GAMES GIRLS PLAY: A CRITICAL FEMINIST ETHNOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION
OF ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS
SUPPORTING (En)GENDERED AND (A)GENTIVE SELVES

by

CLEOPATRA ELAINE WARREN

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my mother, grandmother and sister, Vickie Warren, Mattie Warren and Kim Ballard. I am forever grateful for your unconditional love, fervent prayers and endless support.
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ABSTRACT

CLEOPATRA ELAINE WARREN
GAMES GIRLS PLAY: A CRITICAL FEMINIST ETHNOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION
OF ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS
SUPPORTING (En)GENDERED AND (A)GENTIVE SELVES
Under the direction of WYNNETTA SCOTT-SIMMONS, Ed.D

Educators continue to seek and discover effective strategies that improve student academic proficiency in the classroom. For female African American students, the debate continues regarding successful instructional, culturally appropriate techniques that best address their academic performance and engagement during a most critical developmental stage. Relatively little research on the multiliterate practices of female African American adolescent students exists. This research study draws on Black feminist thought, culturally responsive pedagogy, and multiliteracies theory. The purpose of this study was to understand the interactive cultural patterns of female African American students in online learning environments. The researcher conducted a qualitative analysis to focus on the oral-kinetic and embodied tradition of handclapping games as a metaphorical framework to examine sociocultural experiences and technology-mediated practices of African American female students in online learning spaces. The study examined distinct, culturally constructed school experiences and critical postures of African American girls who critically interact with technology in multimodal learning environments. The methodology presented empirical qualitative evidence through four fundamental venues that argue for inclusion of culturally
congruent curriculum and instruction in responsive classroom environments, which can effectively contribute to student academic performance of African American female adolescents. The discussion points to the primary role of the narrative as a meaningful communication tool in conveying the lived experiences of female African American adolescents across modalities. The findings of this study demonstrated that students’ academic lives were represented in dual worlds, physical and virtual. The conclusion of the study indicated that African American women and girls are constantly negotiating their identities across a paradigm of intersecting oppressions.
PREFACE:

SHE IS MY SISTER

For hands
Without rest
Weary, aching bones
Working through
For eyes
Turned downward
Toward stations
Of invisibility/silenced
Forced to the margins
Shadows of
Disregard
Shadows of
Working through
Pain shooting
Through hands
Cleaning
Cradling
Holding on
Working through
The day
When voices of resistance
Will send
Vibrations
Shake foundations
Forcing access, power
Working though

-Jaribu Hill, *Excerpts from A Life Standing at the Well*, p. 35
PROLOGUE

The spirits move mountains
When you call them out
And the songs sleep inside you
Until you call them out

-Cassandra Wilson, resurrected blues

The physical dynamics of hand clapping initially and typically involve hitting the palms of the hands together quickly and successively while producing a percussive rhythm, then immediately placing the same palms directly onto the hands of a participating partner standing/sitting facing you (Merriam-Webster.com, 2017). Considered a cultural art form, regular participation in hand clapping also strengthens neuromuscular pathways between the brain, eyes, and hand reflexes. Ben-Gurion (2010) conducted a research study of hand clapping, the results of which revealed a direct link to the development of important cognitive and motor skills in children and young adults, including university students. This study suggested that brain-hand-eye coordination is a complex cognitive ability proven to correlate to regular hand clapping that can unite visual and motor skills, allowing the visual stimulation that the eyes receive to guide the hand—a skill critical to academic success.

In an analysis of handclapping games, Gaunt (2012) found that the embodied vernacular practices like the partner style of handclapping referred to as bridges consisted of elements of narrative rituals and performative practices related to identity. Drawing on an extensive range of sources, the author set out the different ways in which
handclapping bridges publicly ritualized social memory, group solidarity, and positive socialization.

This research study draws on the hand-clapping game metaphor to examine communal ethos and expressions from a conceptual framework centered on the notion that women can critically engage in discursive aspects of cultural knowledge production in online learning environments using narrative inquiry, counter stories, restorying, and autobiographical vignettes (Hall, 1997). The history of hand clapping as a cultural practice can be traced to ancient history. A study by Stefano (2017) presented hand-clapping rituals in ancient Egypt where ancient reliefs display hand clapping. According to Broughton, Ellingham, and Trillo (1999), Baka cultural traditional practices featured in ancient Egyptian murals where Baka culture centered on clapping and rhyme games for children. Recent evidence by Church and Page (2017) suggested that Baka culture has endured for over 40,000 years. While hand-clapping rituals also date later, the earliest documented rituals similar to hand clapping today can be traced to the Cameroonian Baka and ekonda ritual practiced by the Gabonese Baka and Mbuti people.
Figure 1. Ancient Egyptian relief from The Mastaba of Mereruka girls playing hand games. Reprinted with permission from The Mastaba of Mereruka: Part 2 by P. Duell, 1938, p. 165. Copyright 1938 by University Press.

Historically, since slavery, African American women and girls have played an integral role as guardians of the cultural community and heritage. The following is a description of African American girls as transmitters of cultural codes using the narrative, interactive oral and kinetic embodied tradition of African American children’s hand clapping games as the metaphorical framework for this study. Specifically, African American hand-clapping games were a central feature oral and connectivity on slave plantations highlighting the everyday lives of children. While many of the more modern games are a combination of European games and African movements, many recent scholars note that despite forced acculturation, the games involve African retentions (Gaunt, 2012; Wiggins, 1980; Wright, 1996). Wright (1996) noted, “Enslaved Africans
were forced to use the expressions and rituals of their European owners as a cover that would allow them the ability to secretly express their own messages in their own ways” (pp. 3-4). She also detailed another significant aspect by noting the extent to which African American slave girls retained many of their cultural traditions by engaging in social play promoting cooperation and teamwork. Indeed, it is highly likely that the kinetic-oral tradition of handclapping and ring games assisted with the preservation of African American culture and community. The slave plantations were complex representational sites situating the social construction and representation of girls and women of color as othered.

Figure 2. Session of hand games organized by Beverly Robinson. Reprinted with permission from C. Fleischhauer, South-Central Georgia Folklife Project collection (AFC 1982/010), Copyright 1977 by American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.
In a study of African American female handclapping games and hip hop, Gaunt (2012) reported that call and response provided a significant insider perspective into the experiences, generational connections, and counter stories as an identity model for engendering notions of African American female agency. She noted,

By 2001, the games black girls play turned up just about anywhere American children are present or represented. Like everything else, these games were globalized through sonic, visual and musical mediums. And they continue to be globally transmitted to places outside everyday practice, through commercial print and audiovisual media, the Internet, and even face-to-face interactions between children speaking different languages, whether in domestic contexts or abroad. (Gaunt, 2012)

The construction of social relationships during play is a critical feature of African American female relationship building and social networking. Higginbotham (1992) presented a potent argument for discussing the importance of gender relations, indicating efforts by many historians to totalize Black feminism or Black femininity without consideration for configurations of difference. As defined by U.S. law, African Americans were chattel slaves whose sole purpose was to work under a stratified system of extensive and laborious conditions. The 1855 ruling in State of Missouri v. Celia brought tremendous upheaval to the state of Missouri, which established the first set of national laws to protect the rights of women. Under the influence of institutionalized slavery, 19-year-old Celia suffered abuse and exploitation at the hands of her slave master for five years. After giving birth to her owner’s child and defending herself from
further advances, she was found guilty of his murder because of her status as a slave. Higginbotham (1992) also noted that Black women’s experiences generally were inherently different from slave men. In addition to fieldwork, slave girls and women were also responsible for domestic duties linking and connecting to race a socially constructed personal identity specifically related to the Black women.

Wiggins (1980) provided further insight to the unique position of slave girls as domestic workers and facilitators of play. To take a case in point, the play of slave children was restricted to the borders of the plantation. Wiggins’s (1980) *The Play of Slave Children in the Plantation Communities of the Old South, 1820-1860* built upon previous studies by examining the performativity and value of the play of slave children in the cultural community. He provided a critical perspective and simple interpretation that slave play was a site of massive resistance, preserved as a culturally situated resource. Though denied access to education, slave children used games to learn basic reading and mathematical skills. Relying on primary sources and narratives interview, Wiggins (1980) offered an in-depth interpretation of slave play:

Many of the games played by children of the slave quarters had definite educational implications. Through the playing of games, slave children were often able to learn simple skills of literacy. “I learned some of the ABC’s in playing ball with the white children,” remembered Mattie Fannen of Arkansas. Anna Parkes, who lived on a large plantation in Georgia, remembered nothing about special games except “Ole Hundred.” “Us would choose one and that one would hide his face against a tree while he counted to a hundred. Then he would
hunt for all the others. They would be hiding while he was counting. We learned to count a playing Ole Hundred.” (pp. 24-25)

In an examination of girls’ play, Wiggins (1980) concluded that girls were more likely to engage in social play and group activities, specifically ring play games or hand-clapping games. Hand-clapping games enabled African Americans to retain a significant part of traditional African culture. While most modern games are played for entertainment and fun, the games have their origins in coded language and cultural expressions during the American slavery era. Wiggins (1980) wrote,

The most popular group activities of the slave children, especially the girls, were “ring games” or “ring dances,” accompanied by a variety of songs and riddles. There were infinite variations in these games, but the general procedure was to draw a ring on the ground, ranging from fifteen to thirty feet in diameter; depending on the number of children engaged in the dancing ring. The participants would congregate within the ring and dance to different rhythmic hand clappings. (p. 24)

Wiggins (1980) further asserted that the oral practices of hand clapping games encouraged social participation and access to simple literacy to create codes of power and notions of gender.

In a more recent study of Black girl hand games, Gaunt (2012) demonstrated how Black girls’ triintersectional marginalization can affect their cultural play into a musical art form (Jamison, 2015). She theorized kinetic orality and offered the possibility of an innovative methodology for further investigation (West, 1987). While the study implied
the possibility of using cultural games for academic learning, the study did not investigate how educators might develop strategies to plan these games as a classroom learning activity through curriculum instruction. Since hip hop and social media have influenced and transformed the modern game play, Black girls remain triply minoritized through race, class, and gender.

Many would argue that hip hop is the most expressive form of Black culture today. To put it succinctly, male rap artists have mainstreamed and controlled traditional handclapping games. Collins (2000) indicated that stereotypical images of Black women in mainstream media platforms include “mammies, matriarchs, welfare recipients, and hot mommas” (p. 76). The images continue to dominate the mainstream discourse and foster the oppression of Black women. As an illustration, southern rapper Juicy J’s (2016) Miss Mary Mack song uses the title of traditional hand-clapping game and misogynistic metaphorical references to communicate a message about drug use:

And I'm smokin' kebowls all out my bong
All I inhale is that strong
So you know I keep the grass all in my lungs
Mrs Mary Mary, roll it back to back
On a shot of gin and a beam on my tongue. (lines 31-35)

In rapper Nelly’s Country Grammar lyrics are references to the traditional handclapping game, Down, Down Baby. The video features Nelly in the center of a group surrounded by preadolescent girls at play and half-naked video dancers dancing suggestively.
Currently, these portrayals of African American women and girls seem to be an industry norm. To better understand the cultural significance of hand-clapping games, it is important to understand how hip hop as a cultural phenomenon is responsible for using the oral-kinetic tradition of girls play to proliferate these negative representations of young women of color.

In conclusion, together these studies indicate that the interactional cultural patterns of students in mediatized learning environments expand the discourse surrounding student agency and identity. This qualitative study used interviews, recordings of hand-clapping games, and personal memories of game playing to connect the embodied expression of African American girls in online learning environments. Furthermore, all studies reviewed here support this research study to examine student identity, gender, and cultural knowledge production using critical literacy praxis in a single-gender high school. The Games Girls Play explores how cultural games that African American female students play reside in their cultural traditions and incorporate into their creativity, positive socialization, and academic achievement.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

_The authenticity of The Past only obtains in regard to the current practices as witnesses, actors and commentators against the renewal of power and domination. Only in the present can we be true to the past we chose to acknowledge._

-Trouillot, 1995

Background of the Problem

Over the last several years, empirical research on the triintersectional experiences of African American female adolescents (i.e. Black girls) in multiliterate learning environments have included several examples of the multiple subject positions of Black girl existence (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Haddix, McArthur, Muhammad, Price-Dennis & Sealy-Ruiz, 2016; Miller, 2017; Price-Dennis, 2016). Educational research has also shown that systematic generic labeling and collective inclusion of Black girls among minorities typically invalidate the cultural uniqueness and importance of African American female adolescents (Collins, 2000; Owens, Stewart, & Bryant, 2011). Disregarding the validity of cultural capital as an asset-based academic learning tool, especially in low performing school environments and urban classrooms, has historically restricted opportunities for innovative curriculum instruction, teaching strategies, and creative student learning (Boykin, 1994). This further suggests that it may have also influenced and placed female adolescents, specifically African Americans, at risk for academic under performance and disproportionate discipline that is often misunderstood.
by educators unfamiliar with current cultural paradigms. When incorporating storytelling strategies in curriculum instruction as a cultural approach to learning, educators also include divergent aspects of cultural capital that contribute to learning in ways that lend to students’ development as agentive beings (Milner, 2007).

These efforts to educate ethnically diverse female students in academic environments effectively in preparation for success as adults continue to move forward (Haddix et al., 2016; Price-Dennis 2016; Winn, 2010). Current trends in education have led to a proliferation of studies centered on the educational experiences of female African Americans in high school (Owens et al., 2011). The experiences represented are critical to understanding their agentive roles in constructing their social, academic, and personal identities (Few, Stephens, & Rouse-Arnett, 2003). Moreover, the critical essences of race, class, and gender as socially and culturally constructed categories situate Black girls in a unique context due to the realms of power constraining them (Few et al., 2003).

In today’s classroom settings, teachers are expected to address the growing needs to support diverse learners. A growing body of literature recognizes how narrative might serve as a strategy to address the cultural incongruences in classrooms. Freire (1970) addressed this problem as “a banking concept of education” (p. 72), which involved teachers’ significant role in delivering instructional content directly to students. Instead of engaging learners in a process of dialogue and exchange, Freire argued that this approach disregarded student cultural capital and failed to draw upon the critical aspects of self-definition necessary to respond appropriately to the privileged responses of dominant society (Williams, 2008). Those unfamiliar with this school of thought may be
interested to know that it is simply engaging diverse learners to promote student achievement and academic success.

Most major studies of achievement among African American students focus only African American males (Gayles, 2005). Gayles’ (2005) study, Playing the Game and Paying the Price: Academic Resilience among Three High-Achieving African American Males, highlighted the academic achievement and dual existence of three Black male students in an affluent high school. However, until now, little importance has been given to the dual frame of references of African American girls, specifically in interactive learning environments (Haddix et al., 2016; Price-Dennis 2016; Winn, 2010). Coleman (2017) conducted a recent study suggesting and encouraging further investigative gender-specific and age-related research. This quantitative study explored supporting cultural orientation and home socialization factors of African American children, to be used as cultural and learning capital in African American students’ educational environments. A communalism instrument on the presence of communalism in the home, preference for communal behaviors and beliefs, and preference for cooperative learning environments was administered to 105 African American third and fourth grade students from low-income backgrounds. Questionnaire results suggested that participants’ home orientation and socialization were more communal than individualistic; participants preferred participation in communal rather than individualistic activities. They preferred cooperative to individualistic learning contexts. Correlational findings suggested that the more students perceived communalism at home, the greater the endorsement of communal behaviors, beliefs, and cooperative learning.
Statement of the Problem

As educators seek to find the most effective strategies to ensure student academic proficiency, the debate continues regarding the most successful instructional strategies to best address student engagement during a most critical developmental stage of African American female adolescents, ages nine through thirteen. Thomas and Jackson (2007) argued the necessity of a detailed assessment to determine the extent to which cultural marginalization of African American girls within a race, class, and gender context have impacted learning outcomes. Teacher perceptions of their roles as critical pedagogues in an increasingly diverse society (Thomas & Jackson, 2007) demand further exploration as well. Racially situated experiences on both sides of the teaching-learning relationship demand closer exploration. Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, and Thomas (1995) claimed, “Indeed, their (African American females) specific raced and gendered experiences, although intersectional, often define as well as confine the interests of the entire group” (p. 36). Crenshaw and colleagues (1995) urged us to consider the highly contested terrain of race as a social construct predicated upon maintaining social and political subordination (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Higginbotham, 1992).

Despite increased studies and meaningful strategies that focus on the academic disparities in curriculum instruction for programs designed for African American students, challenges continue to exist (Collins, 2000; Gayles, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Milner, 2007). The challenges of understanding multimodality as a useful academic learning tool are affected by social media, unforeseen changes in school strategic planning, reevaluation of academic objectives, and a changing national
landscape reflecting students from diverse cultures, values, and languages (Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia-Lopez, 2002). These challenges strongly suggest an urgent need for more studies that focus on individual cultures. Drawing on engendered voices to make meaning of lived experiences, this research study serves as a base for future studies centered on the interactional cultural patterns of African American female students in multimodal learning spaces. This study also provides insight into how the critical use of technology can be used to examine African American girls embodied online learning experiences. Furthermore, it serves as a resource for educators interested in developing culturally responsive curricula outside of hegemonic cultural traditions (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Lastly, this study provides a unique opportunity for educators to reexamine culturally situated resources in the form of multiliterate and multimodal practices across disciplines in interactive learning environments to address achievement disparities for at-risk students, specifically African American females.

Theoretical Framework

The interactive oral and kinetic embodied tradition of African American hand-clapping games serves as the creative metaphorical backdrop for this research study (London Knowledge Lab, 2011). The study provides insight into the networked connections between African American girl’s gendered experiences, performativity, and expressive engagement patterns as tools of knowledge and cultural production in “culturally responsive technological ecologies” (Gaunt, 2012; Hall, 2011, p. 18). Holloway-Attaway (2012) noted that the increasingly complex context of organic embodied experiences operate as expressive referents within online environments.
Higginbotham (1992) argued that it is necessary to define the technologies of race, gender, and sexuality as social constructions to call attention to the complexity of meaning. Higginbotham’s (1992) position is extremely useful because it sheds light on the importance of what Collins (2000) stated as the importance of self-definition. She argued that before the experiences of subordinated groups are centered for analysis, the individual experiences of members of that group must be validated. Collins (2000) drew attention to the empowerment of nondominant groups by challenging existing frameworks and developing an inclusive curriculum.

Personal storytelling is also a key feature of this research inquiry into the researcher’s educational practice and philosophical journey. It follows, then that this research project attempted to capture the work of instructional theorists and ultimately employed a narrative approach to make meaning of the researcher’s story as it relates to her personal, academic, and professional journey in education.

In other words, by drawing on personal experiences, the female storyteller has the power to craft an authentic image by owning her account and life story. In Abraham’s (1999) description of Black feminist narrative research, she made note of the importance of the work presented by Collins (1986) on Black feminist thought by stating,

She critiques the contributions made in outlining these strategies by writers such as Karl Marx, Paulo Freire, and Frantz Fanon, which assume that the ‘oppressed’ have an inferior ability to make decisions and a lack of motivation because of a lack of understanding of their situation. (p. 6)
Summarily, Abraham (1999) also indicated that “the process of writing autobiographically, whether presenting a single or collective life, is a reflexive process which rebuilds, remembers, re-organizes thought and experience ways to establish meanings or relevance” (p. 3). Thus, this research project attempted to capture the work of feminist theory, Black feminist discourses, the lived experiences of young women of color and those who teach them to give value to the practice of narrative storytelling. Lawrence (1995) stated emphatically, “The ability to produce text, to stand in the position of subject and tell one’s own story, is central to one’s humanity and one’s freedom (p. 349). Therefore, these findings suggest several courses of action for narrative theory, feminist narrative theory, and black narrative feminism.

The initial objective of this study involved providing authentic learning experiences connecting students learning responses to society. It was hypothesized that adults and youth can engage in multimodal forms of teaching and learning to make critical connections to their personal life stories and learning experiences. Hull and Katz (2006) noted, “Thus how we represent ourselves in storied worlds depends on who we are trying to be in relation to the present” (p. 45). Recent studies like these shed new light on providing alternative strategies to connect students lived experiences to their identity and performance in relationship to a broader sociocultural identity.

Purpose of the Study

The primary reason for choosing this research project involves both personal experience and professional interests. Working with predominately African American
girls in an urban, single-gender school has shaped my research agenda and theoretical framework.

This study presents empirical qualitative evidence through four fundamental venues that argue for inclusion of culturally congruent curriculum and instruction in responsive classroom environments. This evidence can be an invaluable disrupting deficit perspective contributing to student academic performance of African American female adolescents. Although relatively little research on the multiliterate practices of African American females exists, this study draws on Black feminist thought, Critical Theory, and New Literacy Studies to (a) understand the culturally constructed experiences of African American female students in online learning environments and (b) connect to their identities and lived experiences to inclusive curriculum practices in online learning environments (Collins, 1986; Haddix et al., 2016). The three frameworks draw on student self-discovery, agency, and power to inspire and motivate learners (Vygotsky, 1933/1978). Previous research has not been explicit enough regarding the connection between the three frameworks to curriculum and instruction.

When considering the strategic academic significance of “stories developed into narratives” (Warren, 2016, p. 1), this researcher argues that critical pedagogy sits at the heart of understanding the importance of critical practice in standards-driven and traditionally oppressive institutional structures. The discussion points to the primary role of the “narrative” as a meaningful communication tool in conveying the lived experiences of African American female adolescents across modalities (Butler, 2006). Until recently,
many scholars surprisingly overlooked learning across modalities, specifically making meaning of lived experiences through narrative storytelling.

Additionally, this research study explores the problem of hegemonic constraints that African American adolescent females experience in online academic learning environments. Historian Darlene Clark Hine (1982) noted “a deep, pervasive, and centuries-long conspiracy of silence surrounding the creative expressions, strivings, and struggles of African American women” (p. 357), contending that African American women “be appreciated and studies as positive creative agents in their own right” (p. 358). The essence of Hine’s argument is to imagine alternatives to the main narrative in the form of a counternarrative. Lesko’s (1999) study presented schools as masculinizing institutions that fail to address patriarchal programs resulting in racialized remasculinization. Finally, this study also examined the distinct, culturally constructed school experience and critical postures of African American girls’ critical engagement with technology in multimodal learning environments (Foley, Levinson, & Hurtig, 2001; Lusher, 2011).

The findings of this study attempted to demonstrate the benefit of implementing inclusive practices for dispossessed students, specifically African American female students. The increasing demographic and technological shifts justify the need for more relevant and responsive teaching approaches. Thus, schools that employ the recommended strategies will be better equipped to prepare divergent learners for academic success. For the researcher, this research study assisted me with exploring
critical aspects of research that many researchers have been unable to investigate (Regoniel, 2015).

**Research Questions**

This study interrogated critical aspects of self-definition as a recurring theme as a basis for positive socialization and culturally responsive student identity construction using the following research questions:

1. Do the interactional cultural patterns of African American female students in multimodal spaces shape their sociocultural identities in on-line learning environments?
2. Do the embodied experiences of African American female students’ multiliterate spaces shape their academic identities in on-line learning environments?

**Assumptions and Limitations**

A limitation of this study was the implementation of a sample of convenience. It was projected that high school respondents would participate in this study over a period of eight months. However, a similar study should be conducted in the single-gender middle school within the same school and district, as well as in other geographic areas.

Another limitation was the lack of transferability. The qualitative methods could potentially explore more in-depth issues that teachers and students experience within a gender specific environment. According to Shenton (2004), “In order to assess the extent to which findings may be true of people in other settings, similar projects employing the
same methods but conducted in different environments could well be of great value” (p. 70).

Definitions of Key Terms

*African American* is a term that refers to an American who has African ancestry and/or is descended from Africans legally classified as property during the American enslavement era (Gates, 2009).

*Agency* is a person or thing through which power is exerted or an end is achieved.

*Black feminist thought* refers to African Americans—primarily women—who possess some version of a feminist standpoint (Collins, 2000).

*Cultural codes* are symbolic and systemic meanings that are relevant to members of a culture (or subculture). These codes can be utilized to facilitate communication within the 'inside group' and also to obscure the meaning to 'outside groups'.

*Culturally constructed experiences* refer to a construct in the context of culture, or set of ideas that become one significant idea. Each culture has its own construct of what a certain thing might be, and since it typically embodies healthy amounts of human activity, it shares many traits while still varying significantly in many details.

*Culturally responsive pedagogy* refers to instruction with values that relate to culturally diverse worldviews, individual learning styles, and specific challenges, along with current theories and practical methodologies and the extent to which they accommodate the unique needs of teaching.
Embodied interaction is the creation, manipulation, and sharing of meaning through engaged interaction with artifacts. Embodiment is the property of our engagement with the world that allows us to make it meaningful.

Gender is a classification that delineates a definitive distinction between men and women and may be entwined with race and culture.

Multimodal communication “is comprised of multiple ‘modes’ or communicative forms (i.e., digital, visual, spatial, musical, etc.) within various sign systems that carry meanings recognized and understood by a social collective” (p. 8).

Summary

This research is important to study because it demonstrates how cultural games might be investigated an important role in academic learning to counter hegemonic and patriarchal dominance in school settings. This project also examines how the interactional cultural patterns of African American female students in multimodal learning environments connect to their identities and lived experiences as counter to the masculinist privileging of curriculum in secondary classrooms. The researcher assumed the role of anonymous insider in this critical feminist ethnographic exploratory study and used an inquiry-based approach to also advocate for increased access to technology to support learning for young women of color who are socially positioned as “othered” (Hall, 2011, p. 15). Furthermore, providing teachers with authentic job-embedded experiences to engage in critical literacy praxis to support African American female students is a crucial step in adding value to the conversations centered on the value of student’s lived experiences and learning outcomes.
The Bridge Poem

I will not be the bridge to your womanhood
Your manhood
Your humanness
I’m sick of reminding you not to
Close off too tight for too long
I’m sick of mediating with your worst self
On behalf of your better selves
I am sick
Of having to remind you
To breathe
Before you suffocate
Your own fool self
Forget it
Stretch or drown
Evolve or die
The bridge I must be
Is the bridge to my own power
I must translate
My own fears
Mediate
My own weaknesses
I must be the bridge to nowhere
But my true self
And then
I will be useful.

-Donna Kate Rushin, 1981
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE:

THE GAME CONFIGURATION: (RE)PRESENTING A DIASPORIC LANDSCAPE OF BLACK GIRL PLAY

_my grandmothers are full of memories_
_smelling of soap and onions and wet clay_
_with veins rolling roughly over quick hands_
_they have many clean words to say._
_my grandmothers were strong._
_why am I not as they?_

-Margaret Walker, 1989

A growing body of literature continues to recognize the importance of the educational experiences of women of color in multiliterate, technology-supported learning environments. Researchers have shown an increased interest in integrating interactive strategies in secondary classrooms, and instructional leaders have sought innovative ways to leverage technological resources for 21st century learners (Imam, 2016). A 2014 study of interactive learning environments conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress found that the use of simulations and games in at-risk schools resulted in significant achievement outcomes (Darling-Hammond, Zielezinski, & Goldman, 2014). The available evidence suggested that critical scholarship on African American education corroborates the notion that it is becoming extremely difficult to ignore the existence of the issues impacting achievement
data. Furthermore, in the last two decades, educational research has provided significant support for the assertion that more emphasis has been placed on the achievement levels of African American males as opposed to females. Therefore, the literature on critical pedagogy and the relative importance of urban education reform for minority girls have been topics of great interest (Haddix, McArthur, Muhammad, & Sealey-Ruiz, 2016).

Equally important, when it comes to the topic of education and interactive learning environments, most educators will readily agree that current youth media practices are constantly evolving (Greenhow, Sonnevend, & Agur, 2016).

Whereas, some studies indicate that interactive, technology-mediated learning environments provide relevant learning experiences for all students, others maintain that limited access results in a participation gap that inhibits the achievement of learners in low-socioeconomic groups (Greenhow et al., 2016). This argument usually revolves around concerns for equity and access. In this context, research has suggested that digital media can be used to provide meaningful and challenging assessments for learners through multiple modalities and informational texts (Hull & Katz, 2006). It follows then, that this researcher searched through existing literature to examine the extent to which studies have effectively addressed the interactional cultural patterns of African American female adolescent students in multimodal learning environments. She also investigated methodologies that researchers used to present their ethnographic cultural learning as an inclusive teaching tool that can connect to their identities and lived experiences as counter to the masculinist privileging of curriculum in secondary classrooms.
Organization of the Literature Review

This chapter first gives an analysis of literature that addresses the theoretical dimensions of the research study followed by an ethnohistorical framework of educational experiences of African American girls. It investigates studies that have focused on culturally responsive pedagogy, cultural identity formation, and the origins of narrative feminist theory to explore the race-gender disparities in achievement among African American girls. The remaining literature reviewed presents studies of how a critical pedagogical approach is crucial to address the insider perspectives concerning issues involving African American female student’s performance. Moreover, the researcher investigated how or whether the studies presented reviewed indicated how and what levels of low achievement levels among African American female students was rooted in historic oppression and that a feminist triintersectional perspective is necessary to investigate the interactive influences reflected in academic achievement disparities (Jamison, 2015).

This literature review also uses the studies analyzed herein to argue that the continued need for an interdisciplinary approach including a gender responsive and culturally appropriate pedagogical framework is crucial to address the current race-gender disparities in achievement involving African American females by addressing the following research questions:

1. Do the interactional cultural patterns of African American female students in multimodal spaces shape their sociocultural identities in on-line learning environments?
2. Do the embodied experiences of African American female students’ multiliterate spaces shape their academic identities in on-line learning environments?

Drawing on African American girl’s technology-mediated practices, this study utilized a critical feminist ethnographic and narrative approach to make meaning of lived experiences, sociocultural and academic identities of African American female students. Ultimately, this project examined how identity play and interactional cultural patterns of African American female students in multimodal learning environments connect to their lived experiences as counter to the masculinist privileging of curriculum in secondary classrooms. With this intention, this study may provide a unique opportunity for educators to integrate the multiliteracies approach as an instructional process across disciplines in interactive learning environments in an effort to address the pedagogical value of multimodal engagement and achievement among African American female students (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Haddix et al., 2016).

A primary objective of this literature review was to critique and analyze existing studies that may or may not have already addressed portions of what might prove useful but may leave avenues for further investigation that is relevant and possible to fulfill within this current study. It is the objective of the researcher to also investigate areas within existing literature that unveil new possibilities for research that this study aims to contribute to further the existence of empirical studies that will contribute to the field.
Search Strategies

In order to generate relevant search results to support me with devising a central question for this research study, the researcher began the study of available literature on African American females, critical literacy, and technology supported learning environments by selecting the most appropriate research databases that would allow securing of relevant sources. Through this method, I identified several suitable databases for the research documents used in this study. I searched through documents in the following research databases available through Mercer University and New York University’s Alumni Library: JSTOR, ProQuest (General), Education ProQuest, Project Muse, EBSCO, EBSCO-Education Full Text. I also secured a university system card to borrow seminal texts from Mercer University, Clark-Atlanta University, and Emory University libraries to support the search for reliable, accurate, and current material on the research topic. During this process, I used a literature search template to outline and sort the terms associated with my study, which included multimodal learning, multiliteracies, new literacies, culturally responsive pedagogy, and critical media literacy. I expanded my search to include additional articles related to culturally responsive pedagogy AND multiliteracies AND African American girls. As I proceeded with the search, I also secured articles centered on related to culturally responsive instructional practices in core content subject areas related to the following terms, divergent learners, technology mediated learning, culturally congruent classrooms, deficit thinking, and counternarratives. I created literature review charts to examine
culturally responsive classroom practices related to the research problem (see Appendix I).

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

The issue of research specifically focused on African American girls’ learning experiences has received considerable critical attention. For example, Whitney (2016) sought to gain greater understanding of the multimodal writing practices of African American girls with learning disabilities. Their stories shed light on the complexities of pedagogical relevance and identity formation among divergent learners. Hilliard (1998) acknowledged this unique positioning as a process of socialization “situated in a sacred space” (p.10). Hilliard (1998) indicated that games play an integral role in reinforcing social and cultural relationships. The researcher used the critical interpretive frameworks of Black feminist thought and culturally responsive pedagogy to build a metaphorical bridge to connect the culturally constructed experiences of African American girls in online learning environments.

Collins’s (2000) Black feminist thought foregrounds gender to interrogate the complex issues related to African American women. Numerous studies have established that the historical trajectory of African American women’s lived experiences should be further examined (Collins, 2000; Davis, 1990; Hine & Thompson, 1998; hooks, 1993; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005; Madison, 2005). Collins (2000) acknowledged the significance of Black feminism in creating safe spaces for African American women to recognize the power of self-definition. Collins (2000) emphasized:
Historically, survival depended on sticking together and in many ways aiming to minimize differences among African Americans. More recently, in a changing political economy where survival for many U.S. Blacks seems less of an issue, space to express these differences now exists. Black feminism itself has been central in creating that space, in large part, via Black women’s claims for self-definition. (p. 112)

Collins’s (2000) point was that the historical struggle for Black women’s survival is situated in institutional oppression. Adams, Bell, Goodman, and Joshi (2016) suggested that lived experiences are centered on location. They further asserted that the intersectionality of race, class, and gender is closely related to identity formation through the cycle of socialization, as displayed in Figure 3.
During the slavery era, as a class African American women’s voices were silenced. Consequently, they formed their own secret collectives known as *hush harbors* to share rituals and cultural practices unknown to their owners. History documents hush harbors or secret spots as the earliest unauthorized and unsupervised sites of resistance.
for slave women. Evans (2008) stated that enslaved women used hand clapping, songs, and call and response to communicate and engage in performative cultural expressions.

As the anti-slavery movement became increasingly widespread in the northern states, free African American women formed the Female Anti-Slavery Society in 1832. Both Black and White women were denied fundamental rights. Although many enslaved women were associates of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, there is no record of African American women in attendance at the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, and they found their stories omitted from the national discourse. While obvious parallels emerged between both groups, the slavery era continued to reinforce oppressive institutional norms, resulting in further marginalization of African Americans as a cultural group. To illustrate, Grant (1968) indicated that the Roberts v. City of Boston (1850) case set a precedent for widespread legal segregation of public schools. Sarah Roberts, a five-year-old plaintiff, was denied access to the Abiel Smith School due to her race. This case served as the legal standard for the separate but equal argument in the landmark Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) decision. One year after the Roberts (1850) decision, Sojourner Truth (1851) stressed the importance of treating women of color equally:

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain’t I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain’t I a woman? I could
work as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and bear the lash as well! (para. 2)

The personal story of Sojourner Truth echoed the weight of disenfranchisement engendered by institutionalized subjugation.

Following Reconstruction, the institution of Black Codes reinforced written and unwritten social norms. The cultural norms regarding social status in late 19th century America prompted feminist leaders, such as Mary Church Terrell, Mary McLeod Bethune, Frances Harper and Ida B. Wells, to explore the complex status of Black women. Despite the proliferation of reconstruction era schools for young Black women, the mammy image remained a pervasive negative stereotype. Established in Athens, Georgia, the Black Mammy Memorial Institute (1911) prepared freed Black women for domestic work in dominant culture and in the field. Collins (2000) noted, “Resisting by doing something that is not expected could not have occurred without women’s long-standing rejection of mammies, matriarchs, and other controlling images” (p. 108).

To counter these hegemonic practices, Black women formed organizations to galvanize against segregation and abuse. In At the Dark End of the Street, McGuire (2010) noted the emergence of the Sojourners for Truth and Justice (STJ), organized in 1951, sought to resist institutional oppression using the tradition of testimony by “inviting Black women to come speak their minds” (p. 80). Thus, Black feminist thought recognizes the divergent experiences of African American women and seeks to establish a sense of legitimacy for the humanistic vision of social justice to empower all marginalized groups.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Debate continues regarding the best instructional strategies to address the ways and means of effective engagement with critical practices among African American women. In their useful analysis of African American female students, Thomas and Jackson (2007) indicated that a critical assessment of African American female academic performance is necessary to determine the extent to which the cultural marginalization of African American girls within a race, class and gender context have impacted learning outcomes. Thomas and Jackson (2007) also addressed teachers’ perceptions of their roles in as critical pedagogues in an increasingly diverse society. Correspondingly, growing evidence suggests that critical pedagogy is among the most important factors for addressing the needs of urban schools.

Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) suggested that critical pedagogies could give educational stakeholders an understanding of the diverse needs of learners in urban school settings. They argued that critical pedagogy is a critical framework to expand understanding of critical pedagogical as a useful instructional practice in standards-driven and traditionally oppressive institutional landscapes. A significant body of research has accumulated on how the critical role educators play in adequately addressing the needs of divergent learners. These findings challenge the work of earlier researchers, who tended to exclude the specific learning needs of students in urban settings. Consequently, the issue of critical pedagogy has received considerable critical attention.

According to Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008), “To be effective, urban education reform movements must begin to develop partnerships with communities that
provide young people with the opportunity to be successful while maintaining their identities as urban youth” (p. 7). In making this comment, Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) urged us to acknowledge the need to engage with communities in ways that empower youth as problem solvers and constituents of learning. The literature of critical pedagogy and the relative importance of urban education reform has been the subject of considerable discussion. While a variety of definitions of the concepts of critical pedagogy have been suggested, this study utilized the definition suggested by Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997), who saw it as “the term used to describe what emerges when critical theory encounters education” (as cited in Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 24). Recent attention has focused on the conditions under which knowledge transfers from teacher to student. Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) highlighted the relevance of Freire’s banking model of education.

Student and teacher lived experiences play a critical role in culturally responsive teaching and learning in educational cultural settings (Baker & Digiovanni, 2005; Banks, 1993a, 1993b; Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Recently, considerable literature has emerged around the theme of addressing the achievement disparities of diverse learners within the U.S. educational system. Considering current events and recent scholarship on multiculturalism, it is becoming extremely difficult to ignore the existence of the issues affecting culturally and linguistically diverse students. In the last two decades, educational research has attempted to address these needs through curriculum reform efforts. Furthermore, the literature on the transformative power of cultural understanding
through intimate knowledge about students’ ways of knowing has received great attention.

Historically, during the early 20th century need to address the perils of racial segregation and growing immigrant population, Banks (1995) noted that challenges to mainstream racial theories emerged to counter hegemonic knowledge. Banks (1995) acknowledged the role of progressive era scholars, such as W.E.B. DuBois, in addressing the inequities faced by reconstructing notions of race. Yet, although not widely supported, *de jure* segregation persisted, the focus on ethnic and cultural diversity in curriculum focused on the experiences of people of color and women (Banks, 1993a; Lee, 2008; Schneider, 2007). For instance, the Sea Island Citizenship Schools, Algebra Project, and Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) Freedom Schools made mathematics education and literacy the primary foci of their curricular interventions to support disenfranchised communities. To circumvent the hegemonic nature of school curriculum, these institutions implemented programs to empower communities through literacy to encourage citizens in rural communities to vote. Sea Island Citizenship school leader Septima Clark’s quest to promote literacy and active citizenship was strikingly similar to Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy involving literacy programs in Brazil (Schneider, 2007). These efforts during the Civil Rights Era of the 1960s and 1970s attempted to circumvent the traditional segregated school systems. Ladson-Billings (1992) propounded the view that these programs empowered individuals and communities struggling with illiteracy. Furthermore, she claimed that they failed to address the underachievement of diverse student learners and argued for a broader
conceptualization of literacy by advocating for a culturally relevant approach to address these issues (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Therefore, from these counter hegemonic examples and counterarguments, critical theory emerged to address the needs of a changing national landscape.

The literature on culturally responsive pedagogy and the relative importance of meeting the needs of diverse learners has also been a topic of interest. After the Brown v. Education (1954) decision, American schools remained largely segregated (Bell, 1980; Motley, 1999). Despite efforts to integrate public schools, the schooling experiences of divergent students remained substantially segregated. In Equal Justice under Law (1998) Civil Rights judge Constance Baker Motley noted that during the post Brown I (1954) and Brown II cases (1955), disenfranchised students fought to end systemic, voluntary segregation in the Atlanta Public Schools and the University of Georgia. Thereafter, several courses of action emerged to address the growing disparities by shedding light on the necessity for critical practice.

In the 1970s, Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed caused critical pedagogues to reassess their curricular approaches by engaging a mutual partnership with students. Freire (1970) noted that banking education was the most common teaching practice and, because it is a deficit approach, it should be replaced with a more emancipatory approach to learning (Apple, 2015; Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Schneider, 2007). Critical pedagogues emerged to connect the rigor of academic experiences to the daily lives of students. Hence, they emerged to draw attention to the academic disparities in education, as well as employ critical praxis to promote and support student achievement.
Critics questioned the ability of critical theory to provide transformative experiences for students in the age standards-based in scripted programs (Evans, 2008). Evans (2008) argued that the institutional constraints on teachers’ and students prevent critical pedagogy from thriving. Whereas Evans (2008) provided ample evidence that hierarchical structures limit effective implementation of critical practices, Jamison’s (2015) research on single-gender schools revealed that female students recognized the external and internal constraints on their personal and academic lives. Furthermore, her research drew attention to the complex nature of what she referred to as the triintersectional constraints of race, class, and gender oppression among diverse students in educational institutions.

When it comes to the topic of culturally and linguistically diverse learners, most readily agree that relating to students’ cultural lives to provide optimal learning experiences for minoritized learners is a critical feature of effective teaching (Sleeter, 2011). Where this argument usually ends, however, is on the question of teachers’ cultural proficiency. Whereas some are convinced that addressing the individual cultural lives of our students is essential, others maintain that it is difficult to assess due to teacher deficit perspectives of divergent learners (Milner, 2008).

Freire (1970) stated, “Education becoming an act of depositing, in which students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits that the students patiently receive, memorize and repeat” (p. 72). In making this comment, Freire urged reconsideration of curriculum and instructional approaches to knowledge transfer. The essence of Freire’s
argument is that the traditional role of the teacher-student relationship must be viewed as a learning partnership. This concept has important consequences for the domain of teaching and learning. The shifts in accountability and expectations experienced by teachers over the past decade remain unprecedented. By extension, the issue of culturally responsive assessment has received significant attention. One key aspect of culturally responsive learning is to address the diverse needs of learners. A broader perspective highlights the relevance of culturally responsive pedagogy as an instrument to promote equity and ensure legitimacy of student performance. In recent years, there has been an increased interest in addressing the needs of diverse student populations. Thus, it is becoming extremely difficult to ignore the existence of the role of culturally responsive pedagogy.

Hood (1998) asserted, “Culturally responsive instruction has been generally defined as that which incorporates teachers’ adaptations of subject matter content to reflect the culture of their students” (p. 189). One implication of Hood’s (1998) view is that culturally responsive practices are rooted in teacher’s individual instructional practices. Recently, curriculum and instruction planning processes have addressed the standard way of thinking about culturally responsive pedagogy. Mandates to address the growing needs of diverse learners urge school leaders to consider the importance of culturally responsive teaching in curriculum planning and development. The changes in accountability and expectations experienced by teachers over the past decade remain unprecedented. Thus, culturally responsive pedagogy addresses curriculum planning at across all sectors of the school population (Curtis, 1998). While they rarely admit as
much, curriculum planners often take for granted that culturally responsive pedagogical practices are implemented with fidelity.

Khalifa (2013) asserted that school administrators and stakeholders play a critical role promoting inclusion in schools through curriculum planning and development. By extension, the issue of culturally responsive pedagogy refers to efforts to promote equity and to promote student engagement. More specifically, Howard (2003) posited, “Teachers must be able to construct pedagogical practices that have relevance and meaning to students’ social and cultural realities” (p. 2). Previous studies have suggested that a reexamination of school curriculum and effective teaching strategies should include innovative assessment tools (Smith-Maddox, 1998). Thus, culturally responsive instruction must build on the importance of cultural knowledge production and the culturally situated funds of knowledge students bring to school. The changes in accountability and expectations experienced by teachers over the past decade remain unprecedented. However, other researchers who have examined culturally responsive pedagogy have found that a reexamination of school curriculum and effective teaching strategies should include innovative assessment tools (Smith-Maddox, 1998). By drawing on the concept of critical pedagogy and assessment, Smith-Maddox was able to show that alternative assessments to address the needs of diverse learners is crucial in school wide instructional planning processes.

The question of whether institutional factors contribute to the academic deficit has caused much debate in the educational profession. Ladson-Billings (2006) refuted the claims by cultural deficit theorists who support the notion that schools should not be held
accountable for the underachievement of African American students due to a combination of social, political, and economic factors. Specifically, recent studies conducted by the Alliance for Excellent Education and the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (SCOPE) indicated that minority students lack access across general education indicators, including curriculum materials, qualified teachers, funding, and computers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2014).

Banks (1995) asserted that schools have failed to utilize the various forms of cultural capital for knowledge production by minoritized students. Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) emerged to address ways to access divergent sites of cultural capital to teach divergent students more effectively through culturally derived knowledge (Banks, 1995; Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia-Lopez, 2002; Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Gay, 2013; Milner, 2008). Growing evidence suggests that culturally responsive pedagogy is among the most crucial factors for addressing the needs of diverse learners.

The National Education Association (2014) reported that by the year 2021, the number of minority students will increase nationally, resulting in lower enrollments for White students. For this research synthesis, this theoretical approach has been identified in a variety of contexts. Data from the U.S. Department of Education (2016) indicated that during the 2011-2012 schoolyear, the teaching force was 82% White. Diverse learners are presented with significant challenges through their dual existence throughout their academic lives (DuBois, 1903/1965). These disparities are crucial to their academic success, yet continue to emerge as a continuous process described by Scott-Simmons (2012) as a cultural misalignment with the curriculum. Scott-Simmons’s (2012) position
is extremely useful because it sheds light on the difficult problem of culturally
unresponsive teachers’ inability to respond effectively to the divergent sites of cultural
capital their students bring with them to school. Specifically, to address the growing
disparities in our national achievement gap, teachers must be prepared to support diverse
learners with effective instruction and meaningful relationships by employing culturally
situated pedagogical practices (Ayers, 1992; Delpit, 1988; Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings,
1995; Milner, 2007; Scott-Simmons, 2012).

Gay (2003) suggested that to critically support culturally and linguistically diverse
learners, effective instructors consider the culturally situated resources of diverse learners
and make learning meaningful for them, one of which is storytelling. Connecting
learning through narrative stories enables teachers to engage learners in ways that
empower students and transform learning (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The underlying
argument in favor of culturally responsive pedagogy is that it lends itself to improving
academic achievement for culturally and linguistically diverse learners by considering the
lived experiences of both teachers and students.

According to Solórzano and Yosso (2002), counter storytelling as a critical race
methodology and pedagogical medium enables teachers to confront the master narrative
exposed in “monovocal” stories. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) identified three functions
of counternarratives:

● Building community by humanizing the experiences of oppressed populations

● Challenging dominant narratives by contextualizing non-dominant beliefs and
   practices
• Exploration of new possibilities by connecting experiences with marginalized groups (p. 36).

Conle (2003) explained that counternarratives create space for multiple explanations that transform curricular practice because students are encouraged to engage in critical evaluation of their academic and social worlds. Through this process, students have the potential to develop the critical skills for transformation and actualize what Cutts (2012) referred to as *agentic possibilities*. Cutts’s (2012) position is extremely useful because it sheds insight on the role of teachers and curriculum leaders in developing culturally congruent curricula to promote both student empowerment and academic achievement. Furthermore, researchers have shown an increased interest in the intersection of culturally responsive evidence-based practices and counter storytelling to disrupt the deficit perspectives of hegemonic education.

Gay (2000) acknowledged the importance of a critical praxis that examines the dialectical relationship between culturally responsive theory and practice. This review will also attempt to highlight the dialectical tensions between conceptual and pedagogical understandings of culturally responsive experiences of teachers and African American female students through counter storytelling. It will interrogate how teachers’ counternarratives inform their culturally mediated instructional practices to provide meaningful and relevant learning opportunities for their students. Furthermore, this research review encompasses a discussion of how culturally unresponsive practices disproportionately impact underrepresented or marginalized African American female students. Therefore, effective culturally responsive evidence-based best practices must
be coupled with counter storytelling to interrogate content in a manner that will ultimately demonstrate how asset-based approaches can be used to counter deficit perspectives of hegemonic curriculum. A divergent student’s narrative ways of knowing are a critical feature of culturally responsive pedagogy (Milner, 2007). Furthermore, a culturally appropriate pedagogical framework is necessary to address the current disparities in achievement involving divergent student learners.

Teachers’ Cultural Competence and Student Empowerment

The tenets of culturally responsive practices are shaped by the characteristics of cultural competence. For the purposes of this study, cultural competence is an instructional process designed to support divergent learners by creating a system of effective pedagogical strategies centered on students’ unique cultural referents (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Several research studies examine the effect of teacher cultural competence on student engagement. The first group of studies reviewed in subsequent paragraphs center on culturally responsive teacher competence and student engagement in four core content areas, (mathematics, science, social studies, and English language arts). The second group of studies assessed the effect of cultural competence through teacher and student narrative ways of knowing using counter-narrative experiences of teachers and students.

The underlying argument in favor of culturally responsive pedagogy is that it prepares students to address inequities and involves positive learning outcomes (Gay, 2000) due to the teachers’ ability to employ high impact culturally competent standards of practice (Ladson-Billings, 2006). This section puts forth the claim that culturally
congruent practices involve an asset-based approach to counter deficit-based perspectives in dominant curriculum. Ladson-Billings (2006) also noted that cultural competence is a student-centered practice that is counter to dominant hegemonic ways of thinking and knowledge acquisition. This section centers on how teachers established a deep understanding of cultural knowledge and competence to engage in highly effective teaching with diverse learners. On these grounds, one can argue that effective culturally responsive instructional practices are centered in the teacher’s ability to engage learners from diverse backgrounds and traditions to take ownership of their own learning using their cultural awareness and interactions.

Averill and colleagues (2009) reported that culturally responsive pedagogy can be implemented as an effective model to support student achievement and engagement in mathematics through traditional and indigenous cultural practices. For example, Averill et al. (2009) collaborated to better understand how traditional Maori practices can be transferred from teacher education into classroom mathematical practice. While in class, students received encouragement to participate in discussions using traditional songs, games, manipulatives, drawings, and indigenous cultural crafts. Overall, students were more engaged in instruction that addressed not only the professional standard, and they were able to learn from traditional experiences through crafts, discussion, games, traditional songs, and prayers. However, institutional constraints on their time and lack of collaboration with other teachers restricted the preservice teachers’ efforts to incorporate bicultural perspectives from culturally derived indigenous instructional
strategies. In this study, all but one of the teachers interviewed indicated an enhanced awareness of culturally responsive pedagogy in mathematical teaching.

Bonner and Adams (2012) also reported a positive effect of teaching culturally responsive pedagogy with students. The teachers in this study employed four foundational cornerstones of culturally responsive mathematics teaching to increase their understanding of the foundational principles of culturally responsive mathematics teaching and instructional practices. The study used individual semi-structured interviews, observation, and artifacts to determine how one teacher used examples of her subjective experiences to connect with learners through storytelling. The results summarily indicated that the teacher connected with students and their communities through fundamental culturally responsive practices and provided a shift from dominant ways of thinking towards authentic engagement with the curriculum. In this study, the teacher taught community mathematics courses for parents, and used music and dance to represent culturally connected ways of knowing. The current literature abounds with the examples of culturally responsive teacher competence (Bonner & Adams, 2012).

Jett (2013) reported that preschool teachers of African American students develop authentic practices to gather information about students’ cultural heritage, interests, and strengths. The researcher also employed critical dialogue to support students with engaging in divergent mathematical perspectives. The findings of this study suggested that when teachers’ efforts to employ and integrate effective culturally responsive mathematical practices occurred, additional research is necessary to examine
the culturally responsive teaching and learning practices of postsecondary mathematics professors (Jett, 2013).

In social studies classes, Cho and Reich (2008) found that teacher competence involved a need to increase comprehension of textual evidence and speech using bilingual support resources. In this study, data collected from surveys revealed that teachers utilize modifications and accommodations to provide extra time for English Language Learners, which included adjusting the speech rate. Cho and Reich (2008) also discovered that teachers did not provide differentiated learning opportunities for students. These findings suggest that teachers need additional training in adapting to diversity and cultural awareness.

Choi (2013) sought to understand how highly effective teachers use culturally responsive curriculum to provide meaningful instruction to all learners in social studies classrooms. This qualitative case study conducted in an alternative public high school collected data using observations, interviews, artifacts, and field notes to obtain additional information about teachers’ culturally responsive instructional practices. Choi (2013) utilized a constant comparative method to identify patterns in the data. The results revealed that teachers used interactive strategies to engage students in collaborative group work, reading groups, small group discussions, peer feedback, technology-based teaching, and cross-cultural competence. Choi (2013) concluded teachers’ efforts to engage and learn about divergent cultures resulted in meaningful cultural connections with students.
In the same vein, Epstein, Mayorga, and Nelson (2011) noted that teachers employed culturally responsive units of study, pre- and postinstructional perspectives during classroom discussions. Observing 121 African American and Hispanic students in an urban ethnically diverse high school in New York City, the researchers used random solution to interview eight students. Data were coded using a constant comparative method designed to understand how students respond to culturally responsive teaching in a history classroom. Epstein et al. (2011) concluded that students’ viewpoints shifted to address multiple perspectives after reading textual evidence to support their positions regarding the history of racism in the United States.

Esposito and Swain (2009) reported that using a culturally responsive framework to develop critical awareness of the challenges associated with implementing culturally constructed instructional practices revealed that teachers used culturally responsive pedagogy despite institutional constraints prevalent in scripted curriculum. They also used instructional time to engage learners in a deeper understanding of social justice. The researchers collected, recorded and transcribed data from seven African American urban schoolteachers using interviews and focus group sessions. The results reported that teachers integrated critical literacy and critical thinking skills coupled with photo analysis designed to combat negative messages about the school community to promote cultural pride and awareness (Esposito & Swain, 2009).

Dimick (2012) found that students were actively engaged in inquiry-based and project-based activities. Group dialogue empowered students socially, politically, and academically to have a deeper understanding of course content through critical thinking
and analysis. The qualitative study consisted of a class of 24 African American students, nine of whom participated. One teacher in an urban charter high school on the east coast of the U.S. included pre- and postinterviews, ongoing discussions, focus groups, and observations. Dimick (2012) explored how student empowerment is reflected in the culturally responsive teaching and learning practices of an environmental science classroom. Teachers employed project-based activities, field trips, hip-hop songs, and group activities.

Despite the view of some that science education cannot adequately prepare students for social political and economic transformation within a classroom setting, Dimick (2012) found that when students engaged in project-based assessments, they viewed themselves as key players within their communities with elevated levels of influence. However, when the instructional focus was unclear, both teachers and students missed the overall objective of the social justice science projects. Dimick (2012) found that when instructional practices support engaging learning and glean from students’ cultural knowledge, students engage in a critical assessment of curriculum. Thus, students empowered with asset-based strategies were more confident and competent in their ability to succeed in their academic coursework, resulting in improving overall academic achievement (Dimick, 2012).

Similarly, Johnson (2010) sought to examine teacher engagement in a culturally responsive transformative professional development model designed to provide effective instructional practices for Hispanic students. This three-year study incorporated inquiry-based lessons, cooperative learning, culturally relevant strategies, funds of knowledge,
lesson plan development, scaffolding instruction, and cultural traditions to support instruction for divergent learners. Johnson (2010) noted that participating teachers implemented the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy with fidelity. Most notably, teachers engaged in effective implementation of culturally responsive practices by collaborating to create a community of learners by reframing literacy practices to include dialogic practices. These findings suggest teacher cultural competence focused on an ethic of caring in order to develop connections with students through learning more about diverse cultures. The collaborative process enabled students to become more culturally competent. These practices provided students in a low performing school with an opportunity to engage in multiple assessments that demonstrated interest in their cultural capital (Johnson, 2010).

Teacher cultural competence and effective praxis go beyond valuing diversity. Goldston and Nichols (2009) noted in their study of Black and White segregation that the teachers were aware of their own cultural identity indisposition through photo narratives to conceptualize culturally responsive science pedagogy. The researchers used transcripts of study group meetings, slideshow presentation, field notes, interviews, reflective sessions, and story memos to collect data. Using a qualitative narrative inquiry, teachers presented photos and narratives through slideshows to build cultural competence with students to recognize their agency. The teachers also used instructional scaffolding and oral speech performance to make culturally responsive connections. Goldston and Nichols (2009) found that the use of photo narratives was a more effective way to promote student learning in science classrooms than the traditional standardized
curriculum. Subsequently, teachers could provide memories of community and cultural reference through photo narratives designed to resist deficit thinking and assumptions about the school community landscape. Teachers in this study were forced to confront their own biases and construct their positions within the context of the school community. Furthermore, teachers could confront social inequities in their photo narratives and analyze their relationships with their school communities from their embodied experiences. Goldston and Nichols (2009) did not offer any evidence regarding the overall impact of these experiences within individual curriculum planning and implementation.

Milner (2010) discovered that cultural competence in an urban middle school that designed the curriculum to recognize multiple identities by confronting race and building culturally connected relationships and cooperative learning. Teacher-student discussions centered upon interactions across cultures that included students as agentive beings and critical participants in the classroom setting. Students were empowered to confront issues involving cultural incongruences and hegemonic power relations in their classrooms. In addition, teachers used student culture in their curriculum planning. This is significant because the research indicates student empowerment is a precursor to learning and academic achievement (Baker & Digiovanni, 2005; Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Furthermore, the researcher engaged in a reflexive approach to research by analyzing his own personal position as a researcher by questioning his privileges and biased assumptions in the process (Milner, 2010). Taken together, the fact that Milner (2010) examined the constraints of positionality clearly demonstrates that multiple
perspectives involving cultural competence are critical features of culturally responsive curriculum and methodological design.

Gainer (2010) found student critiques of racism through critical media literacy were a more effective strategy than traditional, teacher-led pedagogical approaches. In a qualitative study of Mexican and African American students, the researcher met with groups during focus sessions to address representations of urban youth and media. Gainer (2010) indicated that students were critical of racism in mainstream media regarding other youth but were not interested in creating counternarrative and alternative representations to depict racism in their individual lives. The student’s reticence to share their personal narratives indicates an area that previous studies have not addressed.

Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2005) argued that critical media pedagogy was an effective strategy to support students in identifying hegemony and unequal power relations in classrooms. In an analysis of students involved in a summer hip-hop digital media project, Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2005) found that critical media literacy practices place students in an empowering position. This is significant because students developed critical media literacy skills to critique dominant images and create counternarrative in opposition to dominant media representations of their culture. Gainer (2010) concluded that a dialogic approach is necessary to address the needs of diverse learners and divergent sources of cultural capital students bring with them to school.

Garland and Mayer (2012) reported that students’ critical literacy practices shape their cultural views as critical thinkers who are empowered to use a variety of texts to determine the social and cultural construction of literacy thinking. The researchers
utilized curricular artifacts to collect data in the form of observations, diaries, and focus and generative text in a predominantly white high school in north Florida. All classes observed engaged in standard literacy practices, although students are often cited as engaging in multiple literacy practices to express their individual experiences. However, Garland and Mayer (2012) offered little evidence about the effectiveness of these teaching strategies because they did not necessarily involve student input.

Lopez (2011) used poetry and culture to build intercultural understanding and increase student engagement with critical literacy practices to create transformative practice. Preservice teachers sought divergent ways to accommodate students’ needs through collaboration, dialogue, informal and formal inquiry, and group meetings to collect data. The data collected derived from dialogue, small group and whole group discussion, and performance poetry. Unlike the previous study, the findings indicated that students engaged in critical conversations and learned about the lives of others through critical literacy strategies. Although both studies centered upon student critical media literacy practices, this research indicates that creating critical spaces to empower students through collaboration is an important tenet of purposeful and transformative praxis (Freire, 1970). These findings challenge the work of earlier researchers who maintained deficit perspectives about students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Johnson (2010) implemented weekly journals, email, electronic discussion boards, telephone communications, discussion comments, and post observation conference notes to explore preservice English teachers’ literacy practices in a priority school. Participants received encouragement to engage in narrative discussions about
their preservice experiences. Using critical discourse analysis, teachers reported that their lived experiences prepared them for teaching at the research location. However, teachers noted resistance and institutional constraints as obstacles to their instructional practices, which served as a hindrance to their overall ability to develop cultural competence and adapt the learning environment to support fully the needs of diverse learners (Johnson, 2010).

Overall, the research on highly effective culturally responsive practices cultural competence is mixed. Students experienced high engagement during dialogic discussions and participated in a greater number of positive interactions in classrooms encouraging democratic dialogue.

*Figure 4* indicates a clear connection between counternarrative inquiry, cultural pedagogy, and curriculum instruction. It also illustrates that dialogue is a common thread in the literature concerning the importance of critical pedagogy in the form of dialogue as a necessary and effective means to connect the curriculum to students lived experiences. Freire (1970) referred to this process as transformative praxis, a process that involves making the curricular connections between theory and practice.
The only study reporting student disinterest involved a study with predominantly Hispanic students in a working-class neighborhood in the southwestern United States. Gainer (2010) did not indicate whether language was a barrier and diverse ways of communicating prevented students from communicating their cultural experiences through counternarratives. A body of reviewed research noted a positive relationship between critical media literacy practices to engage learners in critical conversations about the lives of others. Furthermore, several studies found an advantage in relating the historical and cultural context of their learning populations to their directly to their curriculum practices. Some studies showed a positive relationship between teachers deliberate instructional planning to include students’ culture in their instructional practices to promote cultural competence between teachers and students. Most studies, however, generally indicated cultural competence as curriculum sought to address diversity and cultural awareness within the school community. None of the studies addressed the specific learning needs of African American female students.
The research on teachers’ cultural competence and student engagement is complex due to methodological differences within the studies reviewed. In most studies, data were collected using multiple sources including field notes, interviews, focus groups, and discussions. Most studies did not address how teachers shared experiences created shifts in their instructional practices to prove effectiveness. Furthermore, most studies identified the students as passive learners. When teachers used student experiences to create curriculum, most studies indicated that students confronted issues concerning race and varied identities based upon their narrative and subjective experiences, which, ironically, were not addressed in the studies researched. DeGennaro (2008) explained, “Identity is the individual's perception of their characteristics, abilities, beliefs, and values integrated with perceptions of future development” (p. 429). It follows, then that institutional constraints on teachers’ time and ability to adequately assess and address the needs of divergent learners, particularly in mathematics, makes it difficult to draw any considerable conclusions about student engagement as critical actors in classrooms (Hall & Bush, 2010). However, the argument stands that counternarrative inquiry is an important pedagogical tool toward exploring meaningful and transformative culturally congruent connections to student academic achievement among culturally and linguistically diverse learners, specifically African American female adolescents.

Multiliteracies Theory, Black Girl Literacies, and Interactive Learning Spaces

Recent trends in education have led to the development of studies centered on the critical aspects of self-definition and African American females. As an illustration, over the last several years, the current literature on value and appropriateness of narrative
perspectives of African American girl’s in multiliterate learning environments abounds with examples of the institutional and academic positions of Black girl existence (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Haddix et al., 2016; Price-Dennis, 2016). The manner in which the experiences of Black girls are represented and reimagined is critical to understanding their role as keepers and transmitters of the cultural codes (Few, Stephens, & Rouse-Arnett, 2003).

Value of Digital Narrative and Identity Play

In reviewing the literature, several studies emerge as experimental group projects. One such study involved the Digital Underground Storytelling for Youth (DUSTY) Center in Oakland, California. Prior studies had noted the importance of the use of technology for literacy; similarly, the DUSTY program examined multimedia literacy and digital storytelling in new literate spaces (Hull & Katz, 2006). The initial objective of the study involved providing authentic learning experiences connecting students learning responses to society. Hull and Katz (2006) hypothesized that adults and youth can engage in multimodal forms of teaching and learning to make critical connections to their personal life stories and learning experiences. Hull and Katz (2006) found that critical aspects of self-definition emerged as a recurring theme and was a basis for positive, learner-centered, student identity construction.

Studies of meaning making and digital media show the importance of preexisting, culturally situated resources and their role in transforming new aspects of identity (De Gennaro, 2008; Hull & Katz, 2006). Generally, mediatized classroom environments have been limited to narrative and autobiographical approaches and have not focused on
student agency. Hence, Dwyer and McCourt (2012) addressed the notion that the classroom can serve as a divergent site of cultural capital. They noted the importance of moving from teacher-centered approaches to creating shared learning spaces for engagement. This approach presents new attempts to reassess the relationship between memory and landscape to promote a learner-centered framework. Additionally, they identified these culturally situated resources associated with performative landscapes as deep learning, student engagement, active learning, authentic assessments, problem or project-based learning, and flipped classrooms.

Recent trends in educational research indicate that stories can be shared through multiple modalities and informational texts. As an illustration, a mixed-method study examining teacher lessons plans from a project centered on integrating primary sources from the Library of Congress’s Teaching with Primary Sources program revealed that additional professional development was necessary to support teachers with integrating digital media (Milman & Bondie, 2012). Although providing professional training to support lesson planning might seem trivial, it is in fact crucial in terms of today’s concern over higher-order learning, as well as conducive to learning environments (Imam, 2016). Recent studies in curriculum and instruction emphasize core subject teaching coupled with instructional technology as a collaborative tool to increase learning opportunities for both teachers and students (Callahan, Saye, & Brush, 2013; Hofer & Swan, 2014).

In a study on participatory learning through social media, Krutka and Carpenter (2016) surveyed 303 social studies educators’ use of Twitter in their instructional practices. Considering the evidence, it seems that teachers valued Twitter as a
professional development tool, but they did not observe the utility of it as a classroom communication platform (Krutka & Carpenter, 2016). This supports Milman and Bondie’s (2012) observation of high school social studies teachers who used digital media in their lessons, but “the applications of primary sources were not necessarily consistent with best practices” (p. 393). In making this comment, Milman and Bondie (2012) indicated a need by instructional planners to devise an alignment of support systems to support classroom teachers with employing evidence-based practices.

A study conducted by Friedman and Garcia (2013) revealed that students’ use of Ipads and other technological devices increased student engagement with historical content. The evidence presented also suggests that the role of computers in social studies classrooms can engage learners in divergent ways with content and technology (Callahan et al., 2013; Hofer & Swan, 2014). What is more important is providing high quality job-embedded professional development to build teacher competence and provide tools to facilitate active learning (Beriwill, Bracey, Sherman-Morris, Huang, & Lee, 2016).

Childs (2015) developed a qualitative essay that examined the influential and deleterious effects of culturally biased historical discourse and cultural artifact perceptions in social media and popular culture upon academic performance and behavior of adolescents. The essay explored the possibilities of using common core standards and curriculum instruction as venue for middle and secondary social studies educators. Teachers would have opportunities to develop ideas for lesson plans that would help students understand how negative ideas about African Americans are often socially constructed through media and popular culture and negatively affect their academic
performance and classroom behavior. Students would dialogue and explore methods of how to address these challenges within an academic environment. While Childs (2015) reviewed literature that addressed popular culture, the study also offered an opportune setting for the researcher to develop an interview questionnaire of testimonials of how popular culture and artifacts might affect students adversely.

In conclusion, together these studies indicate that the interactional cultural patterns of students in mediatized learning environments expand the discourse surrounding student agency and identity. Furthermore, all of the reviewed studies reviewed support further research to examine student identity, gender, and cultural knowledge production using critical literacy praxis in a single-gender high school. Kinloch (2005) argued that literacy is “connected to reading, writing, thinking and doing-rooted in the process and act of idea exchange between teachers and students in an urban context” (p. 99). Students bring a broad range of experiences with them to school in the form of cultural capital. In view of the discussed literature, one may suppose that students can access their culturally situated funds of knowledge by using their school environment as a cultural resource (Lee & Anderson, 2009; Monte-Sano, 2008). Furthermore, providing teachers with authentic, job-embedded experiences to engage in critical literacy praxis is a crucial step in adding value to the conversations centered on the value of students’ lived experiences and learning outcomes.

**Historiography of Institutional and Academic Marginalization**

This section follows on from the previous section, which outlined the theoretical foundations of this study. As explained in the introduction, it is clear that disparities in
education among African American girls require further investigation (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Haddix et al., 2016). Boyles, Carusi, and Attic (2009) indicated that during the 18th and 19th centuries, education was established to benefit male children of elite White families. Narrative accounts by slaves reveal that society considered slaves as property and denied them citizenship rights, including access to an education. In her seminal text, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Harriet Jacobs (1861) highlighted her experiences with the horrors of slavery as a young girl. Additionally, the great abolitionist Frederick Douglass related his experiences of attempting to read by stating that it was unlawful and unsafe to teach a slave to read. Douglass (as cited in Arnove, 2009) noted,

> Just at the point of my progress, Mr. Auld found out what was going on and at once forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling her among other things, that it was unlawful as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to read. (p. 88)

These narrative experiences help us to understand the injustices African Americans faced during slavery and shed light on the relationship between gender, race, and class in early America.

In an analysis of social justice and American education, Boyles et al. (2009) indicated that Horace Mann conceptualized the idea of common schools. During the mid-19th century, Mann’s vision of state-operated schools reflected ideals of distributive justice, but it was not reflective of society, but based on European Protestant principles. Due to institutionalized slavery, African Americans were not included in Mann’s plan for compulsory education all young people. It is important to note that it was not until after
the Civil War that freed African Americans developed their own schools (Manning, 1983). During Reconstruction, however, African Americans struggled to maintain these institutions due to ongoing struggles within existing oppressive structures by securing access to education (Boyles et al., 2009). Hence, what followed was that, throughout the 20th century, scholar-activist W.E.B. DuBois influenced education policy with ideals of social justice and equity. He presented the concept of double consciousness to illustrate the marginal social positions that African Americans assumed because of race and defended the rights of all citizens, including women (Boyles et al., 2009). Political pressure from social and political unrest led to a reassessment of public education in the U.S. in the mid-20th century. Consequently, the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education Topeka landmark case desegregated public schools. Boyles et al. (2009) noted that, despite the Brown decision, “The school experiences of African American students, both girls and boys, continues to be substantially separate and unequal” (p. 365). Those unfamiliar with the significance of this case may be interested to know that researchers and scholars often cite it as a primary cause of marginalization of African American students in contemporary educational institutions. For example, Morgan (2005) reported,

Until the late 1950s, one of America’s worst kept secrets was its repression of blacks, other nonwhites, the working class, and women. African American communities lived behind a veil that hid their complex and personal struggle to define manhood and womanhood within an ideological system that denied them social, cultural, and moral citizenship. (p. 425)
After the Civil Rights era, integrated educational institutions as divergent sites of cultural capital attempted to address new technologies, new literacies, and the educational disparities impacting African American youth.

Hip Hop and the Digital Age

Since the 1960s, several reports indicated, “The digital age and the age of hip hop emerged collaterally during the last 35 years” (Mahiri, 2011, p. 1). Increasingly, students nationally and internationally use technology to communicate, engage in meaning making, and develop social and identity connections (Mahiri, 2011). Along the same lines, hip hop as a cultural phenomenon emerged as a new form of expression and communication to address sociocultural, economic, and political issues (Hunter, 2011; Love, 2012). However, since the 1980s, hip hop evolved into a consumer culture and shaped notions of Blackness and female sexuality. In a related study of the existence of hip hop, African American females and the oral transmission of the cultural code, Gaunt (2012) noted that hip hop is a delicate space for women. On one hand, it empowers women as a culturally situated form of word play. However, on the other hand it limits agency and authority because of masculinist privileging and delineates gender roles; therefore, denying things feminine and co-opting behaviors associated with female gender roles and power (Gaunt, 2012).

Counternarrative Ways of Knowing for Transformative Learning

Engaging divergent learners, specifically African American female students in empowering learning experiences, is a critical feature of culturally responsive teaching and learning. However, Milner’s (2008) study results suggested that counternarrative
inquiry techniques can create a transformation in pedagogy by effectively disrupting and interrupting discourse that targets deleterious discourse between teachers and students. Based on their review of the literature on counternarratives inquiry effectiveness, Ming and Ross (2012) challenged traditional interpretations of curriculum research and affirmed the significance of curriculum inquiry as a form of radical democratic practice. This study unveiled neglected narratives of silenced voices that challenge stereotypes of Southern women, Blacks, and other disenfranchised individuals and groups. The research encouraged examination of the impact of slavery, racism, sexism, classism, religious repression, and other forms of oppression and suppression on curriculum instruction in schools throughout the South (Ming & Ross, 2012).

Ming and Ross (2012) recommended counternarrative inquiry to contest the official or metanarrative that presents disenfranchised populations as deficient and inferior. The information within the study suggested that narratives have inspired educators to engage in specific curriculum inquiry projects that counter official or hegemonic narratives of oppression. Furthermore, practitioner narratives also counter the general lack of visibility practitioners engage in curriculum studies scholarship. The study attempted to question the persistent theory/practice dichotomy in curriculum studies and affirmed the significance of curriculum inquiry as a form of radical democratic practice (Ming & Ross, 2012).

Rolón-Dow (2005) implemented a qualitative study design to explore the intersection between ethnicity and caring in the educational experiences of middle school Puerto Rican girls. Rolón-Dow (2005) used counternarratives to provide detailed
connections between teachers and the Latino communities where they work and focused attention to caring at both the individual and institutional frameworks because of their emphasis on the roles of race/ethnicity and racism in shaping the circumstances of individuals and institutions. Critical race theory and Latino/Latina critical theory served as the framework for the qualitative data analysis that developed axial, selective codes and conceptual mapping to link the codes and emerging themes to the research question. Participants engaged in discourse to clarify the researcher’s interpretation of data themes and patterns. After transcription of collected data collected, a qualitative software program connected the data codes. The preceding analysis showed that beliefs about ethnicity influenced the production of care narratives within a school. The lessons learned from the present race-conscious analysis of care narratives offered the opportunity to contribute to critical race praxis relevant to marginalized groups of students, such as the Puerto Rican girls who took part in this study (Rolón-Dow, 2005).

The evidence in this study demonstrated that deficit-based, racialized, caring narratives were often articulated when teachers used their own experiences as well as the historical experiences of White immigrant groups as ideological foundations. These narratives did not account for the persistent nature of racism in structuring conditions in communities and schools (Rolón-Dow, 2005).

Glenn (2012) built upon existing work to focus upon the counternarrative potential of multicultural texts that can help preservice teachers explicitly critique existing perceptions of communities and families. Glenn (2012) observed that the textual evidence allowed participants to connect with characters across lines of difference and
provided evidence of how the counternarratives encouraged them to reconsider assumptions that they possessed and perpetuated relative to people of color. The study offered readers a new way to reconceptualize societal norms, reconsider how they see the other, and, in some cases, recognize their own culpability in promoting existing cultural stereotypes (Glenn, 2012). The experience heightened participants’ awareness of Whiteness, the ways that race can privilege or limit by fostering insider or outsider status, and the discomfort that can result when such dichotomies define our identities. In addition, the experience further illuminated the complexities inherent in the development of understandings of race among preservice teachers and revealed a richer understanding of preservice teachers’ development of knowledge related to the educational needs of students of color and their attitudes toward these students in and out of the classroom (Glenn, 2012).

In a study of indigenous Métis culture, MacLean and Wason-Ellam (2006) used cultural pedagogy of conversational interviewing to explicate how teachers use storytelling to connect to the curriculum in elementary, middle, and secondary schools. The researcher asked seven First Nations and Métis teacher-participants how, why, and when storytelling was integral to their professional practices. Additionally, the researchers invited teachers to examine their own positions about issues of professional practice, including issues of institutional power and privilege that may be unacknowledged, but necessary, as they became the learners of and teachers of students.

The findings revealed that storytelling indigenizes the curriculum (MacLean & Wason-Ellam, 2006). Instead, teachers incorporated indigenous ways of teaching within
the existing socially constructed context lesson plans to be more culturally responsive to each student. The evidence collected within the study suggested that storytelling became an effective cultural pedagogy for institutional agents by providing connections to curriculum instruction that students can understand, so that learning is meaningful and transformative. Conversely, MacLean and Wason-Ellam (2006) failed to address the institutional constraints regarding why First Nations and Métis teachers did not strive to develop lesson plans that represent indigenous knowledge in their pedagogy. This study suggests that a carefully designed curriculum instrument that incorporates academic standards into ethnic folklore from the community can successfully affect student academic performance and improve student behavior because of their familiarity with the story.

Despite the arguments supporting counternarrative as an asset-based way of knowing, the available research indicates that microaggressions in unwelcoming classroom environments continue to promote deficit perspectives of divergent learners (Scott-Simmons, 2012). Milner (2008) observed the instructional methods of teachers in a U.S. urban public school. He used questionnaires to examine how teachers’ counternarratives and experiences influenced them in their urban school classrooms. The evidence in the study suggested that, although teachers in urban schools may employ pedagogical and curricular tools that differ from many mainstream classrooms, the difference does not necessarily mean deficit or deficient. Furthermore, evidence within the study indicated that teachers and students experience adversity and difficulty, similar to teachers and students in other contexts. Response to the counternarrative inquiry
questionnaire information suggested that discourse often focuses on what communities of color do not have or do not do, rather than focusing on what they have and what they do. Milner (2008) argued that divergent learners experience negative situations in classrooms that deserve immediate attention in urban schools.

These studies corroborate the ideas of Solórzano and Yosso (2002), who suggested that counter stories can provide multiple perspectives of a student’s world through critical engagement. One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that storytelling created a climate that is responsive to the individual needs of the classroom while making analogies explicit to prior learning. Through sharing stories, the teacher developed lesson plans that carried a deeper, implicit, or multilayered message that illustrated shared values (MacLean & Wasom-Ellam, 2006). Very little was found in the literature on teachers’ instructional practices to counter deficit perspectives in classrooms using counternarratives.

Glenn (2012) noted that literary counternarratives in the university setting can support preservice teachers efforts to develop understandings of race. Counternarration embodies a method of telling stories of those whose voices have been historically silenced. It also analyzes and challenges the stories of those who are in power to explore alternative ways of knowing and understanding. Reflection on counternarratives told by people of color can provide space and time to disrupt or interrupt the existing discourses that marginalize communities and people of color in their negative, deficit-oriented portrayals (Lopez, 2011). These results are consistent with those of Rolón-Dow (2005), who found that counternarrative as pedagogy in urban schools can be used to counter,
disrupt, and interrupt pervasive discourses that only focus on the negative characteristics of teachers and students in urban schools. If teachers are to learn from the communities where they work, they must acknowledge the contributions that students can make to their pedagogy. The lens of critical theory, culturally responsive pedagogy, and narrative counternarrative inquiry informed these studies. The research reveals that teachers can use culturally responsive practices in classrooms to support and engage divergent learners in our nation’s schools.

Summary of Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

In conclusion, the main goal of this chapter was to outline the theoretical framework used to draw on the relevance of African American girls’ technology-mediated practices, lived experiences, and sociocultural and academic identities in interactive learning environments. An ethnohistorical framework of the education of African American girls interrogated and investigated the origins of narrative feminist theory to explore the race-gender disparities in achievement among African American girls. The remaining part of this supported the claim that a narrative approach to addresses the issues involving African American female student achievement are rooted in systemic oppression and that a feminist intersectional perspective is necessary to investigate the interactive influences reflected in academic disparities. This chapter also provided evidence to support the claim that an interdisciplinary approach, including a gender responsive and culturally appropriate pedagogical framework, is necessary to address the role of popular culture as a source of culturally situated funds of knowledge to address the agentive stances of African American females in interactive learning
environments. Both supporters and critics of this critical aspect of research will agree that the field of study has both broad and reflective implications for school improvement.

Prior to this study, instructional strategies related to teachers’ competence and effectiveness with divergent learners using counternarratives to successfully support diverse student populations were not present. This study adds the body of literature by making connections to strategies that align with using African American female student and teacher counternarratives as critical praxis. Given these points, this research study will also serve as a basis for future studies centered on the communicative and expressive practices of African American female students in multimodal learning spaces and provide insight into how the critical use of technology can be used to understand communities of practices as counter the masculinist privileging of these environments.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY: THE CALL AND RESPONSE: GATHERING EMBODIED VOICES

“If the role of the Word includes its use and value as a unifying force, a statement of protest, an expression of courage, an organizing tool, the articulation of utopian dreams or a higher law, then our methodology must be to inspire and advance those uses and values”

-Lawrence, 1995, p. 337.

Hand-clapping games draw on the African American call-and-response cultural tradition. During the call and response performance, participants orally respond to statements and/or movement gestures from the speaker interactively through culturally mediated expressions. It is a pattern of embodied participation, expressed through various forms of engagement (Foster, 2002). Historically, this form of expression was performed in a counterclockwise formation during religious meetings, community gatherings, and children’s games. The imagery of this interactive rhythmic pattern illustrates the relationship between the interconnecting themes, methods, and strategies employed in this study. The degree to which interconnecting themes, methods, and strategies frame the culturally constructed experiences in online environments is participatory with a variety of different rhythms, questions, and expressions that form the contextual grounds for this study. The contextual call and response integrate comprehensive ways of knowing through the metonymies of hand, brain, and heart (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008). The call and response of critical theory embodies
interpretive paradigms that frame the lived experiences and realities for meaning making. Combined, these systems provide the rhythmic formation to investigate the embodied experiences of African American girls in online learning environments.

This study sought to examine the lived experiences of African American female students using interactive, technology-mediated platforms designed to provide authentic learning experiences from their marginalized positions framed by their race, culture, gender, and class positions. A critical ethnographic approach using a Black feminist theoretical perspective guided the research methodology for this study. This chapter presents the methodological design framing this research study. In the *Research Design and Rationale*, I discuss the research framework used for my research analysis. I examine the use of qualitative ethnographic narrative inquiry, substantiating correlations between my proposed study and the paradigm used by specialists in the field.

Second, in the *Participants, Setting, and Sample Strategy* section of this chapter, I present descriptors outlining the context of this study site including a detailed description of the participants in my study. I identify the procedure for selecting participants and discuss the selection rationale.

Third, in the *Data Collection and Instrumentation* section of this chapter, I discuss my data collection process. I specify the data collection procedures, identify the type of data collected, and outline the data collection timeframe.

Fourth, in the *Data Analysis* section of this chapter, I provide an outline of the data analysis process. I discuss my position as it relates to the study site, my research
participants, and my role as an educator. Furthermore, I examine my positionality and biases and provide details regarding efforts to protect the legitimacy of this study.

Next, in the Dependability and Credibility section of this chapter, I explain the protocol to maintain dependability and credibility of the study. I examine the acceptability of multiple means of data collection, member checking, and external coding techniques used to ensure the integrity of the study.

Finally, in the Ethical Safeguards section, I present my approaches for protecting the privacy of each participant and discuss methods used to ensure that safeguards were observed during and after data collection. I also explain the potential conflicts of interest that might emerge from my role as a researcher at my workplace and research location.

Study Purpose

This qualitative methodology proposed three objectives. First, the research design introduced vernacular to define the effects of hegemonic masculinity and dominant cultural gender roles upon African American female adolescents in interactive learning environments. This notion was further examined using the distinct, culturally constructed school experiences of African American female adolescents in multimodal learning environments (Foley, Levinson, & Hurtig, 2001). Second, the methodology presented a documented empirical process that adequately addresses the triintersectionality of raced, classed, and gendered learning experiences of African American female adolescents and teacher interaction in a high school urban classroom environment (Jamison, 2015). The question of how institutional factors contribute to the academic deficit has causes much debate in academia. Ladson-Billings (2006) argued
that social, political, and economic variables were responsible African American underachievement, rather than schools. By extension, the methodology within this study presents a format whereby scholars and academia can discuss these disparities and present findings that will contribute to curriculum instruction and student academic performance. Third, the methodology profiles a strategy to investigate the interactional cultural patterns of African American female adolescents in multimodal learning environments connected to their identities and lived experiences.

Participants, site selection, and sample strategy for this study’s focus centered on how identities of young African American females are constituted as they engage multimodal spaces in their social studies classroom. As a critical feature, the central aim of this critical feminist ethnographic study was to examine their lived experiences through interactions in interactive learning environments, where it is hypothesized that identity formation and agency occurs. In this chapter analysis, I introduce the participants in this study to draw attention to the techniques used to recruit participants.

Research Questions Reiterated

1. Do the interactional cultural patterns of African American female students in multimodal spaces shape their sociocultural identities in on-line learning environments?

2. Do the interactional cultural patterns of African American female students in multimodal spaces shape their sociocultural identities in on-line learning environments?
3. Do the interactional cultural patterns of African American female students in multimodal spaces shape their sociocultural identities in on-line learning environments?

4. Do the embodied experiences of African American female students’ multiliterate spaces shape their academic identities in on-line learning environments?

Research Design and Rationale

The selection of an ethnographic approach allowed deeper insight into African American female interaction across modalities in online learning environments (Bjork-James, 2015; Lengel, 1998; Stacey, 1988). According to Williams and Brydon-Miller (2004), the ethnographic method is one of the more practical ways of feminist-influenced research due to the number of benefits, which include “empowerment collaboration commitment to community and meaningful relationships” (p. 251). Unlike conventional ethnography, which seeks to interpret cultures (Geertz, 1993), I chose to employ critical ethnography as a method for this study on the grounds that it is particularly useful in studying the lived experiences and exchanges between groups who share environments. The critical ethnographic approach has several attractive features.

A key aspect of critical ethnography is noted in Carspecken and Walford’s (2001) analysis of Habermas’s and Foucault’s social theories. They indicate that critical ethnographic studies provide practical, analytical models for critical pedagogy.

Furthermore, Carspecken and Walford (2001) defined critical ethnography as “critical epistemology” (p. 105) that recognizes the relationship between liberation and history.
Carspecken (1996) noted that critical ethnography seeks to understand the relationship between culture and social structures with the understanding that “power accompanies all actions” (p. 128). This critical ethnographic research study utilized a combination of qualitative and ethnographic methods to collect data from African American female students based on two identifiable research questions (Madison, 2005). According to Creswell (2015), ethnographic designs are ideal procedures for examining culture-sharing groups shared experiences through institutional community and cultural rituals. Creswell (2015) noted that ethnography is most useful as a qualitative instructional approach when a culture-sharing group is represented.

According to Madison (2005), critical ethnographers have a moral obligation to unearth complex operations of power and control. In a critical Black feminist ethnographic study of African American women, ethnography has the potential to “shed light on the obscured structures of power and oppression” (Creswell, 2014, p. 170). The advantage for critical ethnographers is that research provides entry into empathic relationships, closely examining the culture-sharing patterns of participants to understand their lived experiences. While research supports African American female engagement and interactive multimodal environments, existing literature has not identified the interactional cultural patterns and the ways these experiences connect to their sociocultural identities and academic experiences. Thus, this research study is undergirded by intersectionality as a framework through the lens of Black feminist thought (Collins, 2000). This model is appropriate because it requires the researcher to engage in the use of theory and method concurrently (Madison, 2005). As an observer-
participant in the study, I actively engage through *embodied support* to advance my understanding of the power dynamics that systemically marginalizes and privileges (Collins, 2000; Madison, 2005; Patterson, Kinloch, Burkhard, Randall, & Howard, 2016) young women of color in online learning environments. The next section explains the appropriateness of Black feminist thought as the theoretical lens for this research study.

**Theoretical Lens**

The experiential knowledge of women of color is unique and crucial for understanding the prevalence of gender inequality. History and cultural contexts must be considered in order to challenge policies and practices that affect women of color. One ethnographic study by Ogbu (1987) examined how nondominant groups respond to domination through “cultural inversion” (p. 8). This research indicated that group solidarity is a cultural phenomenon that takes precedence over individual academic success. One of the limitations with this explanation is that it does not explain how women are uniquely discriminated. However, in a qualitative research study of women in higher education and public schools, Fordham (1993, as cited in Milner, 2007) found that African American women used silence and invisibility as survival strategies to gain access. As double minorities, women of color invariably experience marginalization.

It is now necessary to explain the course of Black feminist thought as a methodological context for this project. Most ethnographic research on representations of African Americans female students, such as shifting (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003); hip-hop feminism and performance (Durham, 2014); playwright and performance of formerly incarcerated girls (Winn, 2011); single-gender education (Jamison, 2015);
pedagogy and media (Hill & Vasudevan, 2008); celebration of Black girlhood through embodied knowledge (Brown, 2013); multiliteracies (Haddix et al., 2016); urban school resilience (Evans-Winters, 2011); and narrative and collectivity (Patterson et al., 2016), shows that African American girls have unique voices reflected through their “embodied ways of knowing” (Patterson et al., 2016, p. 58).

In *Black Feminist Thought as Methodology*, Patterson and colleagues (2016) argued that self-definition is a form of resistance. Unlike other formats, Black feminist thought decenters dominant perceptions about Black women and relocates their unique culturally constructed experiences from the margins to the center (Hill & Ladson-Billings, 2009). Patterson et al. (2016) referred to this embodied positioning as a standpoint epistemology. Foley et al. (2001) noted that feminist ethnographers challenge androcentric educational ethnography, in addition to challenging both traditional and critical ethnographies of education. As Lewis (1997) explained, traditional methodological approaches are centered on the perspectives of oppressive power structures, which make it the responsibility of researchers utilizing Black feminism to demystify the value of subjective theories and methods.

On the other hand, Stacey (1988) argued that while feminist research should involve aspects of self-awareness, “there cannot be a fully feminist ethnography” (p. 26). In *Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography*, Stacey (1988) presented her own personal reactions to the illustrated fieldwork as evidence to assert the deleterious effects that ethnographic research can have upon human relationships, engagements and attachment that place information shared by participants in a study. These included: “(1) subjective
manipulation, (2) misinterpretation, (3) perceived in-authenticity, (4) intrusion and intervention into a system of relationships” (Stacey, 1988, p. 23)—all at the discretion of the research ethnographer.

Stacey (1988) also argued that her fieldwork experiences revealed conflicts of interest between her position as ethnographer whose observations placed the subjects to exploitation, citing it as an “inescapable feature of ethnographic method” (p 23). Despite Stacey’s presentation of practical issues for considerations, she suggested and proposed that the potential integrity of feminine ethnographic research can be sustained provided the researcher makes deliberate efforts to maintain diligent cautious awareness of the risks involved in ethnographic research. Stacey (1988) advocated more enhanced dialogue with cautious restraints and provided much needed insight into the inherent risks that feminine ethnological research can entail when special methodological precautions are not in place. However, Stacey (1988) did not detail or suggest methodological analysis processes that would ensure protective measures against those risks.

However, Stacey (1988) may be mistaken because she overlooks what Dillard and Bell (2011) noted as the role of endarkened feminism and healing methodologies that acknowledge the multiple layered realities of African American women. This research challenges the work of earlier researchers, who tended to malign the specific learning needs, identify formation and agency of African American females in urban settings, thus, making ethnographic research a crucial feature of this study. Until recently, many scholars have overlooked learning across modalities, specifically making meaning of lived experiences through narrative storytelling (Milner, 2008).
Narrative Inquiry

Recently, a considerable literature has developed around the theme of narrative theory. I became interested in narrative research after reading several dissertations using the method to capture the stories of individual experiences in education. Patterson et al. (2016) argued that it is critical to explore Black Feminist Methodology to examine the lived experiences of Black women. The narrative approach seeks to provide a context for inquiry into Black women’s “everyday taken-for-granted knowledge” (Patterson et al., 2016, p. 60). Furthermore, my personal experience as a woman of color has prompted my interest in feminist narrative theory. This research study involved interviewing educators and students at an all-girls secondary school. In a study of narrative-photovoice methodology for gender-based research, Simmonds, Roux, and Avest (2015) noted that narrative inquiry focuses on the lived realities of participants. Therefore, I believe this research study provided an exciting opportunity to advance knowledge of the critical narrative ethnographic research inquiry in single-gender school settings.

In her introduction to narrative inquiry, Lichtman (2013) defined narrative research inquiry as “a group of approaches that rely heavily on the written or spoken words or visual representations of individuals” (p. 95). Personal storytelling is a key feature of the narrative approach. Denzin (1989) listed the following steps to conducting a narrative study: “collect an objective set of experiences, either chronologically or in life stages; gather actual stories; organize stories into pivotal events or epiphanies; search for meaning in the stories; look for larger structures to help explain meaning in the stories” (p. 96). For many years, numerous scholars overlooked this phenomenon. However,
while a great deal of previous research has focused on capturing the story, Lichtman (2013) claimed that this method involves “a researcher interpreting or making meaning of the told story” (p. 95). Amoah (2013) maintained, “The practice of narrative functions to allow traditionally marginalized and disempowered groups, such as women and people of color, to reclaim their voices (p. 85). In making this comment, Amoah (2013) urged researchers to consider how narrative theory can serve to engage marginalized populations in ways that enable them to share their stories which enables them to create spaces of theorized existence.

In reading Lichtman’s perspective, one may well be convinced that the storyteller’s perspective also shapes narrative research. Lichtman (2013) added that, according to Pinnegar and Daynes (2006), narrative inquiry may also be studied as a method and a phenomenon. Capturing the stories and making meaning of them are important aspects of narrative inquiry. Hence, it is important to note that restorying is an important aspect of interpreting the captured stories.

Creswell (2013) emphasized that narrative research has its origins in several disciplines that have developed their own approaches. In addition, he noted that there are several types of narratives, including biographical study, autoethnography, life history, and oral history (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) further asserted that narrative research “is best for capturing the detailed stories or life experiences of a single individual or the lives of a small number of individuals” (p. 72). For the purpose of my research, I found Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000, as cited in Creswell, 2013) advice to “collaborate with participants to actively involve them in research” (p. 75) useful. Hence,
empowering the interviewee to own the story is a key feature of successful narrative research.

Rose (1990) explained, “According to narrative theorists, the teller of tales has a vision of some kind of community, even if it is only a community of two” (p. 55). She further asserted, “The storyteller, by structuring the audience’s experiences and imagination, helps to turn her audience into a moral community” (Rose, 1990, p. 55). Hence, narratives provoke researchers to rethink and reorder events in ways that challenge our preconceived perspectives about past events. The impact of narrative theory and its relationship to feminist theory is understudied, particularly for women of color (Rose, 1990). In my use of narrative analysis, I draw from Rose’s perspective, who argued that the narrative approach to research is an appropriate research strategy to address issues dealing specifically with women’s issues.

However, Lichtman (2013) highlighted several major drawbacks to this approach, indicating that researchers would understand that narrative inquiry involves more than a story, for it should include understanding of context and the use of multiple data sources to collect information. In general, therefore, it seems that after reading this information that researchers have to understand the delicate nature of narrative research, particularly when juxtaposed with feminist theory. Empowering marginalized groups by enabling them to share their stories essentially involves more than conducting an interview, but consists of a methodology that speaks specifically to capturing stories as an active collaborator with the participant (Creswell, 2015).
Amoah (2013) stated, “Narrative has emerged as the preferred genre of scholarship for scholars of color” (p. 86). To gain a detailed understanding of the narrative method, Amoah (2013) cited the notion that narrative is preferred because of the strong oral tradition in the African American community (p. 86), which “arises out of centuries of being classified in direct opposition to the dominant society” (p. 86). Furthermore, Lawrence (1995) noted, “Storytelling, the articulation of experience and imagination in narrative, poetry, and song, is an important part of the tradition of African peoples” (p. 343). Due to the marginal impact of oppression on outgroups, meaning “those whose consciousness is other than the dominant one” (Amoah, 2013, p. 86), the narrative approach is a powerful method to collect stories and empower the storyteller. It seems, therefore, that the narrative approach is a way to challenge dominant narratives by “showing us the way out of the trap of unjustified exclusion” (Amoah, 2013, p. 87).

As I advanced in my research process, I worked to ensure that my research design process was consistent with understanding the nature of critical conversations and the power of restorying to share the human experience. Therefore, according to Lawrence (1995), “It is the power of narrative to build bridges of validation, understanding, and empathy that makes it so powerful as an intellectual and political tool” (p. 344). After reading Lawrence’s summaries regarding the importance of the narrative as a tool to reconstruct distorted images of marginal groups, I prepared to focus and reflect on my personal narrative and how it impacted my approach to research.
By using storytelling as a cultural approach to learning, teachers can address the divergent aspects of cultural capital that make contributions to learning in ways that lend themselves to students’ development as agentive beings (Haddix et al., 2016; Price-Dennis 2016; Winn, 2010). Kinloch (2005) stated, “School mirrors the surrounding community in terms of race, ethnicity, and language” (p. 101). In making this comment, she highlighted the value of the power of shared experiences as a form of identity development. When considering the ways in which narrative stories promote student engagement, it is crucial to examine the lived academic and social realities of students. For this reason, developing curriculum to address the culturally situated role of narrative storytelling and meaning making of shared stories with respect to sociocultural identity in interactive learning environments can be used to support student achievement.

Moreover, this research attempted to challenge the work of earlier researchers, who tended to exclude the specific learning needs of students in urban settings, specifically African American girls. Furthermore, this study investigated identity and agency in spaces and places particularly in interactive learning environments. In an effort to pursue an understanding of African American female identity in online learning environments, I utilized the voices of students, teachers, and myself as a participant-observer to understand the divergent ways in which student experiences are represented, transmitted, and coded. The choice of critical ethnographic methods was undergirded by an identity conceptual framework using the cultural studies coding and encoding process model. The purpose of connecting the conceptual context was to offer an alternative to the dominant narrative of masculinist thinking in digital spaces.
Participant Selection

Drawing on Creswell’s (2013) sampling approaches, I determined that the sampling strategy would be purposeful sampling. Creswell (2013) noted that these strategies or approaches are useful to understand the central phenomenon. To maximize the variation sample, I examined additional criteria, including participation in-site based community support programs and after-school programs. In addition, invitations to volunteer to participate in the study were extended to African American female students. Before the study began, I received approval from Mercer University’s Internal Review Board (see Appendix A), and subsequently obtained consent of student participants (see Appendix B). As in most critical qualitative research, the objective was to collaborate with the participants through open dialogue and negotiation regarding the study (Madison, 2005; Tricoglus, 2001). Participants in the study consisted of those who responded to the invitation and agreed to participate in the study (see Appendix B). I acknowledged the inclusion criteria on the participant consent form, such as response to interviews and tape-recording of questions. Additionally, as participant-observer, I employed personal teaching experiences for this process by engaging in a process of reflexivity to monitor my position within the study (Carspecken, 1996; Collins, 2000; Dillard, 2000; Hill & Ladson-Billings, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2000b; Madison, 2005; Milner, 2007; Tricoglus, 2001). The research project covered a four-month period with repeated observations and interviews. This format allowed time to explore multiple sources of data to document findings of African American female engagement across modalities in online learning environments (Dillard, 2000).
Site Selection

In this research study, I investigated the participants targeted from a group of African American female high school students at an inner city high school for girls. I examined the lived experiences of two former high school students from an urban low socioeconomic status, single-gender girls’ high school in a large metropolitan, southeastern city. African American female high school students were selected for this study because of the lack of ethnographic research that investigates their distinctive experiences in online learning environments. Purposeful selection of student participants was established using the following criteria: (a) members of the most recent graduating class, (b) enrolled in the school at least four years, and (c) at least 18 years of age (Creswell, 2013). Of these, one participant attended the school for six years. In an effort to maximize the variation within the two participants, I developed additional criteria, such as validating their lived experiences by examining multiple realities (i.e., personalized identities and dominant perspectives) (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). One participant, who was the child of immigrants, self-identified as a student with a disability; and one participant was a self-described performance poet lived in the surrounding community. Both participants lived in two-parent household with both parents.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

Creswell (2013) advised, “Ethnographers should be open and transparent about gathering data” (p. 478). As an ethnographic study, I drew from a variety of ethnographic methods and textual resources to collect data: journaling, researcher
reflections, Google Classroom assignment postings, classwork, archived data from online educational games, social media screenshots, field notes and memos, video and audio recordings, electronic communication, unit and lesson plans, archival data, face-to-face discussions, classroom observations, and interview transcriptions (see Figure 5). My position allowed me to document daily rituals, routines, and social interactions in an online learning environment (Carspecken, 1996). Carspecken (1996) suggested that this outsider, or etic, perspective is crucial to discovering meaningful interactions and cultural themes in subsequent stages of the research study.

![Research Artifacts](image)

*Figure 5.* Research artifacts of the study

This study incorporated qualitative data sources to respond to the proposed research questions. Developed by the researcher, the semistructured interview questions contained open- and closed-ended questions to illicit and probe responses from African
American female students (Madison, 2005; Patterson et al., 2016). Each interview lasted 45-60 minutes at the respective high school site. The interview infrastructure included two group interviews with two participants occurred during the summer of 2017. In order to capture the lived realities of each participant with authenticity, I invited them to engage in an open exchange of stories in online learning spaces (Patterson et al., 2016). Through documentation and analysis, I sought to understand the factors influencing the participants’ positioning, power, and agency (Amoah, 2013; Bailey & Fonow, 2016; Denzin, 2016).

I designed the interviews to grant the participants an opportunity to share their lived experiences, perceptions, and epistemological beliefs about their online learning experiences in school. Using the Patton model style of questioning, I began with background, demographic, and experience questions to guide ensuing questions (Madison, 2005). Interview questions (a) examined and documented the participants “lived” experiences and situations in which individuals developed and interpreted the meanings of their institutional landscapes; (b) analyzed experiences and exchanges between groups who share virtual environments; and (c) investigated identity, self-perception, and agency in spaces and places, particularly in their online learning environments to determine the usefulness and applicability to curriculum instruction development in academic settings (Madison, 2005). The following research questions were incorporated into the interview process (see Appendix C). With each participant’s permission, I critically examined archived data from audio transcriptions from semistructured interviews to facilitate cross-checking of findings (Hardcastle, Usher, &
Holmes, 2016). Patterson et al. (2016) referred to this process as *recorded dialogic conversations* to ensure researcher authenticity.

During this study, ensuring that respondent voices were privileged and “meaning making” of their lived experiences was adequately represented was critical to this study (Dillard & Bell, 2011). The researcher acted as participant-observer to audiotape the voices of self, one-on-one dialogue with each student, and students and teachers to understand the divergent ways in which student experiences are represented, transmitted, and coded, thus reflexively analyzing, shifting understanding, and expanding consciousness. Additional tools of inquiry also included telephone, Internet, extended observation, and paper questionnaires (Creswell, 2013).

**Data Analysis**

The data analysis for this research project included an interactive process aligned with the data collection process. According to Carspecken (1996) and Madison (2005), data analysis starts with coding and logging emergent themes. The preliminary understandings from the interviews informed the grouping and ordering of data. Creswell’s (2013) illustrated this process as six steps, for the researcher engages in a process formatted in four stages. Throughout the process of analysis, I formed clusters to look for patterns and themes from textual data collected from interview transcripts, direct notes, field observations, and visuals. I adopted the critical methodological approach to narrative data that examines transcripts as *embodied tellings* (Chadwick, 2017).

Throughout the process of analysis, I assigned a specific word or topic, documented topics into a code journal, and systematically categorized responses, ideas,
cultural concepts, and perceptions labeled according to the category. The second coding stage incorporated the use of NVivo software to facilitate the primary coding process. I uploaded the interview transcripts into NVivo and applied open coding and thematic analysis. The third and most important stage of coding involved collapsing, expanding, and galvanizing the coded categories into one collective revised format. This process allowed me to align codes to the research questions and streamline the process, including responsiveness to themes and key issues for further exploration and interpretive insight (Carspecken, 1996; Koro-Ljungberg, 2012). The fourth stage of this process included comparing and contrasting topics across data clusters and creation of themes specific to the examination of the context and positioning of each participant.

After evaluating online course activity, interview transcripts, and social media engagement multiple times, the data gathered revealed that the participants’ social and cultural experiences were due to the course principles associated with the contextual framework (Evans-Winters, 2010). The prominent themes were learning from interaction and collaboration. Learning from interaction provided a context to social and cultural identity formation. In addition, these themes were consistent with collectivity and student agency (Haddix et al., 2016). The end resulted in a list of key descriptors specific to this study, which included agency, barriers, collaborating online, connection between learning and games, equity, ethic of care, groups, safety, social media and social life, virtual presence, and vulnerability. The final themes that emerged focalized on online learning and collaborative learning. Figure 6 illustrates the process I used for each phase of data analysis.
Validity and Trustworthiness

In an effort to validate the accuracy of my findings, I used an audit trail (Creswell, 2015) to provide an element of triangulation using various data collection methods to analyze that data produced in this project. Data were collected over a period of three months in the form of Google Classroom assignment postings, classwork, archived data from online educational games, social media screenshots, field notes and memos, video and audio recordings, electronic communication, unit and lesson plans, archival data, face-to-face discussions, classroom observations, and interview transcriptions. I employed peer debriefing regarding my observations with professional colleagues, mentors from the research site and from my program of study (Carspecken, 1996). As a critical ethnographer, I understood that I must “cross the boundaries into the territories of Otherness in order to engage with the Other in their terms” (Madison, 2005, p. 97).
Essentially, I legitimize their lived realities by my embodied participation (Patterson et al., 2016). Therefore, I used member checking from July-October to share initial results with participants. I conferred with each participant to elicit feedback on preliminary findings prior to proceeding to the next phase of research (Carspecken, 1996).

The roots of this inquiry lie in my personal connection to the community that served as my workplace and the source of my family’s rich history in the community, which spans over 100 years. I recall spending much of my childhood in the play area of my family church, playing hand-clapping games after church service during the mid-1970s and 1980s. I witnessed the community transition from an upwardly mobile working class community to a gentrified urban area impacted by blight and neglect. As I had not been a resident of the community for 30 years, I considered myself an outsider in many aspects. However, the community that shaped and nurtured my early life experiences was now impacted by urban decay, gang violence, drug abuse, and poverty. As an African American woman who worked as a teacher and who was a product of this community, I wanted more insight into the social and cultural changes in the community and how they impact these young women. Hence, as a participant-observer, I cannot disregard the possible effects of my presence as a factor in this study. However, Creswell (2015) suggested that transformative research situated in feminist research has the potential to challenge the status quo within society.

Ethical Safeguards

Madison (2005) suggested that care and justice serve as core ethical practices in critical ethnographic research. The well-being of my students was an important aspect of
this study. The risks to potential participants were minimal. The research study took place in a local educational setting familiar to the students. Following approval from the Mercer internal review board (see Appendix A), I collected, reviewed, and secured written informed consent from each participant and informed them of their right to remove themselves from the study, if necessary (see Appendix B). Participants received an opportunity to review transcription data reports. Careful documentation of their unheard narratives was available to participants to ensure appropriate interpretation of their information (Carspecken, 1995, Oliver, 2009). To mitigate the ethical risks associated with maintaining anonymity of the research participants, all participants were coded using pseudonyms. Figure 7 depicts the timeline of this study.

Figure 7. Research timeline of the study
Summary

The purpose of this research study was to analyze the effects of hegemonic masculinity and dominant cultural gender roles upon African American female adolescents in interactive learning environments. The findings of this study demonstrated the benefit of implementing inclusive practices for divergent learners, specifically African American female students. A critical feminist ethnographic method was employed to present the lived experiences of the research participants. The results of this study support current efforts to address the field of research related to the use of narrative experiences to communicate the instructional needs of marginalized learners. Thus, with school systems increasingly adopting a technological approach to instruction, student experiences as stakeholders will enable schools to prepare diverse learners for academic success. The research approaches involving critical components of ethnographic and narrative research received specific attention. This chapter outlined information about the research site, data collection methods, data analysis procedures and ethical safeguards. Figure 8 is an illustration of the research methodology I used. This research project provides a unique opportunity for educators to reexamine culturally situated resources in the form of multiliterate and multimodal practices across disciplines in interactive learning environments in an effort to address achievement disparities for at-risk students, specifically African American females.
Figure 8. Research methodology of the study

The Healing
(In Memory of Safiya-Henderson Holmes)

The Healing will come
When we stop
When we listen
When we learn

The Healing will come
When we are compassionate
When we need one another
When we understand

The Healing will come
When we share hope
When we hate no more
When we know God

The Healing will come
When Healing becomes Love

-Diane Richards, 2001
CHAPTER 4
THE CYPHER: RESEARCH FINDINGS

“Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity. . . . When we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise.”

-Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, 2015

Healing is a dominant feature of the poem, *The Healing*. Diane Richards addresses healing as a type of empathic power and support as she urges readers to “stop”, “listen” and “learn” (Hill & Ladson-Billings, 2009). Using the cypher or performance circle to represent the collective standpoint (Collins, 2000) where two African American female students engaged in dialogue as connected knowers (Collins, 2000), collectively, we built an interlocking bridge of their shared dialogue. This study sought to examine the culturally constructed experiences of African American female students using interactive, online learning platforms designed to provide authentic learning experiences.

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the educational experiences of African American female adolescents (Price-Dennis, 2016; Thomas & Jackson, 2007). Current research suggests that the triintersectional (Jamison, 2015) experiences of African American female adolescents in multimodal and interactive learning environments provide insight into the multiple layered realities of their experiences (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Haddix, McArthur, Muhammad, Price-
Dennis & Sealy-Ruiz, 2016; Jamison, 2015). Inclusion of Black girls’ cultural experiences as an agent of rigorous qualitative research within the methodology of Black feminist thought provides a foundation for the study of Black girls’ educational experiences (Patterson, Kinloch, Burkhard, Randall, & Howard, 2016). In so doing, it presents the cultural experiences of Black girls as an important source of reference that further contributes to the empowerment of Black Feminist Thought. The theory of triintersectionality considers that various human aspects of gender race and culture interact in complex, overlapping, and interwoven relationships that are essential to understanding the human condition.

The social experiences unique to the Black girls’ demographic provide clarity critical to understanding the social construct of academic performances and personal identities (Few, Stephens, & Rouse-Arnett, 2003). For example, Morris (2015) cited a plethora of situations like hair, cultural values, expressions, and attire—all of which have impacted the viewed and treated differently syndrome attributed to Black girls. Morris (2015) identified factors that continue to hinder, marginalize, and provide damaging labels to society’s perceptions of Black girls and women. Moreover, socially conceived notions about Black girls are documented under labels of age, gender, race, and class that categorize realms of power. These realms of power constrain the overall success of most Black girls (Ringrose, Harvey, Gill, & Livingstone, 2013).

Gender and race-based marginalization continue to posture a noticeable position for Black girls in America. Contrary to historical marginalization of women in general, accounts of social inclusion and academic progress of Black girls remain typically
stagnated and negatively biased compared to the women in other ethnic groups. Social media documentations of random accounts of malfeasance towards Black girls and women serve to remind the public that Black girls’ experiences are often ignored due to their historical marginal social positions (Collins, 2000).

In a historical study focused on the education of African American women and girls, Thomas and Jackson (2007) indicated the necessity for a detailed assessment to determine how the cultural marginalization of African American girls within the contexts of race, class, and gender have impacted learning outcomes. Additionally, Thomas and Jackson (2007) examined teachers’ perceptions of their roles as critical pedagogues in an increasingly diverse society. These results provided confirmatory evidence that a critical position is necessary to identify cultural patterns of African American female adolescents in multimodal learning environments with their identities and lived experiences as central to their own claimed stances and counter to the masculinist privileging of curriculum in secondary classrooms (Collins, 1986; Haddix et al., 2016).

The organization of this chapter and study results are presented through the correlative frameworks of Critical Theory, Black feminist thought, and New Literacy Studies. Chapter 2 presented the related literature and rationale for investigating this study. Chapter 3 provided an overview of the methodology employed in this study. Using a critical feminist ethnographic method, I examined the lived realities of the experiences of two African American female students in online learning environments. I also provided a synopsis and explanation of the research methodology.
In an effort to validate the accuracy of my findings, I used an audit trail (Creswell, 2015), which provided an element of triangulation to analyze that data produced in this study in the form of Google Classroom assignment postings, classwork, archived data from online educational games, social media screenshots, field notes and memos, video and audio recordings, electronic communication, unit and lesson plans, archival data, face-to-face discussions, classroom observations, and interview transcriptions. This section is arranged under the following headings: course description, research questions, data analysis, coding procedure, major themes, Black feminist thought (BFT), participant background matrixes, research results, and conclusion.

As these students conveyed their experiences, it was obvious that socialization played a critical role in how they perceived themselves and their relationships with their communities, both physical and virtual. Collins (2000) noted that socialization legitimizes ways of knowing through multiple modes, both physical and nonmaterial. The complex web of socialization provides a context for women to engage in knowledge production. Furthermore, it is through narrative analysis (dialogue) that the interactions between the participants and the researcher established connectedness and solidarity as it relates to culturally constructed experiences in online learning environments.

Research Questions Revisited

Two questions were explored to better understand the curricular congruence and implications of online learning. These questions were:
1. Do the interactional cultural patterns of African American female students in multimodal spaces shape their sociocultural identities in on-line learning environments?

2. Do the embodied experiences of African American female students’ multiliterate spaces shape their academic identities in on-line learning environments?

Data Collection

Creswell (2013) advised, “Ethnographers should be open and transparent about gathering data” (p. 478). Careful documentation of their lived experiences was available to participants to ensure appropriate interpretation of their information. During this study, ensuring that respondent voices were privileged and making meaning of their lived experiences was adequately represented was critical to this study (Dillard & Bell, 2011). The researcher acted as participant-observer to audiotape the voices of self, one-on-one dialogue with each participant to understand the divergent ways in which student experiences are represented, transmitted, and coded. Additional tools of inquiry included telephone, Internet, extended observation, and paper questionnaires (Creswell, 2013). Interviews were combined with other sources of data, including multiple digital data sources, to examine the social and cultural interactions of African American females in multimodal spaces (Nam, 2014). As an ethnographer, the researcher included field notes as a participant observer. Additionally, the researcher conducted individual semi-structured interviews, two group interviews, and member checks.
Coding Process

The initial coding process for this study involved reading each transcript multiple times and identifying factors related to social and cultural interactions in online learning environments. Creswell (2013) acknowledged the importance of coding and analyzing qualitative data. I started the coding process by reviewing transcripts based on each participant’s point of view. I formed clusters, examined, compared and contrasted each specific topic within each cluster (Madison, 2005).

The emergent codes were based on student experiences as culturally situated resources in the form of words, expressions, and visuals. The end resulted in a list of key descriptors specific to this study, which included agency, barriers, collaborating online, connection between learning and games, equity, ethic of care, groups, safety, social media and social life, virtual presence, and vulnerability. The final themes that emerged focalized on online learning and collaborative learning.

Themes

Patterson et al. (2016) posited that Black feminist thought as methodology provides a standpoint epistemology for Black women to interrogate self-representation. According to Collins (2000), the four epistemological dimensions of Black feminist thought include:

- lived realities that provide precedence for meaning making from self-discovery and self-definition;
- dialogic engagement that is used to evaluate knowledge claims;
- the ethic of caring, which is fundamental to Black women’s lives; and
• individual knowledge claims that emphasize the relevance of personal responsibility.

Using the four epistemological dimensions of Black feminist thought, the following themes are examined and used to interpret the data in Chapter 4:

Theme I. Engaging by Design: Critical Aspects of Self-Definition

Theme II. Interplay between School and Community Support

Theme III. Interacting Digitally: Embodiment in Online Learning Environments

Theme IV. (Dis)Playing: Digital Rebels

Theme V. Game Changers and Online Social Presence

Participants

Participants in this study attended a single-gender high school that served 279 students from an underserved urban community in a major southeastern city. Vivian Malone Jones Academy (pseudonym) was one of the few single-gender high schools in the United States at the time of this study. The student percentage of enrollment was 99% African American and 1% Hispanic. At the time of the study, state achievement data indicated that 100% of the student population was characterized as economically disadvantaged, and 100% was eligible for free-and-reduced meals. The median annual income was $43,992. Since the founding of the school in 2007, the school district and community leaders have grappled with the concept of the single-gender school model in this area plagued by gentrification and neglect. In 2017, the school consolidated and merged with the single-gender boys’ school to address the low enrollment statuses of both schools. Vivian Malone Jones Academy was located in a revitalization zone while
little to no change has occurred to address the deteriorating condition of the neighborhood. Despite these conditions, I chose to include reflections from research participant Mary (pseudonym) who lived in the immediate area. She shared the following personal insight from an online discussion about her lived experiences and observations as a resident of the school community. She stated,

In my community in the morning you hear birds chirping as if you were in the Amazon rainforest; in the evening, you can hear the sound of children playing and laughing and the ice cream trucks song just before it passes your house. In the evening when the sun sets, you can hear the sounds of firecrackers or what you wish were firecrackers, but in reality is gunshots coming from less than a block away. In my community, it is easy to find barbecued foods or southern styled collards. Home cooked meals in any home. You can’t help but smell the meals of other homes mixing together in one state like the smoke from a grill or from baked goods or roasted meats.

When asked what the community looks like, Mary noted:

Sadly, my community almost looks deserted. Most of the houses are well kept, and as you move further into the community, it looks like an entirely different setting all together. My community is most famous for having a shoot out or murdered body found in it or near it. Sadly, that is the case; however, it shouldn't be famous for that, but for some of the amazing people that come from here and some of the amazing people that are to come.

When asked about where in the community people go to feel good, Mary stated:
Most people—minus a few of the troublemakers—go to church to feel good because it is where you feel safest. It is most enjoyable. . . . There are holidays because there is less shooting and more fireworks and everyone seems so happy and cheerful. However, it is most annoying during at night on holidays because my community does not like to sleep until three in the morning. People live here because it is closest to the main necessities and have everything that is needed, as well as the houses are pretty old and cheap yet sturdy and dependable.

When asked how she would change the community if she could, she stated,

*I would clean up the abandoned houses and either try to get someone in them or petition for the land be used more productively like a store or a useful building. Some houses could get improved and more advanced as well as building useful buildings that will be beneficial to the community and funding some important organizations.*

It was interesting, despite the dominant negative depictions and grim statistics associated with this neighborhood, that Mary countered these perceptions by presenting a divergent viewpoint regarding her lived reality as a resident of that community.

Course Description

The participants in this study included two former students previously enrolled in a current issues course, designed to provide students with an understanding of relevant local, national, and international issues of the day using a historical framework. The course emphasized historical significance coupled with research and the use of multimodal and digital media sources to inform and interrogate students’ understanding
of events and their context. As outlined in Chapter 2, this research will incorporate the triintersectional elements of race, class, and gender in order to form a dialectical bridge between the multiple subject positions of Black girl existence (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Haddix, McArthur, Muhammad, Price-Dennis & Sealy-Ruiz, 2016; Price-Dennis, 2016).

Course Overview

In an effort to provide an overview of the significance and role of curriculum, the next section outlines the course unit of study as displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

*Curriculum Outline in 9 Weeks*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Unit and Goal</th>
<th>Online Learning Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1-2  | Course introduction, course expectations and requirements, discussion on significance of course | ● Complete *I Am Animoto* digital narrative project  
● Introduce *The New Jim Crow* book and film  
● Review daily warm up questions and how to respond  
● Review Unit Goal and expectations  
● Students take interactive notes  
● Watch CNN Student News  
● Journal entry 1 and YouTube video Watch Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Danger of a Single Story* and complete reflection for discussion |
| 3-4  | Students will become familiar with key terms and concepts found in *The New Jim Crow*. | ● Complete shared reading of Teaching Tolerance’s introduction and Chapter 1 to *The New Jim Crow*  
● Review Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary  
● Watch CNN Student News and  
● Watch and review the film 13th  
● Watch and review the YouTube Frontline story *The Stickup Kid* Alonza Thomas  
● Watch YouTube story on the Kemba Smith case complete debate/discussion  
● Journal Entry 2 and Google Classroom response to Standing Rock reading from the Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility  
● Extended learning activity: Play U.N. Darfur is Dying game |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Unit and Goal</th>
<th>Online Learning Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5-6  | Examine and critique Chapter 2 of *The New Jim Crow.* | • Complete Chapter 2 responses to *The New Jim Crow* in Google Classroom.  
  • Begin independent research of individual mass incarceration cases and review the Innocence Project  
  • Complete WebQuest #1  
  • Complete Journal Entry 3 and Google Classroom response to Emmett Till Case Revisited  
  • Complete Google Classroom Response-Morningside Center Teaching Social Responsibility Activity #2 *What is Black Lives Matter Working Towards?*  
  • Watch CNN Student News |
| 7-8  | Examine and critique Chapter 3 of *The New Jim Crow* | • Complete Chapter 3 responses to *The New Jim Crow* in Google Classroom.  
  • Complete vocabulary Quizziz Jim Crow Unit game  
  • MAC Lab-Complete *The New Jim Crow* mid-semester documentary film project  
  • Complete Journal Entry 4 and Google Classroom response to the Kathryn Johnson case  
  • Watch CNN Student News |
| 9    | Present mid-semester culminating projects of The New Jim Crow unit | • Review unit goals and documentary project rubric  
  • Complete interactive discussion notes  
  • MAC Lab-Complete *The New Jim Crow* mid-semester documentary film group project  
  • Complete group project reflection and formative assessment questions in Google Classroom  
  • Complete Journal Entry 5 and Google Classroom Response to reading on solitary confinement  
  • Watch CNN Student News |

**Narrative Analysis of Emergent Themes**

I draw from Jewel Amoah (2013) who argued, “The practice of narrative functions to allow traditionally marginalized and disempowered groups, such as women and people of color, to reclaim their voices” (p. 85). In making this comment, Amoah urged researchers to consider how narrative theory can serve to engage marginalized populations in ways that enable them to share their stories, which enables them to create
spaces of theorized existence. I see my student’s work and experiences as narrative containers, embedded within the dialogue of spoken and unspoken codes. Recorded dialogic conversations with participants occurred using the interview questions in (Appendix C). The first set of questions aimed to prompt the participants to describe their experiences. During the two in-depth interviews over a four-month period, I asked each participant who agreed to share their experiences related to this study probing questions centered on the previous information they shared. The subsequent sections present the results from the data aligned with the tenets of Black feminist thought (BFT), culturally responsive pedagogy, and multiliteracies theory. These sections include participant personal history, experiences in school, multimodality in online learning environments, and social media. For my narrative analysis, I drew upon Lawrence-Lightfoot’s (2005) concept of portraiture to provide an introduction and visual representation word cloud of codes (see Figure 9) from participant's’ distinctive voices as connected knowers (Collins, 2000). The query results generated through interview data examining the student’s feelings and opinions using NVivo software.
Figure 9. Word Cloud of Robin and Mary’s recorded dialogic conversations

Tweet Baby, Tweet Baby: Robin’s Story

My Momma said she rocks in the treetop
   All day long
      Huffin and a puffin
      And singing that song
   All the lil birds on Jay Bird street
Love the way Momma goes tweet, tweet, tweet
   Rockin Robin, Tweet Twalee
   Rockin Robin, Tweet Twalee
   Batman and Robin
      Flying in the air
   When Batman lost his underwear
      But Batman said I don’t care
My Momma’s gonna buy me a brand new pair
   Rockin Robin, Tweet Twalee
   Rockin Robin, Tweet Twalee
Momma in the kitchen cooking rice
   Brothers outside shootin dice
Daddy’s in jail drinking ginger ale
   Sisters outside going fruit cocktail
   Rockin Robin, Tweet Twalee
   Rockin Robin, Tweet Twalee
Robin was a first generation African American, born of African immigrant parents from West Africa. Robin has a strong connection with her family and members of the local West African immigrant community. She lived with her parents in a neighborhood in close proximity to the school, and she self-identified as Muslim. She was currently attending a small, historically Black college in the southeastern United States. During this study, she shared that although she liked working in groups, she preferred working alone. Robin mentioned having seizures and a learning disability as a critical descriptor of her identity. She provided the following narrative regarding her background:

My family’s from Conakry, and it’s on the map. It’s on the side. It’s right between Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire. When you look it up, you’re going to see it right there, and as you zoom in, use Google Map, as you zoom in, you could see the city Conakry on there. My culture is basically a culture that most people doesn’t know about. We have hair braiding, it’s a lot of hair braiding going on. People get their hair done. Some people be like what are you speaking? I want to know what you’re saying. Some people think we’re taking advantage of them just talking about them when we’re really not because we’re really just minding our own business, but again, it’s so many different cultures and so many different languages, and so many different types of musics, clothing.

Table 2 depicts Robin’s background information.
Table 2

Robin’s Background Information

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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>African American (1st generation born of African immigrant parents)</td>
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<td>Years in Single-Gender School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internet Research for Classes</td>
<td>All the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Usage</td>
<td>All the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Timeline</td>
<td>• Two months after graduation (7/2017) at school site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• After interview 1 via telephone, text messaging and Gmail (8/2017).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Final member-checking phone conversation (10/2017)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robin’s Poem: I Am From

I’m sweet heartwarming and loving
I rose like dark blood
like my soul it boils sometime
I am a Muslim
I go to mosque every Saturday and Sunday to read the holy Quran
and I was born in my beauty
Which is New York
From the Bronx
That’s when my medical problem began 2012
Which turn into a big problem
Like my school work
I have disability
which is seizure
and it’s be hard for me
I can’t go swimming
or go on a rollercoaster
I miss out on all the fun
but I’m strong
and brave young woman
who made it to 2017
and I thank God everyday
and my Mom always told me
and Dad
do your best
you can do it
you’re the next future
The future of the United States
you’re going to be a great lawyer
my family from west Africa Guinea
and
I get my smart from my daddy
and
I get my look from my mommy
My name is Robin this is who I am

Context

Robin wrote the “I Am From” poem in current issues class, as a part of the course introduction activity. The assignment was to write a poem about the various cultural influences (i.e., family, religion, ethnicity, nationality, education) that shape identity. From Robin’s journal, I noticed that she chose to write about her cultural background and her disability. Robin chose to confront the challenges she faced with her disability with the love and support of her family and community. Empowered through self-knowledge, Robin rejected the stance of victimization and affirmed her voice by writing about her experiences. Collins (2000) noted that breaking silence of our blues, challenges, and struggles through writing can move women to share their experiences with others.
Theme I. Engaging by Design: Critical Aspects of Self-Definition

During the first interview, the first question I posed to both respondents was: How do you define Black girlhood and what experiences contribute to that definition? Robin explained that the experiences of students were not homogenous but rather different for each of her classmates. Robin described the context of the situation that many of her classmates confronted by stating:

*Black girlhood for me is like okay, I’m in an all-girl school. We’re not compatible, we’re not the same. They might be going through some things at home that you don’t probably understand because you have it all good for yourself. You got good parents to give you advice or taught you, or going to college, or inspired you to do this and that, but for other girls, it’s kind of a rough patch. The way they be acting up in school, it’s not because they have a attitude. It’s because of what they’re going through at home, and they have no one to guide them except for their friends, but you know, your friends can always have your back. Some can have your back, some can’t*

The subtheme in this case was black girlhood in a single-gender school. Robin discussed her experiences as an African American female student in a single-gender school. Robin explained that while all of the students in her school were girls, they were not a homogenous culture. In telling her story of lived realities in a single-gender school, it was evident that the school provided a safe haven for many students who were struggling with life challenges. While Robin noted the differences in the group, she also associated having a good education with relying on the support of the sisterhood. The
school site provided a significant amount of care and support for Robin. She spoke of her experience in the single-gender school as follows:

*Black girlhood for me is like okay, I’m in an all-girl school. We’re not compatible, we’re not the same. They might be going through some things at home that you don’t probably understand because you have it all good for yourself. You got good parents to give you advice or taught you, or going to college, or inspired you to do this and that, but for other girls, it’s kind of a rough patch. The way they be acting up in school, it’s not because they have a attitude. It’s because of what they’re going through at home, and they have no one to guide them except for their friends, but you know, your friends can always have your back. Some give you bad advice, some give you good advice, but you have to learn that when you come to school, there’s nothing better than education. You’re always going to have to be educated to find a job anywhere. A lot of people say women can’t be a president. They don’t know that.*

When asked about what factors led her define black girlhood, she indicated:

*Community is where little kids, especially little kids, they look up to adults. They look up to their mothers and dads to see what they’re doing or what they went through, but if we can just get someone, in my community, some kids look up to me. I’m glad that they look up to me because they’re seeing that I’m a serious person, whatever they need help with, like homework.*
Ultimately, however, despite the challenges she has faced in this setting due to her disability, Robin rejected the negative stereotypes associated with her condition by taking an agentive stance against the school as an institution.

Theme II. Interplay between School and Community Support

At the outset, I wanted the participants to feel comfortable sharing their narrative experiences. Institutional identity was emerged as a subtheme as Robin recalled the challenges (outlier) she faced as a student with a disability in a single-gender school. She described feelings of isolation and stigmatization. She revealed incidents involving impolite comments from her classmates towards her. Consequently, Robin avoided engaging with her classmates outside of her core group of friends.

One interesting subtheme included an ethic of care. In general, she described the importance of having a caring teacher whom she referred to as a “guidance teacher”. Robin stated:

*My experience ninth grade through 12th has been kind of rough, but I have the potential. Even though I have a learning disability, I’m not different from any other student. I can read, I can write, it’s just that I need a little bit of help. Most of the schools, they don’t get that. They tease you. They say, “Oh, she’s stupid. She’s dumb. She don’t know what she’s doing.” Ever since I got here, there’s only one person who understood me. She has been a wonderful guidance teacher. She’s like a stepmom to me, a God mom. I just want to thank her for that any time. She’s there anytime that I need her throughout the whole day.*
Theme III. Interacting Digitally: Embodiment in Online Learning Environments

Students’ online learning experiences are largely affected by pedagogy. In this context, pedagogy refers to knowledge production, identity construction and social relationships (Hill & Vasudevan, 2008; Peck, Hewitt, Mullen, Lashley, Eldridge & Douglas, 2015). Furthermore, these cultural influences provide another domain from which one constructs her agentive self. Women of color, technology, and education interact in complex ways, both in and out of school. These online learning experiences frame how they approach technology use in school. Robin explained her experiences with online learning this way:

*For me, I’m a one-on-one person. I need someone to sit in front of me to explain it to me. I’m not good with online classes. Edgenuity was very rough and tough for me, especially with biology, which was not easy, but I got through it somehow. It was a miracle for me, but if it wasn't for that one person that I could count on, I would have never made it this far. I would have never seen myself going to college. I would have to start all back over again, but who wants to start back over? You want to make your family proud. You want to show those people who let you down hey, I made it.*

The subtheme in this instance was student engagement with multimodal sources. When I asked Robin what her conceptions were about online learning experiences, she expressed that her experiences were collaborative. She also mentioned that online learning took place in spaces such as Google Classroom and Edgenuity. Robin stated:
For Google Classroom, for economics, I really liked that class. It was fun class for me, and current issues. Our teacher gave us many projects that we could work on together with our classmates to get to know each other and get to learn different facts from them, they get to learn different facts from us. Ingenuity is an online class where they'll have these questions for you, your teacher will know if you failed it, it will let you move on to the next lesson. It has a lot of lessons, but it depends on what subject you're really on, that class that you're taking. I took Edgenuity twice for algebra and biology, and algebra had a lot of math solving problems. I always needed help. My teacher, he told me either I can email him or just come look for him to get some help, but I learned from other people, other classmates, like my senior classmates, they knew a lot of math more than I did because I don’t like math like that. They really helped me out through the lessons, the questions, and the tests. Once I finished that class, I was so proud of myself because at the end, they give you a test where it’s like 50 questions, and either you pass it or you don’t.
During this interview, Robin specifically recalled moments her participation online was encouraged through interaction with her classmates and instructors. When asked about specific examples she referred to learning experiences her economics and current issues classes when she actively engaged online with her classmates. She expressed that the cooperative, authentic tasks and projects were instrumental in her committed participation, engagement, and success in the courses. She also mentioned the advantages of the Edgenuity platform for credit recovery. Videos and textual content were used in both platforms to assist students with completing unit modules during the course of the semester. Her lived experience shows how she valued the interpersonal exchanges online influenced and supported her learning outcomes (Smith & Ayers, 2006).
During our second interview, as Robin continued to explain collectivity in online learning environments and her learning experiences at Vivian Malone Jones Academy, she explained her engagement online this way:

*Well, over the past years as I was little if I wanted to talk to my friends, I would just go outside and we would just play little games or run around, since we live in the same community. Over the years, there are apps that are made for special reasons. Social media is not just only for people to associate. It’s for also good reasons like to solve a crime or news reports to make sure the people are getting what they need to know. CNN is always breaking news, always.*

She described how she used her cell phone to download games for social and academic engagement in the following way:

*Well, games like there’s Subway Surfers. Little kids use that like . . . There’s a lot of them. You could go on the app store. You can just download them. Some are, you do have to pay for some of them, but mostly people pick the free ones because they know that’s the best ones and you can compete with another person like UNO. There’s always . . . You can compete with other people and so, if you get into contact with them, they'll start socializing with you and you socialize with them and that’s how you can meet new people over social media.*

Robin’s statement supports the argument that technology influences youth culture. While youth interact with technology in complex ways, these embodied, technology-mediated experiences are not culturally neutral (Smith & Ayers, 2006; Peck et al., 2015). She asserted:
I mean there are other games, like educational games for a reason, like crossword puzzles, mostly I’m interested in those because you can always work on your grammar or your vocabulary for a reason. Though most kids, they don’t want to use that because they know games are more funner, and they’re addicted to that because it’s addictive. Like for a reason like school, they use Kahoot, Quizlet, and then you go download those on your phone for a reason, for like homework or you want to study for a test.

Theme IV. (Dis)Playing: Digital Rebels

Robin admitted that she used Google frequently to search for course content. She perceived the information she located on Google as more reliable than the teacher’s written textual resources, especially when she played online games, such as Quizizz, Quizlet (see Figure 11), or Kahoot:

Like she (Mary) said, teenagers are going to find a way just to get into that type of website......For me, basically, some things that I didn’t see in the textbook, I will look it up on Google. A textbook change every year or every two, three years. It depends on how that book is processed and made and the information that your teacher has learned or that's given. Teachers have their own textbooks, but it’s not always the same thing in that book, so there’s a reason why some people look it up on Google because they know Google will help you out with certain homeworks or projects or study guides.
Figure 11. Sample of Quizizz game results for Robin

For me, I like using Quizit because or Quizit, Quizit because the subject that you’re given, you can type it in and it’ll pop up, but not every single lesson that you type up will pop up. Sometime there are less answers, sometimes there is more.

Robin expressed that online learning opportunities focused mainly on cooperative learning and collaborative groups while her interest in games using multiple modes stemmed from her individual interests. The support of her peers was a crucial factor in working together. She described this process as follows:

Try different strategies, like get together with a group at lunch or there’s reasons why teachers, they put you in a group to work together because they know everyone has a different type of strategy that can help one another out.

Theme V. Game Changers and Online Social Presence

During the second interview, Robin discussed her social media usage. Social media usage was a critical aspect of socialization for sustaining relationships and attaining information. The social networking communities were used as the primary way
to contact peers. Robin mentioned using Snapchat, Twitter and Instagram (see *Figure 12*) frequently to maintain closeness with her family and friends. I wanted to understand more about the development of interpersonal relationships and online social practices. Oliver (2009) noted that Black women used online communities to subvert oppressive structures and build solidarity. I asked each participant to bring a screenshot of something they wanted to discuss and to explain the significance of the image. Robin stated,

_I have a screenshot of a young lady, who’s a nurse, and I got it off of Instagram. The comment that’s written up under the picture, “If my wife, girl, ain’t like this or somethin’ fire in the future, I don’t want her.” My problem is, how do you know this young lady and is she someone that’s okay with you writing a comment up under her picture like that because you’re a young man that’s underage and she’s an adult. Most girls aren’t okay with that, but some girls are because they would like to get more followers. More followers, you don’t really know them like that. You think you do, but you don’t. Some of them just take advantage of you really, just showing other people, “Oh. I'm claimin’ her as this,” or “She’s like that,” but you don’t actually know the person._
The subtheme in this personal account was fear and vulnerability online. While social media provides a medium for social engagement and expression, participants noted that it was potentially a venue where African American girls experience vulnerability in the form of unwanted attention, stalking, oppressive, and stereotypical messages. As Robin talked about her experiences, she noted that unwanted attention is the result of the live app feature in several social media platforms that provide information about your whereabouts. Regarding lurkers and vulnerability, she was clear about not engaging in unwanted interaction in social media spaces. Robin stated, “As someone else says, you don’t have to take that and make it out of inappropriate kind of socializing because, again,
For example, she indicated that organization is critical to planning social events and outings with friends because someone may show up uninvited. She noted:

LIKE SHE SAID, SNAPCHAT IS ONE OF THE MOST, RIGHT NOW IS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIAS RIGHT NOW. THEY HAVE A LOT OF UPDATES. I UPDATED, MINES LIKE EVERY FEW WEEKS. YOU HAVE TO BE ORGANIZED IF YOU WANT TO GO OUT WITH YOUR FRIENDS. YOU DON’T WANT SOMEONE SHOWING UP THAT WAS NOT UNINVITED, UNLESS THAT YOUNG MALE IS EITHER GOING TO PAY FOR THE MOVIES, GOING TO SHOW YOU RESPECT, BUT IF IT’S NOT, WHY ARE YOU HERE? YOU’RE JUST BOtherING US. IF YOU DON’T LIKE THAT, YOU DON’T HAVE TO WALK OUT OF THAT MOVIE BECAUSE THAT PERSON RUINED IT FOR THE WHOLE GROUP. YOU HAVE TO TELL SECURITY AND BE LIKE, “WE DIDN’T INVITE THIS PERSON. HE JUST SHOWED UP OUT OF NOWHERE AND WE’RE TRYING TO ENJOY OURSELVES.”

Bailey and Steeves (2015) used the term online agency to describe the dual virtual experiences of girls online. In an effort to maximize agency, Bailey and Steeves (2015) advocated for increased critical discussions of agency and vulnerability. Specifically, vulnerability, which Bailey and Steeves (2015) defined:

. . . SURVEILLANCE BY ONLINE USERS, PRIVACY RISKS, CONCERNS RELATED TO SELF-DISCLOSURE, REPUTATIONAL DAMAGE, OR CONSTRAINTS ON HIGHER EDUCATION, POTENTIAL SEXUALIZATION, AND RESULTING MISCELLANEOUS THREATS TO PERSONAL SAFETY IN RESPONSE TO SELF IMAGES THAT ARE POSTED ONLINE, OTHER REPUTATIONAL RISKS, BODY IMAGE RISKS RELATED TO INTERNALIZATION OF GENDERED MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS, AND CYBERBULLYING AND CYBER GENDER HARASSMENT. (P. 62)
Collins (2000) claimed that addressing issues of power begins with the context of creating safe spaces within the matrix of domination. This approach can be extremely useful to confront the continually changing online experiences of girls.

Summary: Robin

Critical aspects of self-definition were evident in Robin’s:

- awareness of her peripheral location in the school setting as a student with a disability;
- assertion of her academic potential despite her learning disability;
- rejection of negative perceptions and viewed herself as equal to others;
- recognition of institutional barriers and constraints she faces in school;
- acknowledgment of support structures to support her with dealing with unequal treatment; and
- Engagement in positive and meaningful interaction with a mentor

Figure 13 represents the research findings for Robin. The graphic illustrates the interlocking systems of social group classifications, heterogeneous identities, and modes of oppression Robin confronted as a student at the Vivian Malone Jones Academy.
Robin’s lived reality demonstrates a need for school leaders to implement culturally congruent and culturally responsive support for students with learning disabilities. She noted that her peers and family genuinely supported her. Furthermore, her story highlights the need for a more inclusive curriculum to support divergent learners. According to Collins (2000), the ethic of care is a form of connected knowing embodied through the call and response African cultural tradition. Through dialogue,
Robin expressed that the community contributed to her self-definition and validated her. Her story shed light on the difficulties students with disabilities face and the need for a more culturally appropriate, equitable treatment for students with disabilities. According to Robin, teacher and course expectations influenced her multimodal online learning experiences. She participated from engaging with others during collaborative learning activities online. Through connected knowing, Robin’s ability to learn online by cooperating with others aligns with the tenets of Ladson-Billings (1995) culturally responsive pedagogy.

Collins (2000) emphasized that “experiences shape consciousness” (p. 275). Robin’s observations included issues involving contesting school norms and rules regarding acceptable use concerns, curriculum congruence with teachers expectations, and student’s attention to assigned tasks. She also indicated that online learning assisted her with academic success by providing recovery opportunities.

In the next section, I report Mary’s culturally constructed experiences in online learning spaces. Mary is the second participant in this study. Table 3 provides a graphic representation of Mary’s background information.

Miss Mary Mack: Mary’s Story

Miss Mary Mack Mack Mack
All dressed in black, black, black.
With silver buttons, buttons, buttons
All down her back, back, back.
She asked her mother, mother, mother
For 50 cents, cents, cents.
To see the elephants, elephants, elephants
Jump over the fence, fence, fence.
They jumped so high, high, high
They reached the sky, sky, sky.
And they didn't come back, back, back
’Til the 4th of July, ly, ly.

Table 3

Mary’s Background Information

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Mary</th>
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<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>African American</td>
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<td>Years in Single-Gender School</td>
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<td>A few times a week</td>
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<td>Social Media Usage</td>
<td>A few times a week</td>
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<td>Interview Timeline</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● After interview 1 via face-to-face, text messaging and Gmail (8/2017).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Final member-checking phone conversation (10/2017)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mary had attended the Vivian Malone Jones Academy since the 6th grade and appeared to have strong relationships with her peers. She liked to interact with her peers in various social settings, and she was a member of the school’s Poetry Club. She lived with both parents in close proximity to the school campus. The areas where I noticed Mary shone were performing poetry and community service. She was currently attending a small,
historically Black college in the southeastern United States. She provided the following narrative regarding her background:

I’ve been coming to this school since I was in sixth grade. It’s actually been quite interesting, the experience I’ve had. Coming from a coed elementary school to an all-gender middle school, it was slightly weird, but in a way, I noticed a drastic change as, when I was in elementary school, the girls would act a certain way to impress certain guys. At an all-girls school, the girls are actually their selves. They can express their selves differently than when they’re around their counterparts or whatever. They’re not really focused on trying to impress anybody, because it’s all girls, who you got to impress? It also allows us to become more of us truly, be more independent, get more into our talents. At all-girls school, you get more understanding, especially when you have those issues. People understand, instead of just saying, “Oh, she just has a bad attitude.” Also, you get on that one-on-one content with your teachers; they understand. Instead of you getting in trouble for something, if you’re acting out or a certain way, that the teacher may pull you to the side and say, “Hey, I know this isn’t you.” Instead of just saying, “Oh, she just has a bad attitude altogether. I don’t want to deal with her, just get her suspended,” instead you’re given multiple chances, even though sometimes you might not deserve them or you might act out in a certain way and you shouldn’t.

In the end, you’re given many great advances, instead of where you would be at a coed school and all the attention would probably be on the boys, where they
would probably be doing sports. If they’re failing, the coach will come and talk
to your teacher and be like, “Hey, can you go ahead and give him a pass?”

Whereas, if it’s a girl, you’re just there. Nobody really honestly really focuses on
the girl and her issues. I feel, in a coed school, it’s always the guys. They’re the
one that’s bringing in the popularity, the one that’s doing all the sports, the ones
that are mainly focused or the ones that are seen as, “Oh, we need to go ahead
and give them a crutch.”

I learned over the years I have a lot of culture in my family, whether it’s my great
grandfather that was Irish or my grandmother that was Latina, I tried embracing
a lot because in the end, I would love to say I come from one cultural background,
but it’s just not true. I come from so much, and I actually like it because I get to
experience so many things because I have a love just for different cultures. I love
Asian cultures, I love African cultures, English cultures, European cultures, every
culture. It’s always me okay, so this is where this come from in America because
they're so similar. This is where they’re taking it from. So it’s like social media,
it’s a bridge. Yeah, it has some negative standings or whatever, but there’s still a
bridge that you can use to get back to those roots, back to those starting points.
You could always reach out and say, “Hey, I just recently found out that I have
this culture in me. Could you explain it more?” And somebody could answer
back.

If I could go on there and say, “Hey, I would love to learn more about Japanese
culture, I have a lot of Japanese friends, which I have never said hey, can you
give me more information? Can you give me more about your cuisine? I love your cuisine, but let’s be honest, I don’t know what I’m eating. Can you explain more about it to me? Then, they’ll text me and say, “Hey, okay so this is this, and this is this. Yeah, you speak a little bit. I’ll help you be more fluent in it.

Yeah, anime, I know you love it, that is not the main center around Japanese culture, even though we do love our anime.” It’s so many things that you see in social media that you can experience, even for those people that don’t want to go out and say, “Hey, let me fly out there” because a lot of people, they’re scared of flying, but you can experience that at home just going through somebody’s page, like they went to these places, living through somebody else’s eyes.

Mary’s Poem

Herstory
Would you like to hear my herstory?
Yes herstory not history
You see history is the washed down version
So allow me to give you the uncut original.
The color of my skin condemns me
to the sins of those who classify me
as nothing more than the weak link
There is no need to fear that I may use a weapon.
That’s not what you need to fear NO!
What you need to fear is when my pen hit paper
When my mind, open to the things you try to hide.
You see, my herstory runs deeper than the Nile and the Indus river combined
Deeper than the roots of the trees
It runs deeper than the graves of my ancestors
as the wind carries their voices from the sea
Whispering loud in my ear Daughter of Africa
Allow me to set the record and say I am tired.
Tired of spending years of learning about slavery
of chains and plantations
Because Herstory is Her-Story
the story of Nubian Queens
the story of the Egyptians
the story…..of reality
Herstory is me.
So while you are trying to figure out the secrets of the pyramids
I gain the knowledge withheld from me
Because I am a daughter of Kings
A daughter of queens
A proud daughter of Africa
I am…..My Own Herstory.

Context

Mary wrote this poem as a performance piece for the annual schoolwide Black History program. Mary was an avid writer and served as a member of the school’s Slam Poetry Club. Her writing focused on her cultural experiences and multiple aspects of her identity. From Mary’s journal and class assignments, I noticed that she chose to write often about her community. Mary chose to address the challenges she faced through expressive writing by sharing her original works with her classmates and the school community.

Theme I. Engaging by Design: Critical Aspects of Self-Definition

During the first interview, the first question I posed to both respondents was: How do you define Black girlhood and what experiences contributed to that definition? Mary explained:

*I totally agree with what Robin said. Black girlhood is not just two words. It’s deeper than that. It’s a bond. It’s making something of yourself, and it’s basically showing people that you’re more than just a female. You’re more than just an African American. You’re more than what they just group you together*
with different people. You're an individual. You're unique. You have certain abilities that some other people don’t have. Like she said, it’s becoming a role model. I live in a community where gosh, I could tell you so many people that I look up to, but not every girl has that. It’s kind of sad. Me, I’m trying so hard. I go to PAL, and that’s the Police Athletic League. That’s where, honestly, I started from since I was in elementary school.

The subtheme in this case was black girlhood in a single-gender school. Mary described her experiences in a single-gender school this way:

I’ve tried so hard to give back to try to be a role model for little girls that are coming to my school. I’m giving them advice, I’m like hey, for this teacher’s class, if you're coming to this school and she's still here, make sure you study hard. I want to show them that yeah, you don’t have to be that stereotypical black single mother that's struggling with about four kids. You don’t have to be that. You can be a successful, and I’m not saying hey, get married just because you want to get rid of the stereotype. You could still be a single mother, but you could be successful. You could be that single mother that's own her own company and still got a trust fund for your kids, or basically just happy. It’s more than just tangible, monetary things. It’s being happy about yourself, because in the end, at the very end of the day, if you're not happy about yourself, nobody else is going to be happy about yourself but you. Nobody is going to help you with it.
Theme II. Interplay between School and Community Support

Mary described the community factors that led her to define Black girlhood in the following way:

*I’ve seen so many representations of Black girlhood, whether it be in my community with some of the girls that just walk around, they just aimlessly walk around, or whether it be in my family where I see strong, Black females that are making something of themselves that basically aren’t really even worried about hey, if this guy doesn’t want to be with me, that’s cool because guess what? I’m still getting my education, still going up. I’ll just holler at him on the flip side. Or whether it be in the media, like when they made the movie Hidden Figures, I was so proud, and it wasn’t even me on there. It wasn’t even me doing the thing, but they were recognizing Black females in history. Yeah, it took so many years for them to actually recognize us or for us to actually be even considered to be making a movie, but now, it opened the floodgates. Now, they’re making Girls Trip. Yeah, they’re wild or whatever, but they still classy, and it’s showing. There’s so many representations, and it’s just to the point where who wants to see what representation for their own self? Whether you see the group of females that’s loud that’s just going places that don’t really know where they’re going, they’re just walking up and down and street, don’t care where they’re going, don’t care what they’re doing, or you’re seeing the group of African American females that are making something of themselves that yeah, they might have made some mistakes. They might have actually did some wrong things, but guess what?*
They’re human. They’re going to make mistakes. Nobody’s perfect, but they’re taking their consequences. They’re taking all the things that people are throwing at them and saying, “Oh, you can’t do that,” and then flip them around and then making it work for them. It’s up to you which one you want to see, which representation.

One interesting subtheme included an ethic of care. Mary identified the importance of an ethic of care when describing her relationships with teachers at the school. She stated:

It’s just good to have that one-on-one bond with someone that is like you, that cares about you on a different level than just hey, you’re just my student. No, I see you more as a potential. I’m giving you all these opportunities that you wouldn’t get at a co-ed school.

Theme III. Interacting Digitally: Embodiment in Online Learning Environments

Women of color, technology, and education interact in complex ways, both in and out of school. It is from these online learning experiences that frame how they approach technology use in school. Mary described her experiences with online learning as follows:

What I’ve noticed in my years of school from elementary to high school is that technology, it’s really, really key in education at the moment. In pre-K and kindergarten, they had us on computers already, whereas my mom would tell me, “We didn't start getting the computers till I was in high school.” They had us on, what’s that called, Starfall, where it was basically teaching us. Yeah, me and a
Few other kids already knew alphabets, but they already had a website where you got taught alphabets. Then if I look at today, there are little babies, two-year-old, three, already know how to use a phone. How do you not know how to say the word mama, but you can use a phone, know how to put in the password, know how to get to your game and know how to do the game and you're only two years old? Something is, honestly, it's not wrong, but in a sense, it kind of is because you can't talk but you can use all this technology.

The subtheme in this instance was student engagement with multimodal sources. I followed up with a clarifying question about specific online learning experiences. Mary noted,

*I know this year they recently implemented Google Classroom into all of our classes, or all of my classes at least. For one, it was really amazing for a class that took AP computer science. For that class, we didn't even need paper and pencil. Everything we did was on the computer, be it were we making apps, were we doing research for an app we had to create, whether it be we were watching videos to help us create another app, or making a video about our app, everything we did was basically on the Internet. To a sense, it was easy, but it was also hard because in the end, they still had to bring two technician people from Google to help us out because yeah, we were the guinea pigs, but in the end, we still needed help. And we were pretty well off with it. We knew how to do it, but we still needed that extra help. It was like a whole bunch of experienced things, very advanced things that even being a teenager that most teenagers are really tech*
savvy. We know how to get around a whole bunch of stuff, block walls and everything. I’m just saying the truth. We know how to get around a lot of stuff.

Even then, we needed more people to be brought in to help us. Yeah, it was fun to learn everything about it, but in the end, it was a lot of technical computer-based, so many different programs that you didn’t even know was out there, programming languages, websites that helped you do other things, research.

With the advancement that keeps happening, it’s only getting more and more harder in each thing you do. Google Classrooms, they have where you turn in buttons, you could talk to the teacher, the teacher can see what you did, you submitted it. It tells the teacher whether it’s late or not, and it’s like okay, well I don’t need paper and pencil no more, so what is going on now?

Everything is on the computer. You just type it up and turn it in. You barely need paper and pencil unless it’s math, and honestly, math was almost there too. Unless it’s math, you don’t honestly need paper anymore. Everything is on the computer. That’s a good thing, but it's also a bad thing because I’ve experienced a time where I’ve turned stuff in, the computer crashed, it’s eliminated. It’s gone.

Sometimes Google has mishaps where you write something up on Google Docs, you think it’s there, but then next time you look at it, it’s all blank and you don’t understand what happened, and teachers look at you like well, I gave you the due date. It’s on the website. Well, what if I can’t get to the website? What if I don’t have that computer or that phone that can get me to the Internet at the time?

Yeah, everybody’s supposed to have technology, but maybe I don’t. Maybe I
don’t have that WiFi that could get my phone on there. It’s just a lot going on with that.

While the following section illustrates cultural influences in more depth, Mary’s lived realities of her interactions with online learning is related to her relationship with her peers, so it is presented in this section. Cooperative learning is one of the core tenets of culturally responsive instruction (Ladson-Billings, 1992). When asked about specific experiences working with her classmates to resolve many of the issues related to online learning, Mary described her participation this way:

Dealing with groups and online classes, I know from my experiences with, like Robin said in economics, or even in the AP computer science class, or even in Spanish, there would be a group of assignments where you had to do a project and turn it in through Google Classroom. In a way, it was very useful because there was, let me see, because you had a one site, like you could use Google Docs, where you could send through your email, and each of your partners could edit it or send it back to you, but it always seemed, it never fails, there always seemed to be that one person, or those two people, that decided I can’t do it that day and something goes out of whack. It makes you almost think if we would have did it the old fashioned way of just meeting together, would this have been resolved? Because normally if you meet together and you make the person do what they need to do, then most of the stuff are done as opposed to when you’re doing it on technology, basically you’re just, “Hey, I’m sending this to you. Look it over, edit it, add your own stuff in, and this is your responsibility. I’m not going to be on
your back about it.” You’re giving them that, and you would think oh, you know, they should be responsible enough to do the one job, the one job you give them, but they don’t. It’s still also very good because you might not have that one person in your group where they just don’t do it. You might have those other people that say, “Okay, I’m going to do it at the exact time I say I’m going to do it,” and they wind up doing it, and you get that notification, and it’s done before due, and you just go ahead and turn it in, so it’s always a win-win situation with any possible way you can do it.

As Mary continued to explain the meaningful connections she had with her classmates online, she explained the specific use of online sources, including social media, in the following manner:

*There are a lot of platforms when you talk about social media, where you’re taking about Twitter, or Facebook, or even Instagram, Snapchat. Google Hangouts really is more popular than people think. Even small social gatherings like [inaudible 00:35:17], which is a social gathering where it’s for young writers, or Wattpad, where young authors come out at. You could use all these to basically do classwork and work in. In ninth grade, we used Google Hangouts, and Google Hangouts is really very useful because you could add as many people as you want in there, and all of them can comment in this one chat room, whereas some websites or social medias might have a limit to 50 people. You could have even more than that. You could do conference calls where all of them are on the screen and you’re talking to them.*
Honestly it depends on how you use the social media for your advantage. If you’re using it for negative things like putting somebody out there, or talking about drama, or doing cyber bullying, then you’re taking advantage of it in a wrong way, whereas you could be hey, let’s do this for a project. You could use the social media platform for so many projects. You could say, “Hey, we’re reaching out to somebody.” Our teacher gave us this type of project. Does anybody else have a project similar to this that you could give us some pointers on, if you’re stuck, instead of, you know, Chris Brown just got rid of his baby mama, sister, somebody or other, and you’re up there following with Lil’ Wayne did to somebody else, whereas you could be like okay, Stacey just finished her project. Maybe I should be doing my project right about now since her group is done.

You could use it for education use instead of just basically trying to stay in the loop with all the drama. Oh, Love and hip hop this and this went on, all this other stuff went on, as opposed to just saying . . . I’m just real. A lot of my friends, they’re on social media more than they’re texting and calling people, so if I know so-and-so, I could get to them through Twitter, I’m going to say, “Yo,” at so-and-so, “We need to finish this project. You don’t got to text me. Text me through Twitter or something, but let us finish this project.” You could use social media in different ways instead of that one mindset that people think it’s used to make memes; it’s used to call somebody out; it’s used to make a trend. Yeah, some of those things are good, I’m not talking about the calling out part, but maybe the
memes that are inspirational, maybe the trends that are inspirational is good.

Yeah, but just use it for something positive that’s going to help you in life because in the end, all you’re doing is making Twitter, and Facebook, and Instagram more famous getting more money and while you’re just, where are you at? Probably somewhere almost failing class because you’re on that website and you didn’t do your project, or you didn’t contact your friends on your progress about what you were supposed to be doing.

She described her feeling about social media usage for group work in the following way:

I’m just going to be honest with you. Using social media between teams, honestly, I don’t technically really like doing it, but now, it’s acceptable. Some people are like, “Yo, go head, hit me up in the DMs, that’s okay.” But me, I like being face-to-face. I don’t like talking about business or work over the Internet. Maybe the email, honestly, is really pushing it for me because in the end, it’s like somebody could always hack that. Somebody could always do something to alter that. It’s always something, like, “I sent you an email but oh, I didn’t receive it,” or you look in your email, this message failed, whereas if you would have had a direct conversation face-to-face with somebody, y’all could have already related, and now y’all are on the brink of basically failing because this project is probably 50% of your classwork, and y’all got to rush.

You got to beg teachers, “Oh my God, can I please miss your class to finish this project? I promise you I will come back to school and do anything and
everything that I missed in class today, or something.” In the end, that teacher has a right to say no because it was still your responsibility, both of you or whoever how many is in there, your responsibility to do that project. Yeah, sure, like I said earlier, it’s acceptable for teams to talk and communicate through social media, but you never know. I have a Twitter. Yeah, I don’t get on it that much because at the end, I got it because oh, let me see what my friends are doing on there.

Previously, Robin mentioned that students used their cellphones to play games. I asked both participants to explain their experiences by describing what that process looks like. Mary explained it this way:

Yes, I have experience with that. I know on my phone, quite honestly, instead of using social media, I have a lot of games on my phone, and I’ve noticed that each time you get an update or something, there’s always a game like we don’t play UNO with UNO cards anymore, you play it on the phone. You don’t play Yahtzee with the board no more, you play it on the phone. You don’t play Bingo like they used to anymore, you play it on the phone. Now it’s like, we don’t use the tangible things anymore.

Everything is on the cellphone. It’s just one click away that you can use and you can play it. These games, although they’re just games, I also know that they kind of enter me the social media part of it because like Yahtzee, you play other people. You’re not just playing the computer. You’re playing people that has a profile, that either started the same day, started a week, started a month before
you, after you. You’re like, but you’re still meeting new people and you could still chat with those people. It’s like everything that you do, it’s still incorporating that social media chat with other stranger’s topic, that base of it.

She further elaborated by mentioning the risks associated with playing online games with others, specifically strangers. Mary related the following narrative regarding her experiences:

*I mean, me personally, I’m just playing a game for the game because I mean, coming from me, I don’t have a lot of kids in my community or in my side of town. My parents, they’re older, they just want to watch TV. They just want to read. Half the time I’m reading, but if I want to do something like, hey, my mom’s tired. She can drive me away. I don’t feel like riding a bus. I pull out a phone and play a game. Normally, I’m just . . . In most games, I’m competitive, so I’ll probably be in my own little zone on my phone, playing a game, really intent, trying to get the highest score. I don’t really get into the chatting with other people type. I download those games, but I don’t really chat with the other people. I just download the games for the game itself, not for the social media aspect of it. Whereas sometimes you would see other people, and they’re chatting while they’re playing the games, and there’s nothing wrong with that, but in the end they’re always risks when you’re talking to strangers, whether face-to-face, whether on phones, whether through apps because . . . I mean, just being real, there are hackers out there, and if you’re talking to a hacker, and all it takes is like 10 minutes and has everything from your phone, pictures, he has your*
information, your history, your browsing history, everything. I’m just really cautious about that. I don’t normally like, when you start chatting with people that opens a gateway. It lets them say, “Hey. Okay, as long as I get them into a conversation, the longer I can hack into their IP address, get everything that they done, see who they are and then,” I don’t know, basically do anything with their information.

Mary described her classroom experiences with educational games as follows:

Piggy backing off of what Robyn said, with educational games, they’re fun that is true, but it’s hard to have the child or the kid decide for between, “Hey. I’m learning this,” or “Hey. I’m just trying to get the highest score” because they could be answering all the questions and answering them right, but they’re just doing it for the score. The information’s just really going in one ear and out the other, just because they’re trying to win that prize. Whereas, you’re trying to incorporate the lesson into it and trying to actually get them to learn it.

Sometimes, yeah, like if we would do, I know in some of our classes the teacher will have us do Jeopardy. They would assign a group of people. They would have to make the Jeopardy. Now, not saying that the kids didn’t learn anything from the Jeopardy, but because they know there was a prize involved, they were trying to answer it and they knew it, but the thing is when it came to the test, they didn’t know it because there was nothing involved. There was no prize. There was no, “Hey. Get the highest points.” That was their mentality because it’s like, “Oh. This is just a test. I’m not getting anything.” Instead of looking at, “Oh.
This grade is my prize.” They’re basically looking at it, “Oh. It’s just a grade.”

Instead of, “Oh, um, I got to be competitive.”

They don’t know how to . . . I mean, I’m not saying being competitive in a game isn’t good, but if they act that way towards the test, a lot more people would be passing. If they said, “Ooh. Let me go ahead and get that A, this is another hundred points on my grade. Let me get the highest score in my grade.” If they had that mentality, we would have a lot more people passing with flying colors because they have the enthusiasm. They have that competitiveness that’s going to push them to work harder and be even more and be the best that they can be, but instead they’re doing that for game. They’re really just seeing the game aspect. They’re not seeing the lesson incorporate into the game.

Mary indicated the following experiences working with groups online:

Dealing with groups, I think there are a lot of things to play when creating a group. Honestly, if . . . I’m not downing any teacher or any advisor, but sometimes teachers they don’t actually analyze group. They might randomly pick people and sometimes it works, but there is a chance that it is not working because you’re getting people that are totally different, have different mindsets and so they're clashing. Honestly, if you have . . . it’s just like in the wild, if we have three alphas they're going to fight to see who’s going to be more dominant than the other.

It’s the same thing if you put a bunch of people in a group. If you have three people with strong leadership qualities, they’re going to be stubborn and not
going to see eye-to-eye, even though to be a good leader you need to also have understandings and be able to compensate and be able to basically say, “Okay. How ‘bout this, I give you this, you let me get this,” but when it comes to group you’re not going to always have that, “Okay. She has a good quality being a leader. These three are good qualities because they have these special skills.”

Unless you’re really analyzing the people who you’re trying to put in a group, through like, “Okay. I know she has this weakness, but this is her strength. Let’s put these two together.” Plus, they’re like-minded, so they’re going to get work together.

Then, also dealing with groups, sometimes it’s not even trying to get like-minded people together. It could be a bunch of stubborn people and if you don’t put them with their friends, they’re not going to do anything, but if they’re with their friends then they might do something. I’ve seen it all the time where there’s a group of people, if you put them with any other people, they don’t do work, but if you put them with their friends they’re the main person to work because they know their friends not going to do it. It’s kind of sad because you’re saying, “Oh. Okay, because I know everybody over here is smart. Oh, I know they’re gonna do the work, I’m just gonna stay. I’m not gonna do anything,” but because I know that nobody’s in my group because I’m with my friends, and I know my friends, they’re not going to do anything. I need to step up to the plate and actually do the work.

Then you’re saying something about your work ethic, you're saying, “Okay. I’m not really gonna do anything until I technically really have to like I’m on nails
and pins. People are forcing me. I have to do this.” Whereas you should want to do this because one, you’re in a group of other people. You should actually be dividing the work up, having equal shares of the job, instead of trying to put all your responsibilities on everybody else.

Theme IV. (Dis)Playing: Digital Rebels

Mary reflected on her experiences with contesting school acceptable use policies in online learning environments:

Well, allow me to start off with, with the teenagers mindset, if they want to do something and they really, really want to do it, they’re going to do it. Either way it goes. Even though they know it’s wrong. Even though people are telling them they can’t do it, they shouldn’t do it. They’re going to wind up doing it anyway and they’re going to find any way to be able to do that. Dealing with school, you know if you’re on the school computer, if some websites you can’t get on, that’s not going to stop a teenager. If they say, okay, for instance, I know for a while when I was in middle school my school, you couldn’t get on Facebook. You couldn’t get on YouTube. YouTube, I could understand why you couldn’t get on YouTube, but then I couldn’t because it was bad because some teachers, the work required you to get on YouTube. You had to watch a video and the video was on YouTube, but it was blocked. Now how do you get around that? Teenagers I know, they used to find websites that allows you to type it in and it sends you straight to the link. It gets a way out of the block. I’m just being serious. They
find ways. It’s so many ways a teenager, especially with technology, can get around so many stuff.

There are multiple ways you can get around stuff like Khan Academy. I’m going to be serious, Khan Academy are my best friend for math. I was on that every day because it wasn’t that the teacher didn’t know how to teach, but he didn’t know how to teach it well enough that I could understand. That’s the main thing of being a teacher.

You have to teach it where, if not 100% understand, at least a few could understand it because in the end it’s like everybody have a different writing style. Yeah, they give us a test where it's like, I’m an auditory learner, I’m a tactile learner. I might be both. I might be neither, but that’s still just because you’re putting them to a category, there still a limit to that because I could be a auditory learner, but for this subject I might need to be tactile for it. I might need to be hands on for that subject because, hey, I’m listening, but the way you’re explaining it to me, I don’t get it.

That’s why going around like, teenagers finding different way to go around stuff like, okay, sometime that be frowned upon when you’re looking up stuff when you know it’s like, okay. I’m not saying doing it for a test, but if you have a substitute, and you're looking up the answers, if the teachers giving you something that you haven’t learned before and it's not in the textbook, like Robyn said, what are you supposed to do? You can’t sit there and get an F because then the teacher will probably throw in your face, “You have a cellphone, why didn’t you look it up?”
In the end, it’s always good, it has some downfalls, but teenagers that’s what we’re known for. We’re supposed to get over, get around certain things. Call us a rebel, call us what you want, but in the end getting over in certain instances, going over the limit or just going around certain obstacles actually helps us in the end.

I asked both participants to discuss how they responded to the lack of communication when working with groups for collaborative online assignments. Mary provided the following description:

I’ve known throughout my entire high school career, I’ve been placed in the same group and most of the time, like I said previously, I love, I love, I really mostly love and rather meet with my group in person because you, honestly, in my opinion get a lot more done because you’re on their back. You’re looking over their shoulders, like, “Hey. What are you doing? Get off the phone. We need to do this work.” You’re pestering them, and it’s sad that you would have to pester somebody because it’s their grade, too, but you have to do what you got to do in order to get that good grade. It’s multiple times where if you’re using social media, you’re using Google because Google they have a very nice app or feature, as you could say, Google Hangouts, where you put as many people in that group as you want. You can do a conference call. You can talk to them. Everybody can leave a comment and you’re reading through all these people comments.

We did a project in 9th grade and it was well over 15 people in one group chat. All of us had to produce a movie from a book. We had to make . . . . Me and
friend of mine, we were in charge of making the script. Even though all those people were in there, I mean, we got a lot done. We decided who was going to write the script, who was going to produce it, who was going to direct it, who was going to be the actor, who was going to do the music background and all of that good stuff.

There were just times where the communication was very, it was lacking because, true enough, they’re on their phone they’re using this app, but they’re doing something else on their phone. They’re not paying attention to the conversation, whereas if you were to have all these 15 people in a room on a one-to-one basis, talking to them, and all of us, yeah, you might have an argument here and there, but you’re getting work done. You’re communicating, whereas in the app, all you have to do in the app and that app is put it on block and you don’t have to look at anything else. Then as soon as you see something important and you’re like, “Oh my God. I forgot to turn the block off, but they have something in the group,” You’re like, “You’re behind. You’re like, “What happened? What is this? What are you all talking about?”

As the teacher in the current issues course for both students, I wanted more insight into their experiences with multimodal composition. Students engaged in reflective writing in their journals and online posts in Google Classroom. From immersion in the curriculum content, students worked collaboratively and drew on their personal experiences using multiple sources of media to produce Animoto videos about
critical aspect of the course. Mary shared with me in one exit ticket reflection regarding her work process in the following vignette (see Figure 14):

What problems did you encounter while you were working on this piece? How did you solve them? What resources did you use while working on this piece? Which ones were especially helpful? Which ones would you use again? Does this work tell a story?

Exit Ticket-Briefly respond to EACH question based on your work today.

Figure 14. Sample of multimodal design project in Google Classroom reflection questions

The first problem was that my partner was not here, so we could not do what was scheduled to be done today, so I was basically doing the project blindly. I decided to do the video but just leave the blanks between the spaces that they need to be placed. I also had to look up some information and helpful videos. and the downloading took a while however there was a lot accomplished today.

During a current issues classroom discussion post on social issues, Mary responded regarding the use of Twitter for engaging communities:
I feel that the tweets use social media in a good way, making people aware and “woke” to the cause; however, it is a barrier that stops the communication of the community and simply doesn’t have that needed face to face contact that is needed for movements such as this.

Theme V. Game Changers and Online Social Presence

I wanted to understand more about the development of interpersonal relationships and online social practices, specifically with social media usage. I asked each participant to bring a screenshot of something they wanted to discuss and to explain the significance of the image. For the screenshot depicted in Figure 15, Mary stated,

The screenshot I have is absolutely quite close to me. It’s a screenshot of a conversation me and my friends had during a group chat. There was a controversy. The controversy, which was well over a month before this conversation. Well, three of us were really the main focus of the controversy and it was about six other girls, who were upset with us. It was one very upsetting to us because of the fact that they waited so long to actually, they waited so long to actually say something if they felt upset. The controversy was over a friend, who I’m more closely to throughout than the rest of the girls, invited me and another girl from the group to go to the movies. Now, we didn’t know who all was going. It was just a spur of the moment. That day she called and said, “Hey, let’s go to the movies.” We just popped up and go. It wasn’t planned. Her guy friend came, two other guys, three other guys came in, her guy friends sister came.

Now everybody else in the group chat who didn’t come has some type of beef with
that girl. In order to keep the peace and not get us thrown out from any place we wanted to go, because I’m going to face the facts, some of my friends are kind of wild and they’re petty and they say and do things that they don't think about until the end, so in order to keep us from getting in trouble, we didn’t really say anything about it. It wasn’t like, “Okay. You can't come.” We, honestly, like I say, it was a spur of the moment. It wasn’t like we didn't intentionally not invite them because we didn't even know she was coming. She just popped up. That’s what happened with the three other boys. They saw on social media on Snapchat that we was going somewhere and they popped up at the place and they just started hanging out with us. It really wasn’t, “Hey. Let’s all get together and go somewhere.” They just popped up and we don’t have any. . . . We didn’t feel any type of way about that.
The subtheme in this personal account was fear and vulnerability online. I asked the participants to describe instances of vulnerability and issues regarding safety online. Mary indicated:

*With social media, it’s like honestly it’s really a risk. That’s why I don’t really deal with that. Yeah, I might have a Twitter and Instagram, but I don’t use them because… it’s sad because after a few weeks of okay maybe something good might come of this, but you see the bad and I’m not even going to tell you an untruth. There has been some instance where some things were sent to me where...*
I just shut it down because that’s not me. I don’t do that or I don’t want to see that, so I’m not going to use this app anymore because I don’t feel like I’m safe. That’s why if you’re using social media, you shouldn’t put your real information on there. It’s mad that you say that because you should be able to be truthful, but you never know what could happen. If you put your real information on there, just by your email you tell so much.

Somebody could hack into that email, get everything because if you have that one email and all your other accounts is hooked up that one email, they have access to every other account. All they have to do is go to that account. If they got access to your email and go to that account, say I forgot my password and they basically make everything theirs now. They can do anything with that information. That’s how so many people, they have identity crisis’s and people stealing their identity because these people even through credit cards or through your emails or social security numbers, they’re gaining all of that and they’re using it for their own pleasure. It’s sad because they say they have so much security. I’m not saying I love Snapchat or I use it a lot, but Snapchat is pretty fun because like I said if somebody’s screenshotting your stuff, they tell you. It sends you a nice long message saying, the name of the person screenshotted this message it lets you know that they screenshotted it, so obviously you shouldn’t be sending anything that’s inappropriate. People use social media to hide behind. It gives them a false face. Honestly, you can do anything and they think you think, you can do anything on social media without it coming back to you, but it always come backs
to you through your email, through your phone number. It’s still tied directly to you, but people use it and think that it doesn’t and that’s the problem.

After analyzing Mary’s data, I concluded that her sociocultural experiences were rooted in her connections to her community. She frequently drew upon her cultural background and cultural knowledge to describe her experiences in online learning environments. She often countered dominant views and images of Black girlhood. Mary’s narrative highlighted her location between these dominant views and her own self-definition (Collins, 2000).

Summary: Mary

Critical aspects of self-definition were evident in Mary’s:

- usage of multimodal tools to express her views on social issues;
- engagement in positive interactions with her peers face-to-face and online;
- distinct responses to common challenges in online learning environments; and
- usage of her learning styles as cultural capital to produce new sources of knowledge

Figure 16 represents the research findings for Mary. The graphic illustrates the interlocking systems of social group classifications, heterogeneous identities, and modes of oppression Mary confronted as a student at the Vivian Malone Jones Academy.
Figure 16. Identity matrix for Mary. Interlocking systems of social group classifications, heterogeneous identities, and modes of oppression. This figure illustrates the interrelationship between social group memberships and experiences of oppression within online learning environments. Adapted with permission from “Getting Started: Core Concepts for Social Justice Education,” by M. Adams and X. Zuniga in Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice by M. Adams, L. A. Bell, D. J. Goodman, & K. Y. Joshi, 2016, p. 112. Copyright 2016 by Taylor & Francis.

Mary’s lived experiences supported my assertion that multimodal composition in online learning environments were rooted in social and cultural experiences. She was explicit in her descriptions of her relationships with others in online learning environments. While she understood most concepts presented to her, she stated the group dynamics played a role in her engagement. She provided a detailed perspective of expectations associated with online learning and also countered those expectations with
ways students use the technology infrastructure to resist norms and rules associated with acceptable use of technology.

Closing Remarks

I asked the young women if they wanted to add closing remarks or final reflections. Mary stated:

*I would just like to say that in the world there’s so much going on that, honestly, you can barely even keep track of it. Like Robyn said earlier, technology is constantly advancing and there are constantly updates. You can’t because there’s always going to be something bigger and better out there and it’s not going to stop. It’s not a lot of people, but people working on it, like she said the companies are in competition and in a sense, it’s bad because honestly, it’s starting to break down the community. There’s not going to be a community anymore. The community is going to be virtual. It’s going to be like, there’s this guy—I forget his name—he did a poem, and it was basically like, a husband talking to his wife and he was talking in a robot voice. He was like, “I hope you get this kiss quick. I hope you get these roses quick,” and it was emails. You’re not really touching her. You’re not expressing your love to her, physically. You’re doing it through your phone, through a robot. I feel like that what’s where we all, technically, you’re going to be still with me, but you’re turning into a robot because you’re not talking. You’re not expressing. You’re not communicating and that’s going to be the downfall of us, honestly.*
Robin described how she perceived her responsibility to the community as follows:

*It was my pleasure. It was great seeing Miss Suzie, again. I’m glad I came back. I’m glad I have fun with this experiment and my concern is and comments are, let’s do more things that will satisfy other people. Do something good to make yourself feel good about yourself. Be as supportive as you can be. There’s a lot of organizations like My Big Brother, My Big Sister. Come down to that community and help that little boy out and show him the right road towards that goal that he wants to set or what he wants to become when he get older because once again, we learn from our teachers, but our teachers learn from us, too.*

**Summary**

The literature reports a strong relationship between the communicative and expressive practices of African American female students in multimodal learning spaces. This chapter presented several aspects of culturally constructed experiences of online learning for the two African American female student study participants. During my time analyzing the recorded dialogic conversations shared with me by these phenomenal young women of color, I felt privileged that they would invite me into their material and nonmaterial worlds. They provided intimate insight into their experiences while attending the Vivian Malone Jones Academy. I was amazed at the complexities of their personal, social, and academic lives. As an educator at the school site, I am deliberate in my efforts to make learning engaging, relevant, and meaningful. However, after spending time with the participants, I realized that students perceive themselves as
producers of knowledge, and teachers must use a relational approach to draw on upon that knowledge.

The narratives of the lived realities shared by these recent graduates illustrated interlocking themes and perspectives of self-definition through their discussions with me, with applicable shared values and personal responsibility. These themes served as a bridge during shared experiences of school and community, identity, agency, and online social and academic presence.

When gathered together, these personal accounts unveiled a sacred repository of enriching experiences. With regard to the primary question, “Do the culturally constructed experiences of African American female students in online learning environments shape their socio-cultural identities?, the data revealed that cooperative learning structures centered on collaboration had an important effect on individual learning outcomes. Undergirded by the four epistemological tenets of Black feminist thought, the study findings indicated that online learning environments are not culturally neutral for African American female students. Moreover, centering the lived realities of African American girls, the most obvious finding to emerge from the analysis is that mutual understanding and cooperation were critical features of multimodal interactions with classmates. These online spaces as communities of practice were sites of embodiment, power, and resistance, resulting in meaning making of one’s dual material and virtual experiences.

In regards to the second research question of “Do the embodied experiences of African American female students’ multiliterate spaces shape their academic identities?”,
the research participants expressed positive aspects of self-definition through their narrative experiences. Their storied lives were counter to the deficit-based perceptions commonly identified in dominant discourses about young women of color. In Figure 17, I used a model to illustrate the sociocultural factors informing both participants technology-mediated practices in online learning environments. It was clear from the narrative accounts that cooperative learning was a critical feature of online learning environments.

![Image](image_url)  

**Figure 17.** Culturally responsive instructional practice cooperative learning

Using the example of digital games, both participants indicated a preference for game-based and interactive, face-to-face learning. The students were aware of their dual identities in both the physical and virtual worlds. I reflected often on my position and role as a collaborator in the development of online learning activities. The online collaborative workspaces were also met with resistance due to culturally incongruent learning expectations. Research indicates the importance of culturally based learning
styles in engaging children of color (Banks, 1993a; Hilliard, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2000a). Collaborative action is a key cultural feature of African American engagement. The students used multiple modes of expression, including oral language, personal narrative, and vernacular. Teacher cultural competence is also crucial in online learning environments. The students were well aware of the privileges and constraints, including vulnerabilities within online structures. The results of this study show that, during online learning activities, teachers might consider using culturally responsive teaching strategies to group students, establish clear rules and expectations, use rubrics to assess learning, and consistently monitor and engage with learners. Chapter 5 provides a further discussion of the findings and the significance of the research. Also included are recommendations for future research and curricular implications based on my analysis.

SONKU

to worship
until i
become stone
to love
until i
become bone.
what is done is done
what is not done is not done
let it go like the wind.
let us be one with
the earth expelling anger
spirit unbroken.
you are rock garden
austere in your loving
in exile from touch.
mixed with day and sun
i crouched in the earth carry
you like a dark river.

-Sonia Sanchez, 1998
CHAPTER 5

LET THE CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN:

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“and when we speak we are afraid
our words will not be heard
nor welcomed
but when we are silent
we are still afraid
So it is better to speak
remembering
we were never meant to survive”

-Audre Lorde, 1978

In this critical feminist ethnographic study, I explored the culturally constructed experiences of African American female students in online learning environments. The unbroken circle is an appropriate metaphorical backdrop for this chapter. Through the lens of Collins’ (2000) Black feminist thought (BFT), I sought to gain an understanding about the lived experiences of African American girls in online multiliterate spaces. Through a close examination of the data, I discovered that the themes emerged in this study were interlocked to establish significant tools for policy makers, educators, school partners, and members of the academic community. The following research questions guided this inquiry:

1. Do the culturally constructed experiences of African American female students in online learning environments shape their socio-cultural identities?
2. Do the embodied experiences of African American female students’ multiliterate spaces shape their academic identities?”

This chapter begins with a discussion and summary of the research findings as follows:

- An ethic of caring in the school has a significant role in providing a protected dialogic space to explore critical aspects of self-definition. The communities of practice provided safe havens for students and aligned support from community members, external partners, community organizations, and peer groups.
- Students’ multiple realities were embodied in dual worlds, physical and virtual. This dualism resulted in cultural knowledge production, solidarity, and resistance to culturally incongruent learning expectations.
- Students’ multimodal representation in online learning environments provided a counternarrative to dominant representations focused on deficit perceptions and false assumptions.
- Students’ perceptions of interlocking oppressions influenced them in their virtual and physical worlds.

Following the summary are conclusions and recommendations needed to support divergent learners in online learning environments. The chapter concludes with the limitations to this study, suggestions for future research, and final thoughts.

Summary of the Study

I began this journey by developing a framework grounded in history to gain a greater understanding of the lived realities of African American female students in online learning environments. Through dialogic conversations with the former students, I
discovered their stories were both individualistic and interlocked with similar rhythmic patterns relating to their physical and virtual experiences within online learning environments. The collection of data in the form of Google Classroom assignment postings, classwork, archived data from online educational games, social media screenshots, field notes and memos, video and audio recordings, electronic communication, unit and lesson plans, archival data, face-to-face discussions, classroom observations, and interview transcriptions uncovered critical elements in the student’s online academic experiences. I sought to understand the interpretations of the participants’ social group identities and embodied experiences as identified in the study.

An individual’s sociocultural identity is connected to cultural and historical contexts, socialization, and interrelationships of experiences (Vygotsky, 1933/1978). The participants engaged in dialogic exchanges to share stories of their lived realities. They engaged in critical aspects of self-definition regarding their perceptions of their positions that provided them with a critical stance of empowerment. The young women demonstrated how their notions of self-definition stemmed from their experiences within the school community. Because they saw themselves in solidarity with other African American female students, they discussed issues involving sexism, ableism, and classism. Collins (2000) noted that an ethics of caring consists of three core elements: an emphasis on individual uniqueness, appropriate use of emotions in dialogues, and developing a capacity for empathy. These tenets were gathered together collectively with dialogic conversations to understand the unique stance of the participants. Both young women shared expressions about their individual experiences and relationships in school.
Despite challenges, the interplay between family, peers, teachers, and the community provided safe havens that would provide their experiences with marginalization.

From the narrative stories of the participants’ online learning experiences, I found that students’ academic lives were represented in dual worlds, physical and virtual. DuBois (1903/1965) described this dualism as double consciousness. They saw themselves as members of a community of practice with other young women of color.

The research findings also suggest that the participants also recognized their own individual learning needs within the context of synchronous online learning spaces and their daily offline lives. Many of the responses referenced experiences with exclusion and inclusion. Robin expressed that African American girls do not fit dominant, monolithic profiles. Scott (2003) noted that the interactions of young women of color are complex. She further asserted that intersectionality examines group experiences across social contexts. Both participants used their voices to define their individual lived experiences as social actors (Scott, 2003). The practice of interdependence is, according to Collins (2000), an extension of African derived belief in connectedness. I found each participant made herself visible in the online learning space as a member of a collective group. Both participants also preferred face-to-face interaction to complete online assignments in groups or to receive support from the teacher.

For this study, I examined how curriculum framed the culturally constructed experiences of African American girls in online learning environments. The initial findings indicated that writing was an important tool used to shape their identities. I analyzed poems, student journals, and student online responses to critical questions about
lesson content. Students were able to reflect on their personal experiences and their interplay with structures of power. Their multimodal representations and participation in these environments provided a countercultural network of resistance, storytelling, and knowledge production.

In addition, I discovered that students used cooperative learning to engage in linguistic and visual design. The tenets of culturally responsive instruction support cooperative learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The participants used traits of collectivism, including working together to complete assigned tasks. However, Mary expressed that while the teachers expected students to work in groups in online learning environments, the teachers did not take grouping students by interest and ability into consideration. Freire (1970) urged educators to communicate with students to create meaningful learning partnerships to broaden the possibilities for knowledge construction.

Discussion

This chapter presents the research findings. Five distinct themes emerged: (a) engaging by design (critical aspects of self-definition); (b) interplay between school and community support (an ethic of care); (c) interacting digitally (embodiment in online learning environments); (e) (dis)playing (digital rebels); and game changers: social media and online social presence (fear and vulnerability).

Theme I. Engaging by Design: Critical Aspects of Self-Definition

The participants in this study recalled the ethic of caring in the school as a critical part of their self-definition. The school provided a protected dialogic and social space to engage that bestowed a safe haven from which the young women could construct their
agentive selves. This ethic of caring played a major role in the provision of a protected space to explore the critical aspects of self-definition. The school setting is not only a social, academic, and cultural environment; it also serves as a support structure. Students understand that they can seek support from teacher, external support staff, community members, and their peers. As Mary put it,

*You’re an individual. You’re unique. You have certain abilities that some other people don’t have. Like she said, it’s becoming a role model. I live in a community where, gosh, I could tell you so many people that I look up to, but not every girl has that. It’s kind of sad. Me, I’m trying so hard. I go to PAL, and that’s the Police Athletic League. That’s where, honestly, I started from since I was in elementary school. I’ve tried so hard to give back, to try to be a role model for little girls that are coming to my school. I’m giving them advice, I’m like, “Hey, for this teacher’s class, if you’re coming to this school and she’s still here, make sure you study hard.”*

Through their lived experiences, students had positive perceptions of themselves and their experiences in an all girls’ social and academic environment. The girls saw themselves as important actors in their families and communities. They also expressed multiple dimensions of their lived experiences, including religion and spirituality, which served as essential factors in countering dominant, controlling images and sustaining a sisterhood.
Theme II. Interplay between School and Community Support

The alignment of support structures within the school and communities of practice provides a safe haven for students. Collins (2000) described a similar context as it relates to group survival: “Recognizing that the path to individual and collective empowerment lies in the power of a free mind, these spheres of influence often rely on crafting independent and oppositional identities for African-American women” (p. 204). Like Mary, Robin advocated for engagement in community-based support similar to what she experienced and witnessed as a student in the all-female learning environment. Both women, internally and externally, actively engaged within their respective communities. Collins (2000) noted this duality as an “interdependent dimension of Black women’s activism” (p. 206). The young women of color willingly viewed themselves as advocates. They perceived these positive relationships were driven by their personal perceptions of their central role in the community. They illustrated that social networks within the school organization were instrumental in their capacity to create and experience success (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). Both participants lived with both parents and reported that their parents’ expectations of their achievement in school were a critical aspect of their interplay between the school and community. They received encouragement to succeed in school, regardless of the obstacles and experiences with inclusion and exclusion. Students viewed themselves as achievers, despite their interlocking oppressions within the school organizational structure.
Theme III. Interacting Digitally: Embodiment in Online Learning Environments

The culturally responsive and culturally constructed experiences the girls engaged in within the study were collaboration and cooperative learning. For this study, I analyzed multiliterate artifacts in the form of journal entries, Google Classroom responses to discussion questions, and student analyses of primary source documents from online and textual sources. I also analyzed student work and storytelling in the multimodal sources in the form of Animoto videos, pictures, and performances. Student participation and responses to instructional games (Quizizz and Quizlet) and social media (Snapchat and Instagram) were also analyzed. Both participants indicated a preference for face-to-face interaction regarding online assignments because they perceived it as more authentic. According to Panconesi and Guida (2017), this social presence is critical in understanding social interactions and embodiment in virtual learning environments. Students continuously shifted between identities in both mediated and physical environments.

Theme IV. (Dis)Playing: Digital Rebels

Participant interviews indicated that students frequently contested school acceptable use policies. Students used their personal mobile devices and computers to bypass firewalls and blocked websites to complete assignments. The participants responded to the inequalities by resisting dominant, hegemonic structures by indicating that they could surpass blockages. They discussed their resistance to using technology by the standards of their teachers. Both participants expressed awareness that they were privileged in these spaces due to their external knowledge about how to utilize
technology in ways that administrators and teachers were not able to capture or understand. Mary stated,

Although, someone like a teenager will get around doing some things, they could also use getting around hurdles in a positive way instead of negatively. I know sometimes you might have that one teacher, where, I mean we’ve all had, I’m pretty sure we’ve all had that teacher where, okay, he’s teaching you one plus one equals two, and then on the test you have, “What is the square root of 25 divided by the [inaudible 00:24:47] of 10 and something,” and you’re looking at it like, “What is this?” He goes back or she goes back and say, “I’ve taught this,” but you didn’t teach it. Sometimes you might have to go and say, “Okay. Let me see if I can go find this on the Internet because, obviously, you say you’re not teachin’ it, and then if you give me attitude about you already taught it, I’m not gonna wanna come to you because you’re already upset.” If I feel like, okay, every time I ask him or her a question, she gets an attitude, I’m not going to go to that person. Where’s my next result? If I can’t find another teacher that I’m either comfortable with or I know that can teach me this, I’m going to go to the Internet because the Internet has the answer.

Sawyer (2017) argued that counter publics or social networks opposing hegemonic ideology present counternarratives that challenge the interpersonal domain of power (Collins, 2000). The participants noted their efforts to accommodate the requests of their instructors were often met with tension due to the lack of power sharing and culturally incongruent expectations in online learning environments. According to McLoughlin
(1999), instructional design is inherently linked to the development of cultural identity. The students resisted academic burdens, blockages, exclusion, and lack of support with challenging assignments by taking agentive stances. The patriarchal structure of school curriculum influences frequently maligns young women of color (Sawyer, 2017). The countercultural structures that exist among students online challenge the dominant power structures.

Theme V. Game Changers and Online Social Presence

During the second interview, when I asked participants to identify barriers or obstacles that restricted their creativity in on-line learning environments, their responses were related to (a) privacy concerns, (b) personal safety, and (c) sexualization and objectification. According to Collins (2000), “Social spaces provide an opportunity for Black women to think freely” (p. 100). Both participants presented images to express their viewpoints about representations online. They vehemently spoke against controlling images, stereotypes, and misrepresentations in social media (Collins, 2000). Collins (2000) noted these negative historical images as dominant perceptions. They include the Jezebel (hypersexual object of pleasure), the Sapphire (aggressive and prone to violence) and the Mammy (unattractive and undesirable). For example, Robin recounted that objectification of women was very common online. This suggests that girls are affected by sexual objectification and need safe spaces to take agentive stances to redefine themselves and express their unique voices. This connects to Scott (2002) and Collins’s (2000) claim that African American women and girls are constantly negotiating their identities across a paradigm of intersecting oppressions.
Conclusions

While there are few studies on the culturally constructed experiences of African American female students in online learning environments, findings in this study were similar to other studies focused on asset-based approaches centered on African American female students (i.e., Black girls) in multiliterate learning environments (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Haddix, McArthur, Muhammad, Price-Dennis & Sealy-Ruiz, 2016; Miller, 2017; Price-Dennis, 2016). This study used a critical feminist ethnographic framework to help create a dialogic platform through which to interrogate the problem and participate in the work. Drawing on students’ lived experiences as cultural capital, I sought to create a safe space to investigate the marginalization, oppression, privilege, and agency to address these girls’ experiences in online learning environments. The findings reveal that dialogic conversations centered on lived realities provide meaningful and transformative connections to curriculum and instruction. This study corroborated the research of Solorzano and Yosso (2002), who suggested that counter stories can affect a transformation pedagogy that disrupts dominant discourses focused on diminishing the experiences of African American girls, particularly in urban school settings. I believe the first step to addressing the needs of divergent learners involves acknowledging the contributions that they can make to teaching and learning by drawing on their cultural capital.

The study findings supported the work of Patterson, Kinloch, Burkhard, Randall, and Howard (2016), as the participants engaged in self-definition as a form of resistance. Their individual narratives displace dominant perceptions about Black women. Patterson
et al. (2016) referred to this embodied positioning as a standpoint epistemology. The data analyzed in this study relocate the unique culturally constructed experiences of African American female students from margin to center by highlighting the complexity of Black girls’ online learning experiences: exclusion and inclusion, social, cultural, playful, embodied, performative, cooperative, and collaborative (Hill & Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Implications and Recommendations

The research questions for this study were: 1) Do the interactional cultural patterns of African American female students in multimodal spaces shape their socio-cultural identities in on-line learning environments?, and 2) Do the embodied experiences of African American female students’ multiliterate spaces shape their academic identities in on-line learning environments?. The results of this study indicate that although African American girls experience interlocking oppressions related to gender, class, disability, and class disparities, they employ self-definition and agency as mechanisms to resist oppression in physical and online spaces. Participants recognized structural barriers and confronted them by sharing their lived realities with the understanding that their identity, social and cultural presence in multiliterate and multimodal spaces, is interlocked with their embodied academic, private, and personal experiences. This research, foregrounded in Black feminist thought, Critical Theory, and New Literacy Studies, examined the complex social and cultural experiences of African American female students in online learning environments. The study also examined the unique role of African American females as knowledge producers.
These findings suggest several courses of action for the field of curriculum and instruction:

(a) Further research should focus on the academic outcomes and culturally responsive teaching strategies in online learning environments.

(b) Conduct a study of a broad range of divergent learners nationally to determine the differences and similarities in the lived experiences of African American female students.

(c) Further should be undertaken to explore the embodied and performative experiences of African American female students culturally constructed experiences in augmented learning environments.

(d) Conduct a study to understand how the digital divide further marginalizes young women of color.

(e) Additional research could also be conducted to determine the effectiveness of Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics (STEAM) performance arts and afterschool programs to further examine the culturally constructed experiences of African American girls.

Limitations/Delimitations of the Study

A limitation of this study was the implementation of a sample of convenience. It was projected that high school respondents would participate in this study over a period of eight months. However, a similar study should be conducted in the single-gender middle school within the same school and district. The study also focused primarily on African-American girls within a single-gender school environment. It is also important
to examine the lived experiences of all groups identified as divergent learners, including Black males.

Another limitation was the lack of transferability. The qualitative methods could potentially explore more in-depth issues that teachers and students experience within a gender-specific environment. Additional studies in a larger, more diverse setting could provide more information about the online learning experiences of African American girls in online learning environments (Shenton, 2004). The research study involved a small sample size that included two African American females in a single-gender school. Seven respondents volunteered to participate in the study, and five potential participants were unable to participate due to barriers and limited free time (Sprague, 2016), which include: seeking employment, inability to modify work schedules, personal responsibilities, and lack of transportation. As an ethnographic study, interviewing a larger group for a longer timeframe is an ideal approach. I understand that, for many, the small sample size might be viewed as a limitation. However, this research study yielded *information power* through in-depth interviews, recorded dialogic conversations, and detailed analysis (Malterud, Siersma & Guassora, 2015). In spite of its limitations, this study served as a benefit in allowing me to gain valuable insights into the dual physical and virtual worlds of these two young women of color.

Final Thoughts

This study utilized the metaphorical framework of hand-clapping games. At the beginning, I reflected on the historiography of African American girls’ experiences with institutional and academic marginalization. I also examined how play was used
historically as a strategy to resist and subvert institutional oppression. Thereafter, I explored the historical connections to sisterhood and solidarity using various aspects of the hand-clapping game group configuration. This historical performative context of hand-clapping games was juxtaposed with the contemporary culturally constructed experiences of African American female students in online learning environments.

Through the interlocking of themes, I was able to build a bridge of embodied engagement to connect with these dynamic young women of color. This study provides research to support the complex agency and identity of African American female students. Curriculum and instructional goals must be developed to appropriately address their needs with their lived experiences, counter stories, cultural capital, and potential as knowledge producers. Attention paid to the culturally constructed experiences of African American female students in online learning environments has the potential to inspire educational leaders, communities, and external stakeholders to advocate for the increase of inclusive practices among divergent learners. It is my hope that these authentic accounts serve as a clarion call to education leaders and researchers to center the experiences of young women of color in virtual learning environments.
REFERENCES


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APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL
Wednesday, June 21, 2017

Ms. Cleopatra Warren
Mercer University
TFT College of Education - Atlanta
3001 Mercer University Dr
Atlanta, GA 30341

RE: Games Girls Play: A Critical Feminist Ethnographic Exploration of Interactive Learning Environments Supporting (En) Gendered and (A) Gentive Selves (M1706178)

Dear Ms. Warren:

On behalf of Mercer University’s Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research, your application submitted on 19-Jun-2017 for the above referenced protocol was reviewed in accordance with Federal Regulations 21 CFR 56.110(b) and 45 CFR 46.110(b) (for expedited review) and was approved under category(ies) 5, 6, 7 per 63 FR 60164.

Your application was approved for one year of study on 21-Jun-2017. The protocol expires on 20-Jun-2018. If the study continues beyond one year, it must be re-evaluated by the IRB Committee.

Item(s) Approved:
Initial Application designed to examine the distinct, culturally constructed school experiences and critical postures of African American girls' critical engagement with technology in multimodal learning environments (Foley, Lervon & Hurtig, 2001; Lusher, 2011). Uses video or audio recordings.

NOTE: Please report to the committee when the protocol is initiated. Report to the Committee immediately any changes in the protocol or consent form and ALL accidents, injuries, and serious or unexpected adverse events that occur to your subjects as a result of this study.

We at the IRB and the Office of Research Compliance are dedicated to providing the best service to our research community. As one of our investigators, we value your feedback and ask that you please take a moment to complete our Satisfaction Survey and help us to improve the quality of our service.

It has been a pleasure working with you and we wish you much success with your project! If you need any further assistance, please feel free to contact our office.

Respectfully,

[Signature]

Ava Chambless-Richardson, Ph.D., CIP, CIM.
Associate Director of Human Research Protection Programs (HRPP)
Member
Institutional Review Board
APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT
Consent to Participate in Research

Title of Study: GAMES GIRLS PLAY: A CRITICAL FEMINIST ETHNOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION OF INTERACTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS SUPPORTING (En) GENDERED AND (A) GENTIVE SELVES

Introduction and Purpose
Dear Participant, my name is Cleopatra Warren. I am a doctoral student in the Curriculum and Instruction program at Mercer University’s Tift School of Education. I would like to invite you to take part in my dissertation research study, which concerns using the culturally constructed school experiences and critical postures of African American girls’ critical engagement with technology in on-line learning environments.

Procedures
If you agree to participate in my research, I will conduct interviews with you during two focus group sessions in July 2017. The interview will involve questions about your background, educational experiences and use of computer-mediated technology for online-learning. It should last about 60 minutes. With your permission, I will audiotape and take notes during the interview. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide, and will be used for transcription purposes only. If you choose not to be audiotaped, I will take notes instead. If you agree to being audiotaped but feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview, I can turn off the recorder at your request. If you don’t wish to continue, you can stop the interview at any time.

I expect to conduct two interviews; however, follow-ups may be needed for added clarification. If so, I will contact you by mail/phone to request this.

Benefits
There is no direct benefit to you from taking part in this study. Drawing on engendered voices to make meaning of lived experiences, this research study will serve as a base for future studies centered on the interactional cultural patterns of African American female students in multimodal learning spaces. It is hoped that the research will contribute to the study of academic achievement outcomes for girls of color in on-line learning environments.

Risks
There are no potential risks associated with this study.

Mercer University IRB
Approval Date: 06/21/2017
Protocol Expiration Date: 06/20/2018
Confidentiality
Your study data will be handled as confidentially as possible. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used.

When the research is completed, I may save the tapes and notes for use in future research done by myself or others. I will retain these records for up to 12 months/5 years after the study is over. The same measures described above will be taken to protect confidentiality of this study data.

Compensation
Thank you for participating in this study. However, no compensation will be offered upon completion of the research.

Rights
Participation in research is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to take part in the project. You can decline to answer any questions and are free to stop taking part in the project at any time. Whether or not you choose to participate in the research and whether or not you choose to answer a question or continue participating in the project, there will be no penalty to you or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Questions
If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me. I can be reached at (470) 494-9519.

If you believe there is any infringement upon your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Chair at (478) 361-2327 or Dr. Wynetta A. Scott-Simmons, Dissertation Chairperson at (678) 547-6982.

You have been given the opportunity to ask questions and these have been answered to your satisfaction. Your signature below indicates your voluntary agreement to participate in this research study.

*************************************************************************
CONSENT
You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your own records.

If you wish to participate in this study, please sign and date below.

Participant's Name (please print) ____________________________

Participant's Signature ____________________________ Date ________

Mercer University IRB
Approval Date: 06/21/2017
Protocol Expiration Date: 06/20/2018
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Interview Questions

Please explain your experiences as a student in a single-gender school in this district.

Do you perceive your experiences in this learning environment different from those experienced by students in other schools?

How do you define black girlhood? What experiences contributed to that definition?

What representations about black girlhood have you received from your community?

Describe your academic experiences in online learning environments.

What are your experiences with creating images, word, sound and movement in online learning environments?

How do you decide which computer mediated resources to use and which to avoid?

When you plan to present yourself to others, what characteristics/traits do you consider when you engage in online learning experiences.

Do you engage in online learning activities with your classmates?

Do you have experiences with modeling and discussing your products with other students?

What are barriers or obstacles that restrict your creativity in online learning environments?
Dear Recent Graduate,

I would like to invite you to take part in a focus group (small discussion group) on Tuesday, July 18, 2017 and Wednesday, July 19, 2017 at 11 a.m. at the Vivian Malone Jones Academy. The focus group should last no longer than one hour.

The focus group will provide an opportunity for you to find out about the African American females learning and engagement in on-line learning environments. More background information will be sent to those confirming attendance before the focus group. Your views will be used to help advance the field of education concerning African American women in single-gender schools.

If you would like to take part in the focus group please let me know by contacting Ms. Cleopatra Warren at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or xxx@gmail.com.

Sincerely,
Cleopatra Warren
APPENDIX E

FOCUS GROUP CONFIRMATION LETTER
July 17, 2017

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my focus group. As discussed on the phone, I would like to hear your ideas and opinions about the culturally constructed experiences of African American female students in online learning environments. You will be in a group with 6 to 9 other recent high school graduates. Your responses to the questions will be kept anonymous. Interviews will take place on

July 18, 2017 and July 19, 2017
11:00 a.m.

Please look for signs once you arrive directing you to the room where the focus group will be held. If you need directions to the focus group or will not be able to attend for any reason please contact Ms. Cleopatra Warren directly. Otherwise we look forward to seeing you.

Sincerely,
Ms. Cleopatra Warren
APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS VERIFICATION LETTER
Dear Participant,

I hope this message finds you well. Thank you again for taking time to interview for my dissertation project, Games Girls Play: A Critical Feminist Ethnographic Exploration of Interactive Learning Environments Supporting (En) Gendered and (A) Gentive Selves. This study was approved by Mercer University's Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research in accordance with Federal Regulations on June 21, 2017. Furthermore, the study is designed to examine the distinct, culturally constructed school experiences and critical postures of African American females' critical engagement with technology in multimodal learning environments.

A transcription service was used for the two focus group interviews conducted. I am providing you with exact copies of your feedback in the event you need to restate or make corrections to your responses. Please find the full transcripts for both interviews attached and make corrections within the document, if necessary. Also, send the updated version with corrections attached or indicate to me in writing using this email address that no corrections were made at your earliest convenience and by July 29, 2017.

Your contribution to this process is worthy, valued and respected.

Again, I enjoyed speaking with you and look forward to hearing from you soon. Should you have questions or concerns, please contact me directly.

Sincerely,

Cleopatra Warren
APPENDIX G

PERMISSION TO USE STUDENT WORK
Dear Participants,

Please review the attached requests to use your student work as an artifact for the dissertation study. Your work will be confidential and used to support your interview data. If you wish to have your work used to support the study, complete the electronic signature and return it via this email address.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,
Ms. Cleopatra Warren

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name:</th>
<th>Course/Program Title:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title/Description of Work:</td>
<td>On-line assignments, Google Classroom discussion threads, and classroom journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period of Consent:</td>
<td>from <em><strong>/</strong>/</em>__ to <em><strong>/</strong>/</em>__ OR Perpetual consent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Grant of Permission. I hereby authorize the individual(s), listed below to use my work as described below.

(Please list the individuals, departments, etc. in this space.)

Ms. Cleopatra Warren will use student work artifacts for the dissertation study Games Girls Play: A Critical Feminist Ethnographic Exploration of Interactive Learning Environments Supporting (En) Gendered and (A) Gentive Selves. The study is designed to examine the distinct, culturally constructed school experiences and critical postures of African American females' critical engagement with technology in multimodal learning environments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of Student:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Address or other contact information:
APPENDIX H

PERMISSIONS TO REPRINT
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Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice

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ISBN: 978-138233345
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Publisher: Routledge

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Order License Id: 4247220427478

Requestor type: Academic institution
Format: Electronic
Portion: chart/graph/table/figure
Number of charts/graphics/tables/figures: 1

The requesting person/organization: Cleopatra Warren/Mercer University
Title or numeric reference of the portion(s): Source: Harro, B. (2013a). Figure 4.2 Cycle of Socialization
Title of the article or chapter the portion is from: The role of socialization and hegemony in maintaining systems of oppression.

Order Details

Teaching for diversity and social justice: a sourcebook

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Author/Editor: ADAMS, MAURIANNE

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$ 0.00
APPENDIX I

LITERATURE REVIEW CHARTS FOR CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING (CRTL)
Table I

**CRTL in Mathematics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Participants and Methods</th>
<th>CR Teaching Strategies</th>
<th>General Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Averill, Anderson, Easton,</td>
<td>University researchers and pre-service teachers collaborated to better understand how traditional Maori cultural practices can be transferred from teacher education into classroom mathematical practice.</td>
<td>Qualitative methodology (used questionnaires, focus group discussions, course evaluations, written explanations and semi structured interviews)</td>
<td>Included bicultural perspectives, used culturally derived indigenous written materials and language (crafts, discussion, games legends, calendars, songs, cultural traditions, artifacts and prayers).</td>
<td>Pre-service teachers reported successful implementation of the model to support student achievement and engagement in mathematics through traditional Maori culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the___14 Maro, Smith &amp; Hinds</td>
<td>Grounded theory case study of one culturally responsive mathematics teacher to better understand how the foundational cornerstones of CRMT informs instructional practices.</td>
<td>Grounded theory methodology (used individual, semi-structured interviews, observations and artifacts).</td>
<td>Teacher employed four foundational cornerstones of CRMT (knowledge, communication, relationships/trust and constant reflection). Teacher frequently used examples of her subjective experiences to connect with learners through storytelling. Teacher taught community math courses for parents, used music and dance to represent culturally connected ways of knowing.</td>
<td>Results indicated that connecting with students and communities through fundamental CR beliefs and practices provide a shift from dominant ways of thinking and engaging with curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2009)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonner &amp; Adams (2012)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jett (2013)</td>
<td>Used culturally congruent CRTL practices to make mathematics teaching and learning more culturally relevant</td>
<td>Researcher shared experience working with pre-service teachers of African-American students.</td>
<td>Researcher developed authentic practices to gather information about student’s cultural heritage, interests and strengths. Critical dialogue was used to support students with engaging in divergent mathematical perspectives.</td>
<td>Findings suggest that additional research is necessary to examine the CRTL practices of post-secondary mathematics professors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 12

**CRTL in Social Studies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Participants and Methods</th>
<th>CR Teaching Strategies</th>
<th>General Conclusions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cho &amp; Reich (2008)</td>
<td>Researcher launched study to examine teacher competence with ELL instruction.</td>
<td>Qualitative case study of thirty-three high school social studies teachers in six ESL focused schools in central Virginia. Data was collected from surveys</td>
<td>Modifications and accommodations were implemented to provide extra time for ELL learners, adjusting speech rate. Results revealed that teachers did not provide differentiated learning opportunities for students.</td>
<td>Study found that a need to increase comprehension of text and speech using bilingual support resources, teachers need additional training in cultural awareness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choi (2013)</td>
<td>Researcher sought to understand how highly effective teachers used CR curriculum to provide meaningful CR instruction to English Language Learners.</td>
<td>Qualitative case study conducted in an urban Northeast, alternative public high school. Data collection included observations, interviews, artifacts and field notes. Data was analyzed using Marshal and Rossman (2006) coding process. Constant comparative methods were used to identify patterns in the data.</td>
<td>Used Freirean strategies to engage students Collaborative group work, reading groups, small group discussions, critical literacy, interdisciplinary pedagogies, differentiated instruction, peer feedback, technology based teaching and cross cultural competency.</td>
<td>Teachers efforts to engage in learning about divergent cultures resulted in meaningful cultural connections with students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epstein, Mayorga, &amp; Nelson (2011)</td>
<td>Researchers used random selection to understand how non-majority students respond to CR teaching practices in a U.S. History class.</td>
<td>Qualitative study of one teacher and 21 African-American and Latino students in an urban, ethnically diverse high school in New York City. Used random selection to interview eight students. Data was coded using a constant comparative method</td>
<td>Teachers employed CR thematic units of study, pre-and post-instructional perspectives, classroom discussion,</td>
<td>Students perspectives shifted to address multiple perspectives after reading textual evidence to support their positions regarding the history of racism in the United States.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table I2 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Participants and Methods</th>
<th>CR Teaching Strategies</th>
<th>General Conclusions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Espoito &amp; Swain (2009)</td>
<td>Latina and African American female researchers using a CRP framework to develop a critical awareness of the challenges associated with implementing culturally constructed instruction.</td>
<td>Qualitative study involving 7 African American urban school teachers using interviews and focus group sessions. Data was audio-recorded and transcribed.</td>
<td>Integrated critical literacy and critical thinking skills, photo analysis, combatting negative messages by promoting cultural pride and awareness.</td>
<td>Teachers used CRP despite institutional constraints found in scripted curriculum and instructional time to engage learners in deeper understandings of social injustice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table I3

**CRTL in Science**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Participants and Methods</th>
<th>CR Teaching Strategies</th>
<th>General Conclusions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dimick (2012)</td>
<td>Study to explore how student empowerment is reflected in the CRTL practices of environmental science classrooms.</td>
<td>Qualitative study of 24 students, 9 student participants and one teacher in an urban charter high school in the East Coast of the United States (pre-and post-interviews, ongoing discussions, focus groups and observations).</td>
<td>Employed project based activities, field trips, hip-hop songs, group work</td>
<td>Study found that students were actively engaged in inquiry based and project based activities. Group dialogue empowered students (social, political and academic) to deeper understandings of course content through critical thinking and analysis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table I3 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Participants and Methods</th>
<th>CR Teaching Strategies</th>
<th>General Conclusions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goldston &amp; Nichols</td>
<td>Study in Black middles school involving teachers use of photonarrative to</td>
<td>Qualitative study of 4 Black teachers and 2 White science teachers in a Southern</td>
<td>Used photos and narratives (photographic slideshows) to build cultural competence</td>
<td>Teachers could provide memories of community (social, economic, religious, historical or political) and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2009)</td>
<td>conceptualize science pedagogy.</td>
<td>desegregated school. Data collection included transcripts of study group meetings and</td>
<td>with students to recognize their agency. Also, used instructional scaffolding through</td>
<td>cultural referents through photo narrative to resist deficit thinking and assumptions about the school-</td>
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<td>slide show presentations, field notes, interviews, reflective sessions and storied</td>
<td>oral speech performance to make CRTL connections.</td>
<td>community landscape.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>memos. Data was analyzed using qualitative narrative inquiry.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson (2010)</td>
<td>Sought to examine teacher engagement in a CR transformative professional</td>
<td>Qualitative case study using interviews, focus groups and observations of two middle</td>
<td>Strategies included inquiry, positive expectations, cooperative learning, assessing</td>
<td>Participating teachers implemented the principles of CRP with fidelity and demonstrated effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>development model designed to provide effective instructional practices for</td>
<td>school teachers over a period of three years.</td>
<td>needs of diverse learners, culturally relevant strategies, Funds of Knowledge Approach,</td>
<td>practices by collaborating to create a community of learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic students.</td>
<td></td>
<td>lesson plan development, scaffolding instruction, teacher empowerment, classroom</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milner (2010)</td>
<td>Study explored White science</td>
<td>Qualitative study of one male science</td>
<td>management, cultural traditions, alternative assessments, writing journaling and</td>
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<td>modification of the curriculum.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
teachers developed cultural competence in an urban middle school. teacher, using interviews, observations and thematic processing of data. confronting race, building culturally connected relationships through cooperative learning and dialogue. valuable in addressing perceived biases and felt empowered to confront issues involving cultural incongruences in their classrooms.

Table I4

**CRTL in ELA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Participants and Methods</th>
<th>CR Teaching Strategies</th>
<th>General Conclusions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gainer (2010)</td>
<td>Study conducted in an after-school critical media literacy project in a working-class neighborhood in the Southwestern United States.</td>
<td>Qualitative study involved 9 Mexican students, 1 African American and 1 White. Thematic analysis and artifacts were used to collect data. Researcher met with groups during focus sessions to address representations of urban youth and media.</td>
<td>Strategies involved group discussions, media production techniques, critiquing videos and collaborative projects</td>
<td>Students were critical of racism in mainstream media regarding “bothered” youth but were not interested in creating counternarratives and alternative representations to depict racism in their lives. The researcher advocates for a critical and dialogic environment in “de-tracked” classrooms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garland &amp; Mayer (2012)</td>
<td>Study sought to determine how CR methods were designed to engage students in critical literacy learning.</td>
<td>Qualitative study with students in a media literacy course in a predominately White high school in north Florida.</td>
<td>ACTION genre and NCTE literacy practices used curricular artifacts were used to collect data, included observations, media diaries, focus and generative texts.</td>
<td>Researchers reported that student’s critical literacy practices to shape their cultural views as critical thinkers who able to use a variety of texts to determine the social and cultural construction of literary thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson (2012)</td>
<td>Describes how English teachers implemented varied literacy practices for social justice learning in a priority school.</td>
<td>Researcher interviewed two candidates at a midsized state college on the East Coast for one-year. Weekly journals, email, electronic discussion board, telephone</td>
<td>Testimonial literacy rooted in teachers lived experiences was used as a strategy to empower students to be</td>
<td>Pre-service teachers reported that their lived experiences prepared them for teaching at the research location. Resistance to deficit views was difficult</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
communications, discussion comments and post observation conference notes were used to collect data. Participants were also encouraged to engage in narrative discussion about their pre-service teaching experiences. Data was analyzed using critical discourse analysis.

due to institutional constraints and obstacles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Participants and Methods</th>
<th>CR Teaching Strategies</th>
<th>General Conclusions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lopez (2011)</td>
<td>Used poetry and culture in an English Writers Craft class to build intercultural understanding and increase student engagement with critical literacy practices to create transformative praxis.</td>
<td>Research centered on pre-service teacher who used performance poetry to implement CR pedagogy in a secondary school in Ontario, Canada. Qualitative, collaborative action research study used dialogue, informal and formal inquiry group meetings to collect data.</td>
<td>Instructor used dialogue, writing responses, journaling, small group, whole group discussion and performance poetry.</td>
<td>Findings indicate that students could engage in critical conversations and learn about the lives of others through critical literacy strategies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX J

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Rights & Access

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