength, joy, and knowledge that Black and Brown girls tap into that shape their approaches to learning and strategies to navigating school punishment and exclusion. My dissertation moves the conversation toward thinking about the epistemological frameworks of GoC.

Finally, I position myself among intersectional feminist scholars by adding the dimension of girlhood to the ways in which the lives of WoC are understood. Much of the theorization

around the lived experiences of those at the nexus of multiple marginalities has largely focused on adult women (Anzaldúa 1987; Hill Collins, 2000; Moraga and Anzaldúa 1984; Walker, 1983)—and appropriately so—since those writing during their respective feminist waves (i.e., second and third) spoke to the experiences of being silenced and erased in the various movements for racial justice, gender equality, and civil rights. With this dissertation, I broaden the scholarship of WoC to include the epistemologies of Black and Brown girls and offer an intersectional analysis of power from the perspective of youth, specifically teenagers. I argue that intersectionality as a concept, theory, and framework will be strengthened and deepened by an exclusive examination of girlhood at all of its stages.

In the following section I offer a consideration of intersectional pedagogy as an approach to teaching that centers and responds to an understanding of intersectional girlhood. In this work, intersectional pedagogy is one that considers the entirety of students' identity, particularly understanding how their marginalized backgrounds shape how they are educated, punished, and excluded in school. It employs multi-modal approaches to teaching and caring for students, considers how students have been harmed while also centering what brings them joy, works to dismantle traditional relations of power between teachers and students and seeks to co-create power with students, and centers the knowledge, narratives, and voices of students who are socially located at the intersection of multiple oppressions.

Intersectional Trauma-Responsive Care

There is ample literature on trauma-informed teaching and care that have been widely used in schools (Crosby et al., 2016; Day et al., 2015; Oehlberg, 2008) as well as services and programs outside of education (Ko et al., 2008). However, for the purposes of this study's findings, I recommend a specific type of trauma-informed care (De La Rue & Ortega, 2019), one

that is guided by the intersectional realities faced by Black and Brown girls. De La Rue and Ortega (2019) recently introduced an intersectional trauma-responsive care framework (ITRC) for GoC and WoC who have been ensnared by the criminal justice system. Considering the similar experiences between the criminal justice system and school discipline, particularly as it has been expressed by the Lavender Girls in this study, I propose employing ITRC in schools to more adequately support and care for GoC who have experienced traumatic events in their lives that may shape some of their behaviors and emotional vulnerabilities in school. As I have demonstrated throughout this dissertation, Black and Brown girls face unique types of harm due to their social location at the intersection of multiple forms of oppression. Any educational response, service, or approach designed to support these students must center their identity as it is a crucial part of how they learn and navigate school as well as how they are treated by their educators and peers.

Centering the intersectional realities of youth, ITRC calls for educators to "be able to acknowledge and understand issues of racism and sexism, and other areas of oppression" (De La Rue & Ortega, 2019, p. 510). Specifically, I recommend that educators make themselves aware of how historical racism and sexism as well as present-day classism continue to inform that ways in which GoC from poor/working-class backgrounds are punished as well how school policies can unfairly disadvantage these students. According to ITRC, educators must be knowledgeable of the ways that GoC are punished in society and schools as well as the types of trauma, abuse, and violence they experience (in and out of school). This specific form of trauma-informed care and teaching can be included in schools' training of their educators and staff to draw attention to the unique vulnerabilities of GoC and some specific approaches to care for them.

Just as important and relevant to the context of school discipline and exclusion, ITRC necessitates that educators "make efforts to not engage in additional acts of trauma," which "requires systems to attend to the consequences of exposure to trauma and actively strive to not engage in practices that re-traumatize people" (p. 511). De La Rue and Ortega (2019) use the example of punishment through isolation, which is also a common disciplinary approach in schools that has the potential to "further exacerbate and worsen trauma symptoms" (p. 511). With regard to this point, Lavender Girls across all school sites expressed how being punished would sometimes be intensified by past traumatic experiences with bullying, violence, and humiliation. Finally, an ITRC approach to educating GoC is beneficial regardless of the types and severity of traumatic experiences because it (rightly) assumes that society and schools inherently prioritize a cisheteronormativity, thus disadvantaging Black and Brown girls in the learning process and inflicting them with various forms of harm. In the next section, I expand upon a pedagogical approach that is informed by Critical Race Feminisms and can work in tandem with ITRC to better care for and educate Black and Brown girls.

Intersectional Pedagogy: Caring for Girls of Color

In this dissertation, I have suggested that intersectional pedagogy grounded in *womanist care* (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002) is an approach that educators can employ to support and educate Black and Brown girls, especially those who have been punished and excluded in school. A pedagogy that emphasizes womanist care can help educators begin to dismantle systems of oppression in schools and build new systems that will allow their students to flourish and thrive. Here, I outline the key tenets of womanist care to demonstrate its utility for an intersectional approach to teaching and educator-student relationship building. I make these recommendations not to claim that there is a single approach to employing an intersectional pedagogy, but to

illustrate how an approach that incorporates womanist care can be useful for educators, particularly those who are serving Black and Brown girls in our nation's least resourced public schools serving our most underprivileged students.

Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2002) developed the conceptual framework, womanist care, with the following three tenets: an embrace of the maternal, political clarity, and an ethic of risk. These dimensions underscore

> the agency that each of us has to treat others as our own; the obligation we have to understand as fully as we can the world around us; and the responsibility we have to make sure that our actions contribute to the larger human goal of freedom for all.
>
> (p. 84)

The first tenet, embrace of the maternal, is derived from the African tradition of kinship manifesting itself in teachers of any gender who, through a feeling of communal responsibility, "commit themselves to the social and emotional development of all children in a community" (p. 77). With the second tenet, political clarity, womanist carers understand that politics and identity are a critical component of educating children and that the act of caring is in itself a form of political activism. They are steadfast in their belief that "to withhold knowledge *is* to disempower," and so they impart knowledge "that does not shy away from the reality of domination nor from the existence of resistance struggles against oppression" (p. 78).

Throughout LGP, I sought to employ a womanist care approach when conducting focus group sessions with the Lavender Girls. I found it to be an effective response to the hyper-punishment and exclusion of GoC for two main reasons. First, womanist care lends itself well to an intersectional justice framework, which is a social justice approach that centers on the social location of GoC at the intersection of the multiple marginalized identities. I argue that intersectional justice—where Black and Brown girls are supported, loved, and affirmed through

the schooling process—is the goal of an intersectional pedagogy. The tenets of womanist care, particularly political clarity, have the potential to create opportunities where educators and students can work together to interrogate the current state of education for GoC who are subjected to punishment and exclusion. A womanist care approach can help bring to light the history, tradition, and politics associated with the identity of and marginalization experienced by Black and Brown girls in schools.

A womanist caring perspective pushes educators to take on the moral duty to care for GoC beyond simply correcting and disciplining them. Rather, it calls educators to critically examine the current structures in place that have contributed to the assumptions and stereotypes placed on Black and Brown girls. Womanist ways of caring for students can provide GoC with the tools to better understand the White capitalist imposition of meritocracy that promotes their self-blame and self-hatred by situating their subjugation within a societal context of disenfranchisement. Such tools can also help them to resist and fight back. True to its universalist and political nature, the womanist care approach operates to make both the carer (educator) and cared-for (GoC) knowledgeable, co-dependent, and driven by the aspiration for intersectional justice. In the next section, I argue for intersectional policymaking as a way to create safer, more caring schools for Black and Brown girls.

Intersectional Policymaking: Building School Systems for Black and Brown Girls

My recommendations for an intersectional approach to policymaking build on the work of Tiffany Manuel (2007 & 2019) and extend her scholarship from the field of public policy into education. Manuel argues for intersectionality in public policy as "a practical and meaningfully useful tool to strengthen the explanatory power of public policy frameworks and models" (2019, p. 34). In offering this recommendation, and as I consider how the epistemological foundations

of Black and Brown girls can be centered in educational policymaking, I am guided by the following question that Manuel (2008) posed:

> how do gender, race, class, and other forms of identity and distinction, in different contexts, shape not only the way that we view (education) policies meant to improve… (the academic outcomes for GoC) … but also, our ability to envision the possibilities for (Black and Brown girls) living the good life?
>
> (p. 175)

Here, Manuel appears to suggest that when it comes to policymaking and services in education, issues are typically addressed by tackling ascriptive factors as separate categories (i.e., gender, class, immigration status, and disability). Some examples of such policy approaches in education, include bilingual education, services for students with disabilities, and free/reduced meals—policies and services that are meant to target a single axis of marginalization. For the most part, educational policies are dictated by the assumption that if issues are addressed unilaterally, a large segment of students, including those who are at the intersection of multiple marginalities, will inevitably also benefit. However, this approach falls short in that it does not meet and consider needs specific to students who face academic challenges that are shaped by various types of disadvantages. It also results in ineffective debates over prioritizing issues of race over class, or gender, or immigration—and vice versa.

This dissertation demonstrated that for Black and Brown girls, there was often no hierarchy with respect to the many forms of, and circumstances during which, they felt oppressed in school. Rather, these students perceived all marginalized aspects of their identity as central to how they experienced punishment and exclusion. By proposing the use of intersectional policymaking, I am advocating for the disruption of the dynamics of power in schools so that Black and Brown Girls are not only centered in the act of developing policy, but that they are also included as leaders in the process.

For example, an intersectional approach to reforming—or eradicating—disciplinary policies would be to recruit the leadership of GoC to craft and develop policies that would help make them feel safe and cared for in school. This effort would go beyond the typical student advisory groups that are formed to provide administrators with student perspectives. Instead, students would be invited based on the negative experiences that they have had with school discipline policies. This would allow Black and Brown girls who have been directly affected by these policies to assert their power to create and implement policies that they feel will better respond to their needs and support their academic goals. It would also allow GoC to have a voice in how educators can hold them accountable if they do not abide by the school's policies and community agreements.

Additionally, intersectional policymaking would allow educators the opportunity to address the intricacies of the issues that students, encouraging them to understand the essence of the shared experiences of students across different social locations. For example, an intersectional policymaking/reform focused on academic tracking would first recognize how the process of recommending students to advanced courses could (or does) place certain students at a disadvantage because of the inordinate power that comes with teacher discretion. Recognizing who these students are (or could potentially be) and inviting them to help shape course placement policy would be the next step. Perhaps one option could be to provide the supplemental support, resources, and services to ensure that students thrive in these classes as opposed to being weeded out.

Another, more favorable, option would be to do away with academic tracking altogether, an approach that has been empirically proven to be effective in raising student outcomes across the board (LaPrade, 2011; Rubin & Noguera, 2004). Whatever the decision may be, an

intersectional approach to policy is such that student ideas, recommendations, and aspirations are concretely implemented. This redistribution of power would facilitate a more just and caring environment not only for students, but for all members of the school community. In the next and final section of this chapter, I account for the limitations of my study and describe my aims for future research.

Addressing the Study's Limitations with Future Research

For this dissertation, I endeavored to center the knowledge and identity of Black and Brown girls by speaking exclusively to the experiences of these students. Other than my school contacts at each site, educators were not involved in my study. Although informative and helpful to the design of the protocol, the conversations that I had with the school contacts about the Lavender Girls were informal and not included in the analysis. Therefore, the primary and most significant limitation to this study is the absence of educators' voices and perspective. In future research, I plan to address this by designing a companion study that uses similar protocols to understand the perceptions and decision-making process of educators when reprimanding, disciplining, and academically tracking GoC. Ideally, for this study, I would like to recruit participants from the same LGP sites in order to best align the sociopolitical and geographic locations of the educators with the Lavender Girls. Illuminating educators' experiences with and perceptions of GoC will be critical to deepening the findings in this study.

Although I had ample artifact and video data from LGP sessions to examine and triangulate during analysis, the second limitation that I confronted was the lack of school and classroom observation data. There were instances where my exploration was constrained by the fact that I did not have insight into the quotidian experiences of the Lavender Girls in their schools. Observations would have allowed me to better nuance some of the findings on the

essence of the phenomena. Moreover, lacking observational data limited my ability to contextualize some of the punishment and exclusion reported by the Lavender Girls because I did not have the necessary evidence to elaborate on some of the details of their accounts. Although I am unable to directly address this limitation in this study, this lesson will inform the methodological design and data collection protocols of future projects.

Finally, aside from the limitations, there were several salient themes that emerged in my analysis that were not discussed in this dissertation. I plan to share these findings in future manuscripts. The first will be an exploration of how punishments that the Lavender Girls faced made them feel as if they were learning in carceral environments where they were physically surveilled and emotionally suppressed. I will argue that GoC felt entangled in rearticulations of carceral spaces through school policies (e.g., dress code) and infrastructures (e.g., facilities) in ways that made it difficult for them to engage academically. The second manuscript, for which I have submitted an abstract for consideration to a peer-reviewed journal, will be an argument for considering race and gender-based punishment perceived by GoC as a category of Adverse Childhood Experience that has negative implications for the academic future and wellbeing of these students. I am developing these papers to encourage educators and educational stakeholders to develop policies, pedagogies, and practices using an intersectional framework.

Conclusion

I end this dissertation with the voices of the Lavender Girls, describing how they saw themselves—their strengths, potential, and challenges (Figure 19). This project was about honoring and understanding them while not essentializing their lived and academic experiences. To help me do this, I pictured each Lavender Girl as an individual lavender in a field of other lavenders. Together, they created a stunning sea of purple waves, swaying in unison and

rhythmically with the wind. Individually, each flower was growing at her own pace, fortified and nurtured by the earth. She was thriving fragrantly and beautifully in various, often harsh, climates. And she held within her, the ability to soothe and heal.

Figure 19. The Lavender Girls Describe Themselves in Word Association

The Lavender Girls' word association activity for the word "me" demonstrate their positive and strengths-oriented perspectives of themselves.

APPENDIX A

Lavender Girls Project Phase I 2016
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

SESSION #1

1. Tell me about your school experiences, from elementary school until now.
2. What type of student would you say you were and are?
3. What types of students were/are in your classes? Do any kids in your class stand out in your mind? Why? (grades, teacher's pet, misbehavior, etc.; insight into behavior) Were they different from students in other classes? How? How did your school organize kids? (give example of your school's labeling) Do you feel like you were placed in the classes that best suited/matched you?
4. Tell me about your goals after high school.

SESSION #2

1. Tell me about a time that you experienced an adult at your school reprimanding you.
2. Tell me about a time that you were put out of the classroom.
3. Tell me about a time that you received detention.
4. In what ways has being disciplined affected you and your goals, especially the ones that have to do with begin a student and going to college?

SESSION #3

1. Tell me about a time that you were suspended.
2. Tell me about a time that you were expelled.
3. In what ways has being disciplined affected you? Your goals, especially the ones that have to do with going to college?

SESSION #4

1. What does it mean to be treated fairly? What are some examples of fair and unfair treatment?
2. Are students treated fairly when they break the rules at Inglewood and schools you've attended in the past?
3. If not, who is/was treated fairly and unfairly?
4. How were they treated? Give examples.
5. Why do you think some students are treated fairly/unfairly when they break rules?
6. Who are the people (teachers, administrators, staff) who treat more fairly? What does it look like when a person is treating you fairly?

SESSION #5

1. How do you compare your capabilities with your:
    a. Male peers
    b. White peers
    c. Peers who come from wealthier families
    d. Peers who are not disciplined as much as you
    e. Peers who are “smarter” than you

2. What are your fears with regard to your education?
3. What are you doing to prepare yourself for college?
4. In what ways are you preparing yourself for college?
5. In what ways can you better prepare yourself for college?
6. What are your concerns around being eligible for college?

APPENDIX B

Lavender Girls Project Phase II 2018
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

SESSION #1: Intersectional Identity

1. How do you identify? (Shena give example by sharing how she identifies)
2. What does it mean for you to be a [interX]?
3. How has your identity as [interX] changed over the years?
4. What type of students do you think [interX] usually are?
    a. Are you this type of student? Why or why not?
5. How does your identity as [interX here] influence the way you are treated in school, specifically…
    a. the classes that you are assigned to
    b. how you are disciplined
    c. how you are disciplined in the classes that you're assigned to

6. How does your identity as [interX] influence your decisions about what you will do after high school? *We will keep coming back to this question, so this won't be the last time that you'll get to discuss this.*

SESSION #2: Academic Self

1. What are your professional/academic dreams and plans after high school?
2. How are you being prepared or not prepared in school for your post-high school dreams and goals?
3. How do you describe yourself as a GoC student?
4. Are you the same, different (or both) in school, at home, and in your community? How?
5. What do you think of the classes that you are in?
6. What kinds of students are in your classes? Are you the same or different from them? How?

SESSION #3: Social Class

1. Tell me about the social class of your family (e.g., education levels, profession, housing, immigrant status, etc.).
2. What does being (CLASS) GoC mean for your education, especially the kinds of classes that you are in and being corrected by a teacher/admin, put in detention, and/or suspended?
3. What does being (CLASS) GoC mean for your opportunities after high school?

4. What are your fears about your education and graduating from high school?
5. What are your hopes about your education and graduating from high school?

SESSION #4: Discipline & Tracking

1. When you get in trouble, do you think it's fair?
2. How do you think being a GoC influences what you just told me? How does it influence the way people at school treat you?
3. Why have you not taken any honors classes?
4. What does it mean when a student is in an honors AP class?
5. When it comes to "getting in trouble" (getting called out in class, put in detention, or suspended, etc.), do you think there's a difference between you and a student who is in an honors/AP class?
6. Tell me about a time when a teacher/admin corrected you, called you out in front of the class, or got mad at you.
7. Tell me about a time that you were put out of the classroom, in detention, or suspended.
8. How has getting in trouble with teachers/admin, getting put in detention, or suspended affected your education?

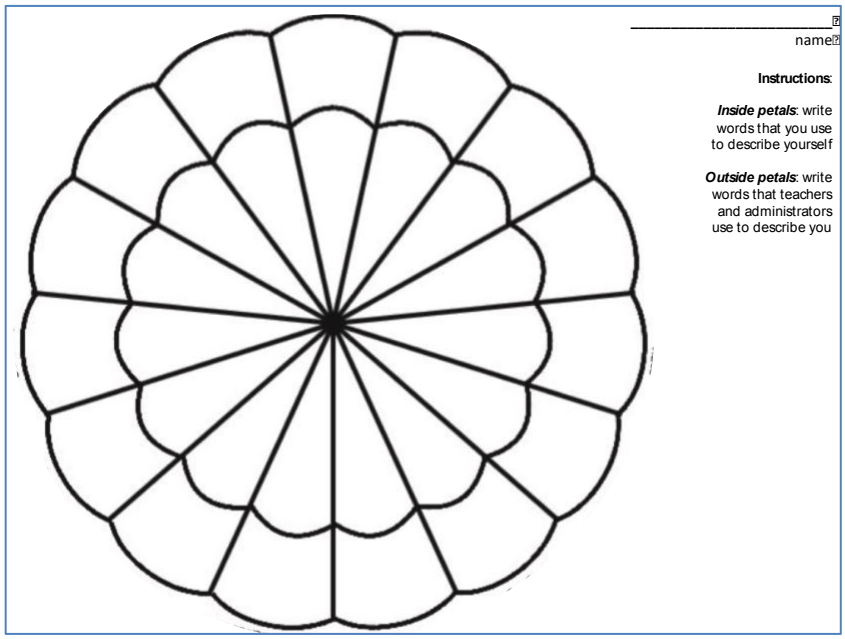
SESSION #5: Postsecondary Effects of Tracked Discipline

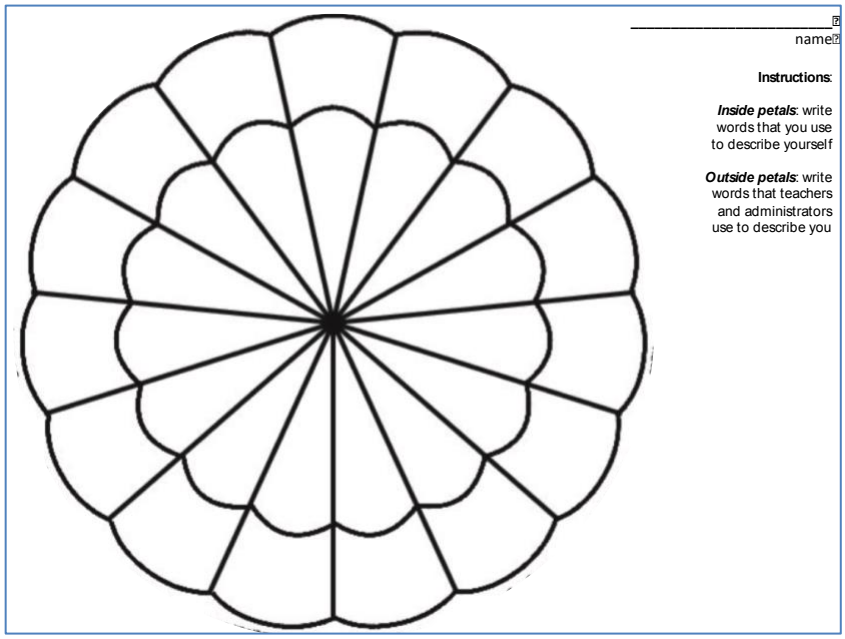
1. How has getting in trouble with teachers/admin, getting put in detention, or suspended affected your goals, especially the ones that have to do with graduating and going to college?
2. Do you think not taking honors classes has affected your education, goals, or what you want to do after high school? How?
3. What do you do to overcome the challenges that you've experienced with getting in trouble and not taking honors classes?
4. How are you preparing for what you want to do after high school?
5. How could your schools, administrators, teachers, educated you better or been better to you?
6. Do you ever compare yourself to other students who you think are good or susccessful students? What do you think of when you do?

APPENDIX C

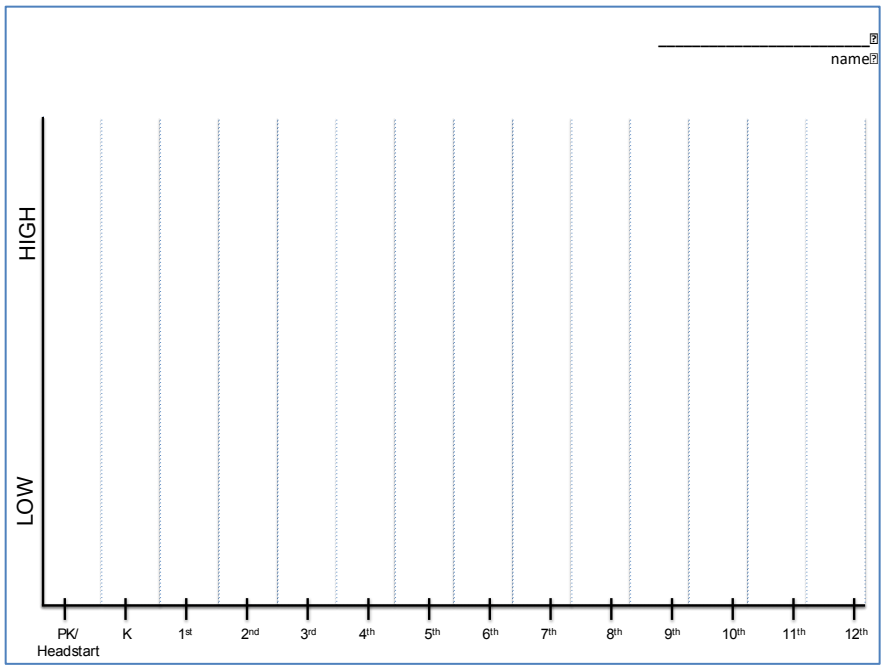
Lavender Girls Project Phase I & II
ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY #1: Identity Flower





ACTIVITY #2: Mapping and Student Identity



name

How do you describe yourself as a student?	How do you describe the ideal (perfect) student?

ACTIVITY #3: Socioeconomic Ladders

This ladder represents the status of people in the UNITED STATES.
Put a:
◆ - Where your family is
■ - Where your family should be based on how hard they work
O - Where you'd like your family to be
- Where you'd like yourself to be

name _____

How do you define Americans? Who lives in the United States?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

This ladder represents the status of people in your COMMUNITY.
Put a:
◆ - Where your family is
■ - Where your family should be based on how hard they work
O - Where you'd like your family to be
- Where you'd like yourself to be

name _____

How do you define community? Who is in your community?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

This ladder represents the status of people in the UNITED STATES.
Put a:
◆ - Where your family is
■ - Where your family should be based on how hard they work
O - Where you'd like your family to be
- Where you'd like yourself to be

name _____

EDUCATION

JOB

MONEY

This ladder represents the status of people in your COMMUNITY.
Put a:
◆ - Where your family is
■ - Where your family should be based on how hard they work
O - Where you'd like your family to be
- Where you'd like yourself to be

name _____

EDUCATION

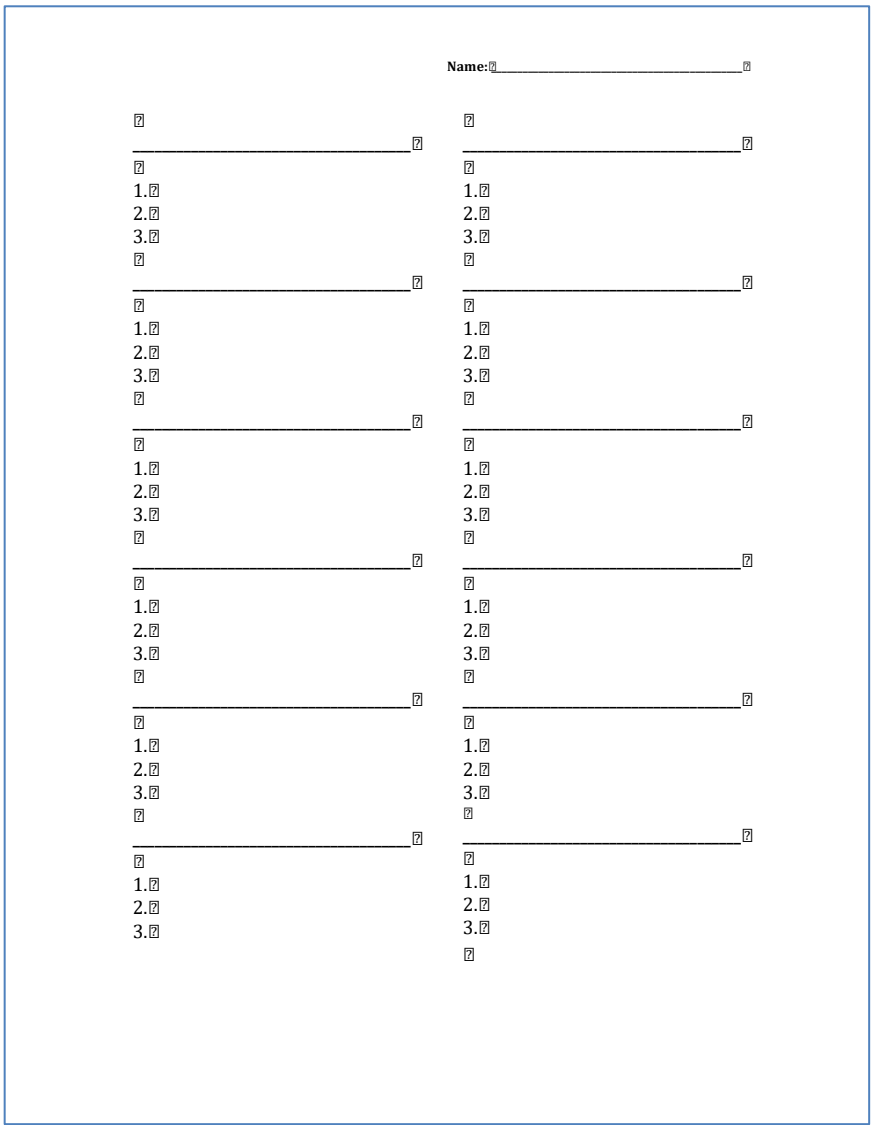
JOB

MONEY

ACTIVITY #4: Word Association

Word Association Prompts:

1. Asian
2. Black
3. Care
4. Class
5. College
6. Detention
7. Dreams
8. Education
9. Family
10. Future
11. Girl
12. Immigrant
13. Judged
14. Latina
15. Life
16. Me
17. Poor
18. Punished
19. Rich
20. School
21. Shame
22. Suspension
23. Teachers
24. Trouble



ACTIVITY #5: Aspirations

Name:_____

Who has told you what kind of student you are?

What are some things that this person or these people have said to you about the kind of student that you are?

Name:_____

What are your aspirations, hopes, and dreams?

How did you get these aspirations, hopes, and dreams?

When you think of your aspirations, hopes, and dreams, who do you think of?

ACTIVITY #6: Tree of Life

APPENDIX D

DATE

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I am writing on behalf of Shena Sanchez, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Shena is studying education with a specific focus on the academic experiences of girls who are ethnic minorities (ex: Black, Latina, Asian, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans) and attend schools like [SCHOOL]. Because she shares a similar background with these girls, she hopes that she can contribute to research that will help to improve education policies and practices for them.

This fall, we will work with Shena on The Lavender Girls Project (LGP), her research study to better understand the experiences that girls like your daughter have had with school discipline, academic tracking, and college-going. Right now, there is not much research on this topic to help guide teachers and administrators. More importantly, we do not hear enough about the experiences that girls have from the girls themselves. This being said, your daughter was selected to participate in LGP as her school records show that she is eligible for this project. Shena would like to hear more about your daughter's experiences directly from her.

Here is the information regarding the study.

OVERVIEW: The study will take place this November and will consist of about six group discussions with your daughter and her peers. During the discussion, your daughter and her peers will be asked to share their experiences of being disciplined while not taking any advanced courses. Discipline experiences can include verbal reprimands, office referrals, detention, in- or – out-of-school suspension, and expulsion warning. Shena will also be sharing her personal experiences with the girls. Using their stories, Shena will write her doctoral dissertation as well as share what she learns with researchers and educators through papers and presentations.

PARTICIPATION: Your daughter's participation will be entirely <u>voluntary</u> and at any point in the study, she can choose to take a break or completely end her participation.

COMPENSATION: As a sign of appreciation and for the time that your daughter invests in the project, Shena will give her a $20 gift card for each session that she completes, which she will receive after the last session.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your daughter's participation will be kept completely confidential throughout the whole process. Shena has gone through the proper training and received approval from the Institutional Review Board at UCLA to ensure that she knows the proper steps to maintain confidentiality.

PAPER & PRESENTATION: Shena will write her dissertation and other papers from this study. She will submit her work to academic journals and media outlets for publication as well as

present them at conferences and seminars. To protect your daughter, Shena will never include her name and will always use a pseudonym instead.

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about The Lavender Girls Project. We hope that you will allow your daughter to participate and help us better understand the academic experiences of students like her. More importantly, we hope that you will allow her to participate, so that her story can help shed some light on the experiences that girls like her have with discipline, academic tracking, and college-going in order to improve policies and provide her with a better education. If you are willing to let your daughter participate, please sign the consent form attached.

We will be certain to treat your daughter with the utmost respect and dignity. We know that she is precious to you, so please contact us any time if you have any questions or concerns. You can reach Shena at (571) 224-5433 or at shena.sanchez@ucla.edu if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

[NAME]
[SCHOOL ROLE/TITLE]

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