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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Cecile Gadson entitled "An Exploration of the Gendered Racial Microaggression Experiences of Black Girls." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Psychology.

Jioni Lewis PhD, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Patrick Grzanka PhD, Camille Hall PhD, Joe Miles PhD

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Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

AN EXPLORATION OF THE GENDERED RACIAL MICROAGGRESSION EXPERIENCES
OF BLACK GIRLS

A Dissertation Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Cecile Alison Gadson
August 2020

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to all the Black girls and all the Black women who were once Black girls. Black women and girls, your gifts to the world are limitless and your strength is unstoppable. In my dedication, I also include a poem by Dr. Thema Bryant-Davis who is a Black woman, psychologist, minister, and sacred artist. These words were one of my early inspirations for pursuing my work with Black girls. I had the pleasure of witnessing Dr. Thema Bryant-Davis perform this poem at one of my first professional conferences as a doctoral student.

Upbeat

*Over my head, I hear music in the air.
Over my head, I hear music in the air.
Over my head, I hear music in the air.
There must be a God somewhere.*

Who will sing an upbeat Black girl song?
Songs of Now-and-Laters and bus passes.
Songs of name brand jeans and name brand shoes and name brands branding, in search of a place
where everybody knows her name.

Who will sing an upbeat Black girl song?
Songs of the intercourse hip-hop beats and gospel hymns.
Caught in the act, caught in her throat. Songs of blues notes and Bible verses running marathons
in her head, from late night Friday all the way to Sunday School.

Who will sing an upbeat Black girl song?
Songs of using a pick until she picked up a Revlon.

Who will sing an upbeat Black girl song?
Songs of the chorus singing “I’m not from Africa. I’m from North Carolina.”
I mean, where *is* Africa?
I mean, I *am* Africa.
Africa-embodied.
Africa-personified.
Africa-transformed.

I mean, not just the Africa on tv with eyes around bulging eyes and bulging bellies,
but the Africa of the Ashanti, the Zulu, the Baster, the Bele, the Mandingo.
The Africa of gumbo and fufu and jollof rice.
The Africa where “Black is beautiful” is not just a slogan but a fact of life.
But who will sing an upbeat Black girl song?
‘Cause the downbeat says, the downbeat says she’s so Black and lazy and slack.
And the downbeat says, the downbeat says she’s a video ho and, of course, academically slow.
And the downbeat says, the downbeat says she’s so visible in welfare lines but so invisible in the
minds of sharehold stakers and policy makers.

But who will sing an upbeat Black girl song?
We will sing it for ourselves.
We will sing it for ourselves.
We will put our souls in our throats and our hearts in our lungs and sing of our survival,
and the world will marvel at how long we hold our notes.
Who will sing an upbeat Black girl song?
Sing it like Harriet sang it.
Sing it like Sojourner sang it.
Sing it like Michelle Obama sang it.
Sing it like Madame C.J. Walker sang it.
And if you don't know none of them,
if you don't know none of them,
sing it like your great-great grandma sang it.
And the world will marvel at how long we hold our notes.

-Dr. Thema Bryant-Davis

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If you want to get there fast, walk alone.

If you want to go further, walk together

–African Proverb

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to extend research on gendered racial microaggressions by using an intersectional approach to develop a taxonomy of gendered racial microaggressions experienced by Black adolescent girls. This study sought to answer the following research question: What are the gendered racial microaggression experiences of Black adolescent girls? The current study used a Black feminist and intersectionality theoretical lens to illuminate the gendered racial microaggression experiences of Black girls. A community sample of 33 high school Black adolescent girls between the ages of 13 – 17 ($M = 15$, $SD = .92$) were recruited through schools, community organizations, and churches in East Tennessee. Data was collected through four semi-structured focus group interviews. Using dimensional analysis, findings of this study uncovered several gendered racial microaggression themes, which expanded the existing taxonomy of gendered racial microaggressions (Lewis et al., 2016). The findings yielded three core themes with three subthemes each: *Standards of Beauty* (Standards of Aesthetics, Devaluation, Hair Exoticism), *Silenced and Marginalized* ((In)visibility, Overdisciplined/Under Protected, Assumption of Intelligence & Communication Styles), and *Projected Stereotypes* (Expectation of the Angry Black Girl, Expectation of the Ghetto Black Girl, Expectation of the Jezebel). The findings uncovered several themes that map onto the taxonomy of gendered racial microaggressions experienced by adult Black women; new themes unique to Black adolescent girls also emerged. The three core themes provided a multidimensional narrative of how controlling images and negative gendered racial stereotypes operate to narrowly define Black girls within a cycle of oppression. The current study addresses several gaps in the literature on intersectional microaggressions, particularly among youth. Clinical, education, and policy implications are discussed.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“Pushed out, overdisciplined, and under protected,” a state of emergency has been called on the experiences of Black girls in the United States educational system (Crenshaw, 2015). Black girls are six times more likely to be suspended from school than their White girl peers for the same infraction (Department of Education, 2012). Additionally, Black girls are three times more likely to get in trouble for subjective infractions like “disobedience,” and twice as likely to receive punishment for minor violations (e.g., dress code and phone use) when compared to their White female peers for the same offense (Morris & Perry, 2017). The consequences of these minor violations are documented in news stories of non-violent Black girls being violently reprimanded by police and slammed to the ground, put in a chokehold, and carried out of the classroom in handcuffs for talking back to the teacher (Frantz, Yan, Shoichet, 2015; Lush, 2013; Stelloh & Conner, 2015). National news stories and reports have brought greater attention to the disproportionate discipline and harsh treatment of Black girls (Crenshaw, 2015; Epstein, Black, González, 2017). The criminalization of Black girls has gained increased attention from advocates and stakeholders in education, law, and mental health (Crenshaw, 2015; Morris, 2015; Thomas, Hacker, & Hoxa, 2011). Black girls are invisible, neglected, over-disciplined, and not supported in the educational system (Crenshaw, 2015).

The mistreatment of Black girls in the school system can be attributed to gendered racial stereotypes that perceive them as loud, disrespectful, aggressive, promiscuous, and disruptive by teachers and administrators (Morris, 2015). These experiences may impact the overall well-being and mental health of Black girls (Epstein et al., 2017). School age Black girls experience a high level of interpersonal violence (Morris, 2015). A 2017 State of Girls Report (Girl Scouts, 2017) claimed that mental health concerns (e.g., cyberbullying, emotional, and behavioral problems) have become more prevalent over the years for girls nationwide (Girl Scouts, 2017). However,

there is a lack of information on the unique experiences of Black girls. In a review of educational studies including Black girls, most were compared to White girls, or focused on girls *responding* to “Black girl issues” (Lindsay-Dennis, 2015). The majority of studies lack a cultural understanding of the historical issues that contribute to the discriminatory experiences of Black girls. Despite the depth of information in previous reports on the state of Black girls, there is a dearth of empirical studies in the field of psychology that explores the types of everyday racism and sexism experienced by Black girls. The current study applied an intersectionality and Black feminist framework to explore the everyday forms of intersecting racial and gender oppression experienced by Black girls. Next, I review the empirical research on racism, sexism, intersectionality, and microaggressions to contextualize the current study, and highlight the importance of using intersectionality to investigate the gendered racial microaggression experiences of Black girls.

Foundational research on racism (Carter, 2003; Jones, 1997) established how the historical meanings of racial power and privilege shaped the current oppression of African Americans. Research in the field of psychology has found that racism impacts psychological distress in Black Americans (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1991; Essed, 1991; Pieterse & Carter, 2007). A foundational study by Clark and Clark (1947) on racial identity found that Black children internalized negative racial stereotypes when they select the White or lighter doll as more attractive than the darker doll. A study on Black youth found that adolescents who report greater perceived racism also report greater psychological distress (Seaton, Caldwell, Sellers, & Jackson, 2010). Further, Black adolescent girls reported fewer experiences of perceived racism, but reported greater psychological distress when compared to Black boys (Seaton et al., 2010). The research on gender differences in experiences of perceived racism suggests that when

studying Black girls, it is important to consider the intersection of gender.

Psychological studies on sexism highlight the ways that women experience gender oppression through traditional, benevolent, and everyday sexism, which includes sexual harassment, stereotypes, traditional gender roles, and assumptions of inferiority (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995; Glick & Fiske, 1997). Gender discrimination research includes the study of sexist events and everyday sexism (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). Previous studies of adolescent girls have shown that similar to adults, girls experience sexist events that include: gender stereotypes, sexual harassment, demeaning comments, sexualization, and assumptions of inferiority in school (Leaper & Brown, 2008; McMaster, Connolly, Pepler, & Craig, 2002; Slater & Tiggerman, 2010). Sexism towards women and girls has been connected to lower quality of life and psychological distress (Corning, 2002; Klonoff et al., 1995; Moradi & Subich, 2002; Swim et al., 2001; Szymanski, Gupta, Carr, & Stewart, 2009). Although previous studies on girls and sexism provide greater insight on the discriminatory experiences of youth, many of these studies have used predominantly White samples, and did not highlight the intersectional experiences of Black girls.

The critiques about single-axis racism and sexism studies highlighted that for Black women, gender was overlooked in research on racism, while race was ignored in research on sexism. The scholarship of intersectionality and Black feminist thought attends to this deficit by providing a framework that highlights the ways that Black women's experiences of oppression are informed by their intersecting race, gender, and class (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989). The types of gendered racism that Black women experience are rooted in historical gendered racial stereotypes (Collins, 2000; Harris-Perry, 2011). Historical stereotypes, also called controlling images, depict Black women as *Sapphires* (i.e., angry/aggressive), *Jezebels* (i.e., sexually

promiscuous), and *Welfare Queens* (i.e., lower class and ghetto) (Collins, 2000; Harris-Perry, 2011; Lewis et al., 2016). These socially constructed controlling images justify and perpetuate oppression for Black women and girls, such as gendered racial microaggressions. Gendered racial experiences of Black women and girls include sexual objectification, sexual harassment, and differential treatment in professional and social settings (Thomas, Speight, & Witherspoon, 2008; Watson, Robinson, Dispenza, & Nazari, 2012). Gendered racism for Black girls includes gendered racial sexualization and discrimination in educational settings (French, 2013; Koonce, 2012; Morris, 2015). Studies have suggested that gendered racism is significantly related to greater psychological distress (Szymanski & Lewis, 2016; Thomas et al., 2008). However, previous research on gendered racism has mostly focused on adult samples, and overt forms of discrimination.

Microaggression research investigates the types and impact of subtle everyday slights and putdowns of individuals with marginalized social identities (Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzales, & Willis, 1978; Sue et al., 2007). Racial microaggressions are defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental slights and indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color” (Sue, et al., 2007). Microaggressions are communicated on a spectrum that range from *microassaults* (i.e., overt discrimination), *microinsults* (i.e., subtle putdowns), to *microinvalidations* (i.e. denying one’s reality of oppression). Sue and colleagues (2007) developed a taxonomy of racial microaggressions, which include: *Alien in Own Land* (e.g., assuming an Asian person is not from the U.S.), *Ascription of Intelligence* (e.g., assuming Black students are intellectually inferior), *Color Blindness* (e.g., saying you do not see color), *Criminality* (e.g., following a Black man in a store), *Denial of Individual Racism* (e.g., saying

you are not racist because you have Black friends), *Pathologizing Cultural Values/Communications Styles* (e.g., telling a Latinx person they talk “too passionate”), *Second Class Citizen* (e.g., a Black customer being ignored for a White customer) (Sue et al., 2007). Research on the racial microaggression experiences of Black Americans have found that greater racial microaggressions are significantly related to daily stress and negative psychological outcomes in general settings, university settings, and in therapy (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008; Capodilupo & Sue, 2013; Watkins, LaBarrie, & Appio, 2010). Racial microaggression research has investigated the types of microaggression experiences that occur within ethnic groups. For example, Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, and Torino’s (2017) qualitative study on the racial microaggression experiences of Asian Americans found that Asian women were subjected to exoticism (e.g., being viewed as sexual objects, domestic servants, Geishas). Another empirical study explored within group differences of microaggressions on mental health with Asian Americans based on age, educational level, and geographic location (Nadal, Wong, Sriken, Griffin, Fuji Doe, 2015). Racial microaggression studies within Asian Americans groups suggested that both age and gender intersect with racial microaggression. Since microaggression research was built on understanding covert forms of everyday racism, a majority of the empirical research has focused on racial microaggressions (Sue et al., 2008; Watkins et-al. 2010); however, there has been an increase in qualitative research on gender microaggressions.

Gender microaggressions are defined as daily and commonplace sexist putdowns, or derogatory slights towards women that are communicated verbally, behaviorally, and environmentally (Capodilupo et al., 2010). Early theoretical work on gender microaggressions developed a conceptual taxonomy of gender microaggressions (Nadal, 2010; Sue & Capodilupo, 2008). Then, Capodilupo and colleagues (2010) conducted a qualitative study with female

participants, which empirically supported the following gender microaggression themes: *Sexual Objectification* (e.g., cat calls), *Second Class Citizen/Invisibility* (e.g., women sports teams receiving less funding), *Assumptions of Inferiority* (e.g., assuming men are better at math), *Assumptions of Traditional Gender Roles* (e.g., being told to act ladylike), *Denial of the Reality of Sexism* (e.g., being told to ignore sexism in a work environment), *Use of Sexist Language* (e.g., calling a woman a bitch or hoe), *Leaving Gender at the Door* (e.g., do not bring up sexism in discussions), and *Environmental Microaggressions* (e.g., seeing pictures of all male leadership in meeting room). Empirical studies have also found that sexual objectification, second class citizen/invisibility, assumptions of inferiority, and environmental gender microaggressions are common experiences for women in the workplace (Basford, Offermann, & Behred, 2014) and in higher education (Lester, Yamanaka, & Struthers, 2016). Although previous research on gender microaggression has highlighted the ways women are subtly objectified, marginalized, silenced, and invalidated, these studies did not capture the subtle intersecting oppression of racism and sexism.

The scholarship of gendered racial microaggressions emerged out of the essential need for research to take an intersectional approach to investigate the experiences of intersectional microaggressions for Black women. *Gendered racial microaggressions* are subtle and everyday slights and insults based on the intersection of racism and sexism (Lewis, Mendenhall, Harwood, & Browne Hunt, 2013; Lewis & Neville, 2015). Gendered racial microaggressions capture the unique and intersecting forms of covert racism and sexism experienced by Black women and other women of color. In the first qualitative study of the intersection of racial and gender microaggressions, Lewis, Mendenhall, Harwood, and Browne Hunt (2016) created a taxonomy of gendered racial microaggressions based on the experiences of Black college women, and

found three core themes, each with two subthemes. This taxonomy included *Projected Stereotypes* (e.g., Expectation of the Jezebel—treating Black women as hypersexual; Expectation of the Angry Black Woman—assuming all Black women are angry), *Silenced and Marginalized* (e.g., Struggle for Respect—power and authority being undermined; invisibility— invisible in academic and professional spaces), and *Assumptions of Style and Beauty* (e.g., Assumptions of Communication Style—assuming the ways in which all Black women speak; Assumptions of Aesthetics— expectations of Black women’s hair and body aesthetics) (Lewis et al., 2016). The gendered racial microaggressions depict the modern ways in which society perpetuates historical stereotypes about Black women as angry, aggressive, and sexually deviant (Lewis et al., 2016). This qualitative study was important to the scholarship of Black women, because it was the first empirical study to use an intersectional framework to explore and conceptualize the covert gendered racial oppression of Black women (Lewis et al, 2016).

Further development of gendered racial microaggression research included the development of an intersectional measure. Lewis and Neville (2015) constructed the Gendered Racial Microaggression Scale (GRMS) with four subscales, *Assumptions of Beauty and Sexual Objectification* (e.g., making sexually inappropriate comments), *Silenced and Marginalized* (e.g., comments being ignored), the *Strong Black Woman Stereotype* (e.g., being considered “too” assertive), and the *Angry Black Woman Stereotype* (e.g., being told to calm down). The GRMS broadened the gendered racial microaggression narrative for Black women by adding themes (i.e., sexual objectification and the strong Black woman stereotype) and providing an intersectional assessment that can measure the frequency and stress appraisal of gendered racial microaggression experiences (Lewis & Neville, 2015). The construction of the GRMS has allowed greater understanding of the psychological impact of gendered racial microaggressions

on Black women's health. With a sample of university and community Black women, Lewis and Neville (2015) found that a greater frequency and stress appraisal of gendered racial microaggressions was significantly related to higher psychological distress. More recently, research has found that gendered racial microaggressions negatively impact both the mental and physical health of Black women (Lewis, Williams, Peppers, & Gadson, 2017; Moody & Lewis, 2019). For example, previous research has shown that gendered racial microaggressions were significantly related to negative mental and physical health outcomes, as well as disengagement coping strategies for Black women (Lewis et al., 2017). Recently, greater frequency of gendered racial microaggressions has also been linked to greater traumatic stress symptoms for Black women (Moody & Lewis, 2019). Although these studies provide foundational support for subtle forms of gendered racism, they have only focused on adult Black women, and have not explored the experiences of Black girls. Thus, no previous studies have investigated the types of gendered racial microaggressions that Black girls experience.

Absent from the literature is an established taxonomy of the gendered racial microaggression experiences of Black adolescent girls. The disparity in school discipline policies on Black girls, and how the gendered racial school-to-prison-pipeline specifically targets Black girls, highlights the need for an intersectional investigation of the everyday subtle gendered racial experiences of Black adolescent girls. More intersectional research is needed to explore the everyday experiences of oppression for Black girls that is not otherwise captured in race or gender research. There is a dearth of literature that centers the microaggression experiences of youth and specifically youth that have intersecting experiences of oppression. Consequently, there is no previous literature on youth microaggressions with Black girl's gendered racial experiences. For example, Nadal and colleagues (2011) qualitative study on youth sexual

orientation microaggressions was from college aged participants who recalled their microaggression experiences from their youth. The current study will extend the previous research on the phenomenon of gendered racial microaggressions by focusing on Black girls, because of the possible risk of these experiences in their social and educational environments (Lewis et al., 2016; Watkins et al., 2010). Developmentally, Black adolescent girls' experiences of subtle discrimination could greatly impact their gendered racial identity, sexual development, and overall well-being (French, 2013; Thomas et al., 2011). The developmental age of Black girls does not protect them from the gendered racial narratives and discriminatory experiences as mirrored by Black women (hooks, 1992). It is important to understand the types of gendered racial microaggressions that impact the lives of Black girls.

Rationale and Purpose of Current Study

The heart of the discriminatory experiences of Black women and girls is founded at the intersection of racism and sexism (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality and Black feminist thought epistemology have provided the most robust and comprehensive narrative of Black womanhood and the controlling images that feed into modern cycles of oppression (Collins, 2000; Harris-Perry, 2011; Lewis et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2008). Scholarship on Black girlhood lacks an investigation of the ways in which Black girls experience both gendered racial and microaggressive messages at school and in their community. An unawareness of understanding the types of gendered racial microaggressions experienced by Black girls could lead to gaps in understanding factors that impact Black girls' well-being and identity development.

There is a body of research that has begun to highlight the ways that Black women experience intersectional oppression, such as gendered racial microaggressions in their everyday lives. However, there is a dearth of research that has explored the intersectional racism and

sexism experienced by Black adolescent girls. The current study aims to address this gap in literature by exploring the gendered racial microaggression experiences of Black girls. The purpose of this study was to expand gendered racial microaggression research by using an intersectional approach to develop a taxonomy of gendered racial microaggressions experienced by Black adolescent girls. Utilizing a qualitative critical inquiry paradigm, and focus group methodology, this study sought to answer the following research question: What are the gendered racial microaggression experiences of Black adolescent girls?

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Racism

Racism in America

The oppression of people of color is rooted in America's long-standing relationship with racism. Specifically, Black Americans have historically fought for liberation through such actions as protests, court actions, and demonstrations (Carter, 2003; Essed, 1991; Jones, 1997; hooks, 1992). The current climate of racism in America reflects struggles similar to those of the Civil Rights era. As such, the frequency and attention to police brutality and the Black Lives Matter movement have revealed how racism in America is not a historical tale, but a current struggle. Although this racial tension is not displayed as vividly today, psychology scholars often highlight the nature and impact of racism (e.g., Clark et al., 1999; Pieterse & Carter, 2007; Jones, 1997). For instance, racism has been linked to the mental health disparities and limited access to care among racial minorities compared to their White counterparts (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2001). To understand the connections between racism in American, mental health disparities, and discrimination of Black Americans, it is first necessary to understand the conceptualization of how race operates for people of color.

Conceptualization of Racism

A large body of psychological literature exists on the nature and impact of racism towards people of color (e.g., Clark et al., 1999; Pieterse & Carter, 2003). *Racism* is defined as a set of beliefs and attitudes that are used to rationalize the superiority of the dominant White racial group; these beliefs are used to denigrate individuals and groups based on their presumed inferior status in a socially constructed racial hierarchy (Carter, 2007). Racism includes both active and passive attitudes and behaviors that empower the dominant racial group, while

oppressing marginalized groups.

Racism is multidimensional and multifaceted. In regard to dimensions of racism, scholars have often categorized racism into three levels: individual racism, institutional racism, and cultural racism (Jones, 1997). *Individual racism* is the belief that one's group is superior over another, which is often accompanied by behavioral acts that sustain positions of power and oppression (Jones, 1997). For example, a White store employee following a Black customer is an individual racist act that expresses that Black customers are not as trustworthy as White customers. Different from individual racism, *institutional racism*, is the control of institutions to achieve and maintain racist objectives (Jones, 1997). For instance, the educational system has policies that are designed to favor those in power, and hinder those with less or no social power, such as people of color. This power is asserted through limited resources in predominantly Black school districts or keeping Black children out of the classroom by disproportionately harsher punishments.

In Morris and Perry's (2017) intersectional evaluation of punishment on middle school African American girls, Black girls were three times more likely to receive an office referral than their White peers. In a national report from the Department of Education (2012), Black girls were six times more likely to be suspended than White girls. *Cultural racism* is the individual and institutional messages that one's race and cultural heritage is superior over another (Jones, 1997). For example, celebration and promotion of White European standards of beauty is a common type of cultural racism that communicates that other cultural aesthetics are not beautiful or the norm. Also, the lack of acknowledgement of African American history in many American history curricula is also an expression that Black culture has no thread in the fabric of American culture. Historically, a majority of the research in the psychology of racism has focused on

explicit forms of discrimination. However, in recent years, scholars have turned their attention to modern forms of racism that are more covert.

Contemporary Racism

Some scholars argue that modern racism has changed into a more covert and implicit form (Essed, 1991). That is, the implicit displays of racial oppression have become so ingrained and a part of everyday operations that they have often gone unnoticed to the majority of individuals. Research on racism in psychology has also increased attention to interpersonal forms of racism. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2014), a Sociologist and critical race scholar, argues that racism has become invisible as a result of post-Civil War ideologies, such as color-blind racism, that continue to relegate Black Americans as second-class citizens through seemingly race-neutral policies and practices (Bonilla-Silva, 2014).

Philomena Essed (1984) coined the term *everyday racism*, which refers to racist practices that involve daily behaviors and attitudes. Essed (1991) argued that everyday racism is a manifestation of repeated practices, attitudes, behaviors, and systems that are cumulative, sustained, and woven into everyday societal encounters. Everyday racism literature is built on the history of race relations between Black and White Americans (Essed, 1991). In contrast to overt forms of racism, everyday racism can be more coded and subtly ingrained in everyday events. For example, a teacher complimenting a Black student for being so “well spoken;” this message communicates the racial stereotypes of Black students. The core purpose of the scholarship of everyday racism is two-fold: (1) to acknowledge that racist systems, practices, and attitudes have become hidden yet chronic; (2) once these subtle operations are exposed they can then be recognized as a problem by those who sustain these systems (Essed, 1991). Beyond recognizing the manifestations and types of everyday racism, it is important to explore the ways

that racism impacts its recipients.

Perceived racism is the subjective experience of prejudice or discrimination that can go beyond “objective racism” (Clark et al., 1999). That is, perceived racism may not always be clearly displayed in acts and words, but imbedded in racist ideologies. Perceived racism can also be conceptualized as the experiences and appraisal of inequality and unfair treatment that can occur on the interpersonal, institutional, and cultural level (Pieterse, Todd, Neville, & Carter, 2012). Scholars in psychology have also conceptualized perceived racism as a form of racism-related stress in conceptual models for people of color (Clark et al., 1999; Harrell, 2000; Pieterse et al., 2012). These experiences of racial discrimination are deeply rooted in general and race-related stress for Black Americans. Although much of the research on contemporary forms of racism has focused on the experiences of Black Americans adults, it is important to extend these concepts to Black children and adolescents.

Racism and Youth

An evolving body of research has explored the racial experiences of Black youth and how these early race-related experiences impact their psychological well-being (Clark & Clark, 1939; Seaton et al., 2008; 2010). One of the ground-breaking studies on young people and racism was Clark and Clark’s (1947) doll study that explored how Black children internalize racist ideologies. This study included a sample of 253 African American children (ages 3 – 7) whom when presented with a White doll or a Black doll to play with, more often preferred the White doll because it was perceived as more attractive, smarter, and generally more appealing (Clark & Clark, 1947). Although the children did not communicate explicit racist ideologies, they had internalized the dominant group’s narrative about white superiority. In another study, Fisher, Wallace, and Fenton (2000) explored the effects of discrimination on psychological distress for

adolescents and found that Black and Latino youth reported that they were hassled by store personnel, viewed as dangerous/less intelligent, and hassled by the police. Students of color were also more likely to be wrongly disciplined or face harsher consequences than their White peers (Fisher, Wallace, Fenton, 2000; Gibson et al., 2014). In addition, Black children from an early age are more likely to understand the context of race and be aware of their racial discrimination experiences (Dulin-Kieta, Lii, Fernandez, & Cockerham, 2011). These studies highlight the overt forms of racism that Black youth experience in their everyday lives. Emerging studies have begun to investigate more covert and contemporary forms of discrimination experienced by Black youth.

Seaton, Coldwell, Sellers, and Jackson (2008) investigated Black adolescents' intragroup differences of perceived discrimination and psychological well-being in a quantitative study. This study found across demographic identities (e.g., age, gender, and ethnicity), participants reported perceived discrimination incidents that were significantly related to lower psychological well-being (Seaton, et al., 2008). Likewise, older Black teens (ages 14 – 17) and male participants reported greater perceived discrimination (Seaton et al., 2008). In a follow-up quantitative study, Seaton, Caldwell, Sellers, and Jackson (2010) investigated how demographic identities moderate the relation between perceived discrimination and psychological well-being in Black adolescents. When evaluating race and gender, the results showed that despite Black boys reporting greater perceived discrimination, Black girls had a stronger negative correlation when perceived discrimination was high and psychological functioning was low (Seaton et al., 2010). Both studies (Seaton et al., 2008; Seaton et al., 2010) highlight that although Black adolescent girls reported a lower frequency of perceived discrimination, they experienced a greater negative impact on psychological well-being, which

suggests that frequency and impact on both important considerations when studying perceived discrimination, particularly intersections with gender. In addition, racial discrimination measures do not capture the ways that racial experiences can also be gendered. Although Seaton et al.'s (2010) study highlights gender differences in perceived discrimination experiences of Black youth, their study did not include assessments that capture the unique gendered racial discrimination experiences of Black girls.

Responding to the notion that the racial experiences of Black adolescent boys and girls are gendered, a few studies have explored the racism experiences of Black girls (Burt & Simons, 2015; Joseph, Viece, & Baine, 2016). Joseph, Vieca, and Baine (2016) conducted a qualitative study to investigate how Black adolescent girls experienced racism in their high school. Participants defined racism as prejudice, discrimination, and shared experiences involving differential treatment from peers, stereotypes, and low teacher expectations (Joseph et al., 2016). Although the researchers made claims to examine Black girls' experiences of discrimination through a gendered racial lens, the study's questions and results were aimed at capturing only explicit racial experiences of Black adolescent girls, which ignores how their gender intersects with their racism experiences.

Taken together, the theoretical and empirical research about the discriminatory experiences of African Americans shows that there is a dearth of research focused on the unique experiences of Black women and girls. For example, Pieterse, Carter, and Ray's (2011) study on race-related stress, general life stress, and psychological functioning did not find a significant relation between race-related stress and psychological functioning when general life stress was controlled despite previous studies and meta-analyses with mixed gender samples suggesting otherwise (Pieterse & Carter, 2012; Pieterse et al., 2012). This highlighted the importance of

recognizing that the discriminatory experiences of Black women and girls are complex and must include an examination of the intersections of race and gender. This consideration is further echoed in Essed's (1991) foundational conceptualization of everyday racism. Essed (1991) declares that gender and class must be considered in understanding Black women's racial oppression. Therefore, in studying the discriminatory experiences of Black girls, experiences with sexism must also be considered.

Sexism

Theoretical Terms of Sexism

Sexism is defined as prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors towards women because they are women (Lips, 2006). This type of discrimination is grounded in gender inequality. Gender is a social construction that is associated with various roles, power, privileges, stereotypes, and oppression perpetrated against women. Hence, men often take positions of power and are presumed as more assertive and qualified than women when it comes to many occupational roles. Conceptualizing sexism in youth, sexual objectification theory (i.e., treating women's body as objects and for the consumption of other's pleasure) recognizes that sexual discrimination experiences such as being objectified starts early for girls (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997). Hill and Lynch (1986) defined *gender intensification* as the increased socialization of individuals to adhere to traditional gender roles. For example, boys often receive praise for being more assertive in groups while girls get redirected to play less assertive roles. Increased gender socialization messages and the elevated likelihood for sexual objectification with younger women, suggests that girls are not only receiving sexist messages, but are also being exposed to sexism at an early age.

To better study these forms of sexism, Klonoff and Landrine (1995) coined the term

sexist events, which are specific negative life events and stressors that happen to women because they are women. Klonoff and Landrine (1995) broadly conceptualized sexist events as sexual harassment, unfair treatment from partners/authority figures, sexist names, and institutional sexism. This theoretical model of sexual discrimination was then used to develop the Schedule of Sexist Events (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995), which is a self-report instrument to assess different types of sexist events including: sexist degradation and consequences, sexual discrimination in distant relationships, the workplace, and close relationships. For example, sexist degradation could involve feeling as though you were not treated fairly. Sexual discrimination from a distant relationship involves unfair treatment from services or neighbors, while sexual discrimination from a close relationship involves discrimination from friends and family.

Scholars who have conducted research on sexism have explored the ways that this form of discrimination is communicated in interpersonal interactions. The first form is the most traditional and explicit form of gender oppression. *Hostile sexism* is the traditional/overt expression of sexism that justifies male power through negative stereotypes and degradation of women (Glick & Fiske, 1997). This form of sexism is often used to distance and villainize women who challenge men's power. For example, as displayed during the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election, there was a lot of sexist commentary directed towards presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton, who is seen as a woman who has challenged power and gender roles. Hostile sexism has become less socially acceptable and has changed into an implicit and covert form to sustain the traditional positions of the power of men over women. Consequently, these modern forms of sexism become a more subtle, acceptable, and everyday practice of discrimination that contributes to the oppression of women.

Contemporary Forms of Sexism

Benevolent sexism is the subjectively positive “justification of male dominance and prescribed gender roles” (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Thus, benevolent sexism encourages chivalrous ideology and praise towards women who endorse more conventional roles (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Hence, a man assuming a box is too heavy for a woman to carry, or other women disapproving that a woman carrying a box that may seem “too heavy” is benevolent sexism. Glick and Fiske (2001) believed that although hostile and benevolent sexism take opposite approaches, they work together to justify gender inequality. Similar to benevolent sexism is *everyday or modern sexism*, which is the denial of gender discrimination, the lack of support for policies designed to assist women, and dismissive responses to women’s demands (Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995). Everyday sexism includes both overt and subtle forms of gender discrimination (e.g., gender stereotypes, sexual objectification, and demeaning comments) that often go unnoticed and are a part of everyday incidents (Lips, 2006; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001). For example, daily sexual objectification experiences of women, included participants reporting men making comments, or staring at their breasts, and men intimately touching women they did not know (Swim et al., 2000). Although previous studies have provided a rich insight into women’s daily experiences of implicit sexism, it did not consider the impact of race.

Scholars expanded everyday sexism research by validating measures on samples of African American women (DeBlaere & Moradi, 2008), exploring race and gender correlates (Szymanski & Stewart, 2010), and exploring how race impacts benevolent sexist experiences (McMachan & Kahn, 2016). McMachan and Kahn (2016) investigated how race can influence benevolent and hostile sexism in a comparative study of White and Black women. Results found

that White women reported greater experiences of benevolent sexism than Black women (McMachan & Kahn, 2016). Findings suggest that Black women were perceived as less fragile and needing protection, which in turn led to less benevolent sexism experiences (McMachan & Kahn, 2016). Findings from this study support the notion that race plays a role in the types of sexism Black women experience. However, the majority of the research on gender discrimination has focused on adults and has not addressed the gendered based discrimination of girls (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995; Glick & Fiske, 1997; Swim et al., 1995).

Sexism and Youth

The gender discrimination experienced by adolescent girls is similar to women's experiences in that they include gender stereotypes, sexual harassment, demeaning comments, and assumptions of inferiority in certain social spheres (Leaper & Brown, 2008; McMaster, Connolly, Pepler, & Craig, 2002). Using a racially diverse adolescent girl sample, Leaper and Brown (2008) found that adolescent girls experienced sexual harassment and discouragement in academics and athletics involvement. They also reported experiencing several types of sexual harassment including: unwanted attention from men, sexist name calling, being teased about appearance, and unwanted touching (Leaper & Brown, 2008). Expanding on adolescent sexual harassment experiences, a previous study on peer-to-peer sexual harassment found that cross-gender sexual harassment increased with age, and girls experienced greater sexual harassment over time (McMaster et al., 2002). Peer-to-peer sexual harassment experiences included making sexual comments, jokes, and gestures; touching and grabbing in a sexual way; spreading sexual rumors; showing/sending sexual pictures/messages; making comments about body parts; and flashing private body parts (McMacter et al., 2002). Accordingly, the increase in reports on gender discrimination among girls had led to greater attention on the social and psychological

disparities that relate to this issue.

The sexualization of girls has been recognized as a worldwide problem that leads to many social and psychological consequences of young women. In response to this concern, the American Psychological Association (2007) released a task report that highlighted the impact of sexualization towards women and girls. Sexualization are messages that girls and women receive that include: valuing someone for solely sexual desire and physical attraction, and sexual objectification (APA, 2007). Slater and Tiggerman (2016) conducted a survey study on 300 Australian girls between the age of six and nine to investigate the type of sexualization messages they receive and how they relate to their self-image. The result showed that the more participants reported exposure to sexualization messages via media, the more they preferred wearing sexier clothes for the desires of their peers, which in turn, suggested sexualization (Slater & Tiggerman, 2016). Other results also showed that the greater desire to wear sexier clothes related to lower body dissatisfaction. Slater and Tiggerman's (2016) study added empirical support for the impact of sexualization on girls, but had a racially homogeneous sample so they could not consider how the intersection of race and gender could shape the types of sexualization that girls experienced.

Overall, sexism research and feminist theory assert that women and girls not only experience explicit forms of sexism, but also encounter subtle and everyday sexism that influence their psychological well-being. Research on sexism experienced by youth highlights the way girls are treated differently in school, and the types of sexualization messages they receive, but does not fully incorporate how race and gender can intersect and create different experiences for Black girls. The gaps in the racism and sexism literature highlights the need to use a different theoretical lens for Black girls. Black women and girls do not experience racism and sexism separately; thus, it is important to explore their experiences of discrimination from an

intersectional lens.

Intersectional Oppression Among Black Women and Girls

In studying the discriminatory experiences of Black girls, it is important to contextualize their experiences of racism and sexism through the lens of intersectionality. The adoption of intersectionality theory and Black feminist thought addresses the limitations in single-axis racism and sexism approaches to the study of Black women's oppression (Lewis & Grzanka, 2016). Intersectionality was first introduced as a critical way to explore the inequity of Black women in the justice system (Crenshaw, 1989). Likewise, Black feminist thought provides a theoretical framework to situate Black women's marginalization within a historical context of race, gender, and class oppression (Collins, 2000). The next section will first provide a review of intersectionality theory and Black feminist thought. This conceptualization will be followed by a discussion of how Black women stereotypes, and the history of Black girlhood perpetuates racism and sexism towards Black girls. Then, I will discuss how stereotypes of Black women and girls create experiences of gendered racism. Finally, gendered racism literature will be supported by previous empirical research on Black women and girls.

Intersectionality Theory and Black Feminist Thought

The term *intersectionality* was coined by critical legal scholar, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, to refer to the critical analysis of the ways that the intersection of race, gender, and class shape Black women's experiences of oppression and inequality (Crenshaw, 1989). For example, in a law report, Crenshaw (1989) argued that Black women are theoretically erased from empirical research, policies, and the law. That is, Black women have historically been left out of both feminist and anti-racist policies (Crenshaw, 1989). Crenshaw's (1989) work on intersectionality was grounded in her argument that Black women's position in civil rights and

justice needed to be understood under a new paradigm (Cooper, 2015). Crenshaw (1989) argues the danger of only positioning the injustice of Black women in racism or sexism misses the combined experience of discrimination of Black women (Crenshaw, 1989). Overlooking the intersecting process of sexism and racism weakens the understanding of the reality of the ways in which Black women experience oppression (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Crenshaw, 1989; Lewis & Grzanka, 2016). For this reason, the scholarship of Black feminist thought investigates intersecting forms of oppression experienced by Black women.

Black feminist thought (BFT) is a critical theory that connects the historical oppression of Black women to their current interaction of power and privilege. Collins (2000) developed BFT to empower Black women through collective knowledge about the history and journey of Black women in the U.S. This empowerment is built on the acknowledgement of the social injustice that is sustained through oppression that intersects through Black women's race, gender, and class. Collins (2000) argued that the ideas of Black women are not known or believed within the fabric of American history because politically, historically, and empirically the story of Black women is often lost, silenced, and invalidated. Like the foundational argument of intersectionality, Collins (2000) noted that Black women have been left out of women's issues in White feminism and overgeneralized in race issues in Black civil rights movements. Noting the deficits in understanding the experiences of Black women, intersectionality has been applied as a common research lens for Black women research.

Intersectionality was rooted in the study of law and later this theoretical framework was applied by critical race and feminist scholars in psychology (Bowleg, 2008; Cole, 2009; Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016; Lewis & Grzanka, 2016). Before intersectionality, psychological research studied discrimination through four methods: single axis, comparative, additive, and interactional

(Lewis & Grzanka, 2016). Single axis includes the exploration of racism *or* sexism. Comparative studies often involve studying the differences between Black and White women (Lewis & Grzanka, 2016). This approach often suggests that Black women are not as valued to be studied alone, or cannot be understood without being compared to White women (Lewis & Grzanka, 2016). Additive approaches view sexism and racism separately and either quantitatively computes them to see how they add to psychological distress, or tries to tease them apart to see which variable creates greater psychological distress (Lewis & Grzanka, 2016).

Intersectionality has been applied to the social sciences, and has been defined as the study of exploring multiple social categories simultaneously (Cole, 2009). People cannot experience their racial and gender identities alone; their experiences are shaped by the intersection of their identities. For example, Szymanski and Stewart's (2010) study on adult Black women, investigated how internalized racism and sexism influenced the relation between perceived racist and sexist experiences and psychological distress. They found that only perceived sexist experiences predicted psychological distress, while perceived racism experiences and internalized racism were not unique predictors of psychological distress. The use of an additive versus intersectional approach was explained as a rationale for the study's limitations of the mixed findings (Szymanski & Stewart, 2010). Interactional is similar to additive, but explores if sexism and racism together can account for more variance in psychological distress than a single variable (Lewis & Grzanka, 2016). Intersectionality seeks to address the gaps in theories that erase or overgeneralize race and gender. In the social sciences, the emphasis on studying Black women's oppression using intersectionality can be further conceptualized through understanding historical images and stereotypes that contribute to this oppression.

Controlling Images of Black Women and Girls

In Black feminist thought, Collins (2000) argued that the narrative of U.S. Black women has been shaped through controlling images that are created by historical and current intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, and sexuality (Collins, 2000). These controlling images are often found in stereotypes about Black women, which include: *Mammy*, *Jezebel*, *Sapphire*, and *Welfare Queen*. Collins (2000) and Melissa Harris-Perry (2011) argue that these stereotypes have assisted in justifying the oppression of Black women in America that are designed to maintain oppression and make poverty, sexism, racism, and other injustices a part of everyday life.

The *Mammy* is described as an obedient and faithful servant who is often desexualized, unfeminine, and asexual (Collins, 2000). This controlling image depicts the *Mammy* as a darker skinned and heavier set woman who serves in domestic roles (Harris-Perry, 2011). Harris-Perry (2011) described the historical purpose of the *Mammy* was to be the submissive and loyal aid to White families. The *Mammy* was created to fight against the notion that slavery was humane because it depicted the *Mammy* as content, running the household, and happy to be faithful to her master (Harris-Perry, 2011). Harris-Perry (2011) then highlights modern depictions of the *Mammy* in current shows that include predominately White casts like *Sex and the City* who brings in a Black woman character who has “magical skills” to help solve a White woman’s problems in the storyline. The image of the *Mammy* also served as a prototype of a Black woman who was self-sacrificing and never challenging to the status-quo of White supremacy (Harris-Perry, 2011). In Morris’s (2016) multidimensional review and analysis on school policies that criminalize Black girls, she did not explicitly identify the *Mammy* as a stereotype for Black girls, but she discussed how Black girls are either “good girls” or “bad/ghetto girls.” For instance, “good Black girls” are those who are not hypersexual, do not talk back or resist against “rules,”

and are self-serving to their institutions (i.e., churches, families, and schools) (Morris, 2016). Morris's "good girl" image parallels the function of Collins (2000) and Harris-Perry's (2011) adult *Mammy* stereotype. Many controlling images of Black women and Black girls center around the assessment of whether if they are "good people" to society.

Additional controlling images of the *Sapphire*, *Black lady*, and *Black Matriarch* are figures that depict Black women as the "bad Black mother" who emasculates her spouse (Collins, 2000). Also, these images portray Black women as not submissive, unfeminine, professionally independent, successful, and "too strong" (Collins, 2000). A more current term of this stereotype is the *Angry Black Woman* that perceives Black women as loud, irrationally angry, aggressive, and argumentative (Harris-Perry, 2011). Harris-Perry (2011) noted that Black women who fall under this image, like women political leaders, are pathologized by White policy makers and Black patriarchs for speaking against inequality. Black girls who talk "with an attitude" when responding to disrespect from teachers and peers or express their opinions in a space are perceived as rude and aggressive (Morris, 2016). Again, "talking with an attitude" contributes to the narrative of the *Angry Black Girl*. In like fashion, Black women and girls are also perceived as sexually aggressive.

The *Jezebel* stereotype is the sexually aggressive Black woman that was created to justify the sexual exploitation of Black women's bodies (Collins, 2000; Harris-Perry, 2011). The image of the *Jezebel* is grounded in the legacy of slavery that painted Black women as sexually aggressive and immoral to justify the objectification, rape, and animalistic display of their bodies (Collins, 2000; Harris-Parry, 2011). The legacy of exploiting and hypersexualizing Black women continues today through music and the ways in which celebrity singers and athletes are celebrated and given the benefit of the doubt when they sexually assault Black women (Harris-

Perry, 2011). The sexual violation of Black women is justified through the image that they are sexually aggressive, seeking, and promiscuous (Harris-Perry, 2011). The *Jezebel* image is found in many situations that impact the life of Black girls. The *Jezebel* image is projected onto Black girls through sexual objectification from their male peers to school officials creating sanctions and policing Black girls' appearance because they are "too sexy" (Morris, 2016). In addition to Black women and girl's sexuality and temperament being pathologized, assumptions of social class also create a controlling image.

The controlling image of the *Welfare Queen* displays a stereotype that centers the intersecting oppression of gender, race, and social class (Collins, 1991). The *Welfare Queen* is often depicted as a Black woman who is a poor or working-class single mother who is assumed to pass on poor values such as laziness and bad attitudes to their children (Collins, 2000). This controlling image was created to victim-blame Black women recipients of welfare and justify the need to cut public funding that fed many families, assisted in housing working class families, and supported public infrastructure such as roads (Collins, 2000). The modern depiction of the *Welfare Queens* are Black women who do not accurately control their fertility, have babies with several different men, and depend on government funding to take care of their children in a single-parent household (Harris-Perry, 2011). Similar to the *Welfare Queen* stereotype for adult Black women, there are similar stereotypes for Black girls. Namely, Black girls are sometimes perceived as, *Ghetto Black Girls* when they speak out and "have an attitude" to resist mistreatment and marginalization (Morris, 2016).

Taken together, these controlling images keep Black women in a system of oppression by either rewarding Black women for being compliant and subservient, or punishing them for being outspoken through displaying counter-narratives, which leads to blaming Black women for their

own oppression (Harris-Perry, 2011). Likewise, these controlling images create similar experiences of oppression for Black girls. Consequently, the current controlling narratives of Black women and Black girls also affects the development of Black girls.

In the historical account of women and sexism in America, the gendered experiences of Black women can be traced back to the Black girlhood of slaves. In her historical review of Black women and slavery, bell hooks (1992) stated that sexual assault usually happened to girls between the ages of 13 and 16. This assault often occurred when the girls were old enough to do independent work, which meant that their bodies were no longer protected (hooks, 1992). Furthermore, Black slave girls were seldomly taught about their bodies, or made aware of their vulnerability of sexual assault by their master (hooks, 1992). The early sexualization, sexual assault, and entrance into the workforce during slavery, suggests that Black girls also experienced Black women stereotypes. The history of these controlling images of Black girls can be connected to their modern sexism experiences. Additionally, the ways that Black girl bodies were sexualized, policed, and exoticized speaks to their unique gendered racial discriminatory experiences.

Scholars asserted that the current state of Black girlhood is held in understanding that their childhood is minimalized and interrupted (Epstein, Black, González, 2017; Morris, 2016). Black girls are often viewed and treated more like adults than children, which has been theorized to be an underlying reason for the disproportionate discipline of Black girls in the education system (Epstein et al., 2017; Morris, 2016). A major theory in helping to explain this disparity for Black girls, is adultification (Epstein et al., 2017). Adultification is the age compression of youth that result in treating and expecting certain youth to be older than their developmental age (Epstein et al., 2017). Black girls are often seen as older, which in turn, contributes to adults

holding them to more advanced social expectations than peers their age (Morris, 2016).

Adultification helps explain how teachers respond to Black girls in a more punitive way, which does not allow them to learn and make mistakes as compared to their White counterparts (Morris, 2016). The controlling images and factors that impact the development of Black girlhood reflect gendered racism.

Gendered Racism

Sociologist, Philomena Essed's (1991) work has highlighted Black women's unique experiences of intersectional oppression by coining the term, *gendered racism*, which refers to the oppression Black women face as it relates to racist perceptions of gender roles. Essed (1991) argues that there are various types of gendered racism experienced by Black women, including being marginalized, culturally problematized, and hindered in social mobility (Essed, 1991). For example, Black girls might be called on as the spokesperson for their race in the classroom, which is a form of marginalization. Black girls are culturally problematized when their complaints of unfair treatment may be attributed to "the environment in which they were raised."

In the last decade, there has been an increase in psychological research on gendered racism that have defined the types of discriminatory encounters of Black women (Thomas et al., 2008; Watson et al., 2012). Thomas, Speight, and Witherspoon (2008) conducted a study with adult African American women to investigate how coping skills impacted the relation of perceived gendered racism and psychological distress. This study highlighted gendered racial discrimination, which included differential treatment from service professionals, unfair treatment from strangers, workplace discrimination, and sexual harassment (Thomas et al., 2008). The study captured the coping strategies and psychological impact of gendered racism towards Black women, but used an adapted single axis measure which was not originally developed to capture

intersectional experiences. Watson, Robinson, Dispenza, and Nazari (2012) conducted a BFT-grounded-qualitative study on Black women's sexual objectification experiences. In a study of 20 Black women, Watson et al. (2012) found that participants' sexual objectification experiences included: body evaluation, unwanted sexual experiences/advances, and being treated as sexualized imagery (Watson et al., 2012). This study asserts that gendered racial sexualization is another type of gendered racism that Black women experience. Although previous research reveals a clearer intersectional picture of gendered racism, many studies focus on adult populations and do not include Black adolescent girls.

A majority of the research focused on gendered racism has explored the experiences of Black *women* and very few studies have explored the gendered racism experiences of Black *girls*. To date, no studies on Black girls have explicitly explored gendered racism, but a growing amount of literature has expanded the understanding of Black girlhood using a Black Feminist theoretical framework (French, 2013; Morris, 2015; Stephan & Phillips, 2013). Studies that reflect the types of gendered racism Black girls experience are either focused on the context of education or focused on sexualization research. This section will first present a broad overview of school-based gendered racism and then review a study that highlights gendered racial sexualization as another form of gendered racism.

It is important to understand the gendered racism experiences of Black girls in educational settings, as this is a place where discrimination is prevalent for this population (Koonce, 2012; Morris, 2015). Morris (2015) argues that Black girls are criminalized in the school system through interpersonal and systemic gendered racial experiences in the classroom. Through a collection of narratives and national reports on school discipline policies and statistics, Morris (2015) argues that the over-criminalization of Black girls in the school system

is directly related to gendered racism. Beyond the disproportionate and more severe punishment, Black girls are plagued with gendered racial narratives that include: being the “loud Black girl” who talks back to her teachers, the “ghetto” girl who starts fights, and the “ratchet” girl who is disruptive in class by loudly chewing her gum (Morris, 2015). Although Morris (2015) supports these controlling narratives through individual stories of Black girls, the accounts are not organized in an empirical study about gendered racism.

Using a Black feminist approach and sexual script theory, French (2013) conducted a qualitative study on African American teenage girls who discussed their sexual scripts and their response to sexual coercion. In French’s (2013) study, sexual scripts are the ways that their perceptions are rooted in modern Black women stereotypes that depict Black girls as promiscuous (e.g., Jezebel), sexually aggressive (e.g., Sapphire), using sex for capital gain (e.g., Gold Digger), and abstaining as a symbol of self-respect (e.g., Sister Savior). Results reproduced four emerging sexual scripts and sexual coercion response themes (French, 2013). One theme discussed was *media transformation*, which displayed how sexualization messages in the media influences how girls dress and act like music “video girls” to appeal to the desires of boys (French, 2013). The results provided implications for bringing awareness to the unique sexualization experiences of Black girls to increase solidarity for coping with sexualization (French, 2013). Although French’s study (2013) provides a deeper understanding of how gendered racial sexualization relates to Black girls, the study was more focused on the *responses to* gendered racism and less on *types of* gendered racism experiences (French, 2013). Additionally, the study only offers a narrow scope of the types of gendered racism that Black girls experience (French, 2013). Gendered racism studies in education and psychology depicted the everyday experiences of Black girls in their intersectional context. Accordingly, these

gendered racial experiences guide how Black girls navigate and respond in their academic and social environment. Addressing the dearth of studies on gendered racism and Black girls remains an essential endeavor due to the psychological cost of gendered racism.

Adult studies on gendered racism have pioneered building an empirical narrative of Black women's experiences of oppression. Youth studies using an intersectional and Black feminist approach have indirectly assessed the types of gendered racism experiences of Black girls. Adult coping studies and reports of the overcriminalization of Black girls in the school systems builds the claim that gendered racism greatly impacts the psychological well-being of Black girls. The cost of gendered racism towards Black girls further emphasizes the need to explore the types of intersecting racism and sexism experienced by Black girls. Although previous studies provide insight on types of gendered racial oppression, these experiences display more blatant forms of gendered racism and overlook the possible subtle and everyday types of gendered racism experienced by Black girls.

Microaggressions

Contemporary racism scholars have claimed that the changing face of racism in America has not only become ingrained in everyday events, but it is hidden in beliefs and actions called microaggressions (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007). This expression of prejudice uses covert and brief putdowns that symbolizes the same meaning of overt oppression. This section will include a brief review of the literature on microaggressions theory with particular attention to race and gender microaggressions. Then, I will highlight the development of research on gendered racial microaggressions experienced by adult Black women as a way to contextualize the importance of extending the taxonomy to Black girls.

Microaggression Research

Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzales, and Willis's (1978) conducted a foundational study on racism in television commercials that defined the scholarship of covert racial discrimination. In this study, the term microaggressions was coined as pro-racist behaviors that can be verbal, or nonverbal subtle put-downs against Black people (Pierce et al., 1978). Pierce and colleagues (1978) asserted that racial microaggressions are communicated automatically and innocuously, yet have cumulative and harmful effects towards recipients. Microaggression research was later expanded by Sue and colleagues (2007) and *microaggressions* are defined as everyday, subtle putdowns and slights—whether intentional or not—that are communicated verbally, non-verbally, behaviorally, or environmentally towards people with marginalized identities. These marginalized identities include, but are not limited to people of color (e.g., African American, Asian, and Latinx American), sexual and gender minorities (e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals), women, people from lower social classes, and individuals with disabilities. These forms of discrimination are called *micro* not for their impact but for their subtle, yet chronic and cumulative nature. Microaggressions exists on a continuum, and includes microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations (Sue et al., 2007). Microassaults are conceptualized as explicit and intentional verbal or nonverbal discrimination, while microinsults are more subtle communications that conveys rudeness and insensitivity towards the receiver (Sue et al., 2007). For example, defacing a public space with racial slurs such as the N-word and racist symbols like nooses are a microassaults that send a clear yet anonymous message that people of color are not wanted in that particular space (Sue et al., 2007). On the other hand, questioning or expressing disbelief that a Black student is in an honors class is a microinsult that communicates that Black people are intellectually inferior (Sue et at., 2007). Microinvalidations

are defined as messages or behaviors, which deny or negate the thoughts and feelings of individuals from marginalized groups (Sue et al., 2007). For example, saying that you do not see color or that racism is a thing of the past when a person of color is describing a racial incident is an example of a microinvalidation.

To date, the majority of microaggression studies on African Americans has explored racial microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008; Watkins, LaBarrie, & Appio, 2010). The types of racial microaggressions that are salient to African Americans are: *Assumption of Criminality* (e.g., White women clutching purse as she passes a Black man), *Ascription of Intellectual inferiority* (e.g., telling Black students that they speak ‘so articulate’), *Assumption of Inferior Status* (e.g., assuming a Black woman is a service person), *Assumed Universality of the Black Experience* (e.g., being asked to be a spokesperson for all Black people), *Second-Class Citizenship* (e.g., White cashier passing over a Black customer for a White customer), and *Assumed Superiority of White Cultural Values/Communication Styles* (e.g., code switching to “act and talk White”) (see Sue et al., 2008). Racial microaggression has been studied in a variety of environments and populations, such as on college campuses and in the therapy room (Constantine, 2007; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yasso, 2000). A qualitative study on the racial microaggression experiences of Black college students found that many of their experiences occurred in academic and school settings (Solorzano et al., 2000). For example, Solorzano et al. (2000) found that students reported that professors had low expectations for their academic ability despite contrary evidence, and their peers on campus reminded them that they were not welcomed (Solorzano et al., 2000).

Microaggression research has extended to other marginalized identities such as gender and young age. *Gender microaggressions*, or subtle sexism, are directed at women and include

sexual harassment, degrading day-to-day interactions with men, and unfair treatment in occupational settings (Sue, 2010). Gender microaggressions include: *Second-Class Citizenship*, *Assumptions of Inferiority*, *Assumptions of Traditional Gender Roles*, *Invisibility*, *Sexist Language*, *Sexual Jokes*, and *Sexual Objectification* (Sue & Capodilupo, 2008). Later, Capodilupo, Nadal, Carman, Hamit, Lyons, and Weinberg (2010) conducted a qualitative study that sought to develop a taxonomy of gender microaggression experiences (Sue & Capodilupo, 2008; Nadal, 2010). This study included adult community and university women who shared their experiences in focus groups (Capodilupo et al., 2010). This study found six themes that emerged about the types of gender microaggressions experienced by adult women: *Sexual Objectification* (e.g., men invitingly touching women), *Sexist Language* (e.g., men calling women whores), *Second Class Citizen* (e.g., women receiving less pay at work), *Assumption of Inferiority* (e.g., assuming men are better at math), *Assumptions of Traditional Gender Roles* (e.g., assuming a woman likes to cook), and *Environmental Invalidations* (e.g., depiction of male leadership on the walls). Gender microaggressions can include microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations (Capodilupo et al., 2010). Sexual objectification and assumptions of traditional gender roles were the most frequently reported gender microaggressions (Capodilupo et al., 2010). Although this study greatly contributed to our understanding of the various types of gender microaggressions that women experience, this study did not focus on the intersections of race and gender.

More recent literature has explored microaggressions at the intersection of race and race. Kohli, Arteaga, and McGovern (2019) conducted a study that explored microaggressions that students of color experienced in the K-12 classroom. This study showed that students of color experienced racialized comments from teachers in the form of jokes and “compliments” (Kohli

et al., 2019). For example, participants reported teachers communicating racialized slights through making comments about “how articulate” students of color spoke (Kohli et al, 2019). Although this study adds the needed voices of young people’s experiences in microaggression research, it does not capture the intersectional experience of racial and gender microaggressions.

Taxonomy of Gendered Racial Microaggressions

The intersection of racial and gender discrimination experiences has expanded into exploring subtle forms of gendered racism. Lewis and colleagues (2013) coined the term *gendered racial microaggressions*, which refers to “subtle everyday behavioral, verbal, and environmental expressions of oppression based on the intersection of one’s race and gender” (Lewis, Mendenhall, Harwood, & Brown-Huntt, 2013). Lewis, Mendenhall, Harwood, and Browne-Huntt (2016) conducted the first qualitative study to develop a taxonomy of gendered racial microaggressions based on the experiences of Black women undergraduate and graduate students. They uncovered three core themes each with two subthemes: *Assumptions about Style and Beauty* (Assumptions about Communication Styles, Assumptions about Aesthetics), *Silenced and Marginalized* (Struggle for Respect, Invisibility), and *Projected Stereotypes* (Expectation of the Jezebel, Expectation of the Angry Black Woman). Lewis and Neville (2015) developed the Gendered Racial Microaggression Scale (GRMS) based on the qualitative themes from the taxonomy of gendered racial microaggressions experienced by adult Black women. In addition, the GRMS included subscales that added two additional gendered racial microaggression themes: *Assumptions of Beauty and Sexual Objectification* and *Strong Black Woman Stereotype* (Lewis & Neville, 2015). The next section will first describe the core themes and subthemes from the taxonomy of gendered racial microaggressions (Lewis et al., 2016). In addition, the subscales that emerged from the scale construction of the GRMS (Lewis & Neville,

2015) will also be discussed in concert with the qualitative themes.

Assumptions about style and beauty. The core theme *Assumptions about Style and Beauty* included the subthemes: *Assumptions about Communication Style* and *Assumptions about Aesthetics* (Lewis et al., 2016). In this theme, Black women reported assumptions about the ways they should communicate as Black women and gendered racial comments about their bodies (Lewis et al., 2016). For example, participants shared that people perceived them as being loud and using nonverbal gestures (e.g., neck rolling) when communicating (Lewis et al., 2016). Additionally, a participant shared that her White co-worker felt that her speech was too proper, so he inquired why she did not “speak Black” (Lewis, et al., 2016). At the same time, participants reported that their communication was perceived negatively when White people assumed and complained about Black women “being too loud” in public spaces (Lewis et al., 2016). In addition to making assumptions about the way Black women were supposed to communicate, there was an assumption about Black women’s beauty features and body types. *Assumptions about Aesthetics* included stereotypes about Black women’s beauty aesthetics, hair, and body type (Lewis & Neville, 2015; Lewis et al., 2013; Lewis et al., 2016). For example, participants reported that they often got inquiries about their hairstyles and comments about their body being curvaceous (e.g., big booty) or their body structure (Lewis et al., 2016). Illustrating this, one participant described her co-workers making the comments that her natural hair style (i.e., dreadlocks) were unprofessional while another participant reported a White woman questioning why her body was not as large as most Black women (Lewis et al., 2016). *Assumptions of Aesthetics* were also supported quantitatively as a part of the Assumptions of Beauty and Sexual Objectification subscale in the GRMS measure (Lewis & Neville, 2015). Collectively, these messages reduce Black women to the ways in which they communicate and

their physical appearance (Lewis et al, 2016).

Silenced and marginalized. In addition to being reduced to communication and beauty standards, Black women reported their contributions in school and professional setting minimized (i.e., *Struggle for Respect*) and ignored/overlooked in spaces such as the college classroom (i.e., *Invisibility*) (Lewis et al., 2016). Namely, participants recounted several experiences of White peers cutting them off, or walking into them because they did not notice their presence (Lewis et al., 2016). Black women in college also shared that White peers micromanaged and questioned their writing capability in group projects, and talked over them in class discussions (Lewis et al., 2016). Both of these experiences communicated that Black women were invisible in predominately White spaces and their professional competency is challenged and minimized. Integrating assumptions of communication and the struggle for respect are perceptions that Black women are angry when they communicate in a direct way. This core theme was also found in the subscale of Silenced and Marginalized that emerged in the GRMS (Lewis & Neville, 2015). The next section further explains the projected stereotypes of Black women.

Projected stereotypes. Gendered racial microaggressions also take the form of *Projected Stereotypes*, which include: *Expectation of the Angry Black Woman* and *Expectation of the Jezebel* (Lewis et al., 2016). Participants discussed common experiences of being perceived as aggressive or angry when they communicated in a particular way (Lewis et al., 2016). Particularly, Black women often felt that they had to censor themselves in fear of coming off “mean” or when they communicated with passion it was perceived as angry (Lewis et al, 2016). In some cases, being perceived as an angry Black woman also subjected them to being silenced and marginalized. The *Expectation of the Angry Black Woman* also emerged as the Angry Black

Woman Stereotype subscale of the GRMS (Lewis & Neville, 2015).

The *Expectation of the Jezebel* related to experiences where Black women felt sexualized and exoticized (Lewis et al., 2016). For example, Black women reported someone singing a sexually explicit rap song to them, or a stranger kissing them on the cheek at a night club (Lewis et al., 2016). These expressions implicitly communicate that Black women are promiscuous and comfortable with sexual advances. Furthermore, the stereotypes of Black women being angry, and jezebels illustrated subtle manifestations of historical controlling images such as the *Sapphire* and *Jezebel* (Lewis et al., 2016). For example, idealizing or criticizing Black women for being strong and assertive reflects the negative image of the *Sapphire* who does not need the help of others (especially men) to survive (Collins, 2000). In the same way, sexually objectifying Black women through implicit messages reflected the modern-day experience of the historical *Jezebel* in Black womanhood (Collins, 2000; Harris-Perry, 2011; Lewis et al., 2016). The *Expectation of the Jezebel* also emerged as part of the Assumptions of Beauty and Sexual Objectification subscale of the GRMS (Lewis & Neville, 2015). In addition, one additional subscale emerged quantitatively that represents a projected stereotype rooted in controlling images. The *Strong Black Woman Stereotype* subscale in the GRMS included items of microaggressions that communicate Black women are too assertive and direct. For example, one item in this subscale reads, “I have been told that I am sassy and straightforward” (Lewis & Neville, 2015). Similar to other stereotype-based gendered racial microaggressions, the *Strong Black Woman Stereotype* subscale reflected that Black women are “too independent” and less ladylike (Collins, 2000; Harris-Perry, 2011). Particularly, this gendered racial microaggression is related to the ways in which Black women are masculinized when compared to White women (Collins, 2000; Harris-Perry, 2011). Given all three stereotypes, Black women experienced

gendered racial microaggressions based on controlling images of being angry, promiscuous, and too strong.

Gendered racial microaggression research has made large contributions that help us understand the ways in which subtle gendered racism operates for Black women. The scholarship produced by Lewis and colleagues is one of the first of its kind, to apply an intersectional framework to explore the gendered racial microaggression experiences of Black women (Lewis & Neville, 2015; Lewis et al, 2016). Despite this foundational research on subtle gendered racism, there remains a gap in the literature on the unique gendered racial microaggression experiences of Black adolescent girls.

Summary

Research on racism and sexism has explored the history and mechanisms in which oppression is sustained for people of color and women. The modern depiction of racism and sexism towards people of color and girls has become more covert and routine in everyday interactions. Intersectionality and Black feminist thought have better located the understanding and types of racism and sexism that interlock and reflect the oppressive experiences of Black women and girls. The intersecting oppression of racism and sexism towards Black girls is presented in controlling images, stereotypes, and gendered racial sexualization. Microaggression research has further highlighted how gendered racism can be experienced through subtle and everyday slights and putdowns. Although delivered in small and palatable doses, gendered racial microaggressions can be linked to incidents that impact Black women's daily experiences in social, public, and professional settings. Given the psychological impact of subtle intersectional discrimination, it is important to apply a developmental lens to explore the types of gendered racial microaggressions experienced by Black girls. The goal of the current study was to extend

the taxonomy of gendered racial microaggressions by exploring the types of intersecting racial and gender microaggressions experienced by Black girls.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Theoretical Framework

The current study evaluated the gendered racial microaggression experiences of Black girls through a critical paradigm. Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) state that critical theory is an evaluation of the interaction of power and privilege that critiques how historical events and ways of thinking sustain oppression. Likewise, critical theory often works to give voice to the oppressed and transform the systems that disenfranchise those who are oppressed (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Black feminist thought is a critical theory that connects the historical oppression of Black women to their current lived experiences of power, oppression, and privilege (Collins, 2000). The current study was grounded in a Black feminist theoretical framework. Collins (2000) argued that African American women's ideas are often not known or believed. This framework exposes the ways in which the epistemology of Black womanhood is often silenced, marginalized, and invalidated within the history and politics of the United States. Black feminist thought is a critical social theory that studies the intersection of race, class, and gender (Collins, 2000). The current study used a Black feminist and intersectional theoretical lens to illuminate the intersection of racial and gender microaggression experiences of Black girls.

Research Design

A focus group research design under a Black feminist thought and intersectionality lens was used to explore the gendered racial microaggression experiences of Black adolescent girls. The rationale of selecting a focus group design is threefold. Focus groups have multifunctionality in understanding constructs (Kamerelis & Dimitriadis, 2013). Kamerelis and Dimitriadis (2013) asserted that focus group research situates at the intersection of pedagogy, activism, and inquiry.

Scholars have compared the multifunctionality of focus groups to a prism, because they mirror the complexity of constructs from various areas (Kamerelis & Dimitriadis, 2013). Depending on which angle you look through the prism, perspectives, understandings, and meanings that intersect become more or less visible (Kamerelis & Dimitriadis, 2013).

The pedagogical goals of focus groups are to center the voices of community members and empower them to use their voice to exercise change in their conditions (Kamerelis & Dimitriadis, 2013). A focus group research design offered the voices of these Black girls' realities to be central in the larger narrative of the devaluation and criminalization of Black girls. Focus groups can also be used for social action to transform the current condition of stakeholders (Kamerelis & Dimitriadis, 2013). Group data collection is ideal for feminist research because they decrease artificiality to a phenomenon and balance power between the researcher and group members of inquiry (Wilkinson, 1999). This study aligned with the goals of Black feminist thought because it used the voices of Black adolescent girls to build a taxonomy of Black girl gendered racial microaggressions. Although direct activism was not the major focus of the current study, the function of my data assumed a social action agenda of challenging the status quo for Black girls. The final and major function of focus groups for this study is inquiry. This function is used to construct experiences with the goal of exploring and building a taxonomy (Kamerelis & Dimitriadis, 2013). Inquiry is the foundation of the current study, because as we know more about these gendered racial microaggression experiences of Black girls, we can begin to build a pedagogy to enact change in the context of education, and mental health policies.

Researcher's Positionality

An important part of qualitative inquiry is reflexivity, which is the position and relationship between the researcher and research (Morrow, 2005; Schwandt, 2015). As

recommended by Morrow (2005), the researcher followed a set of criteria to increase reflexivity and trustworthiness in the current study. One of those methods included the researcher reflecting on her thoughts, biases, and assumptions throughout the initial, core, and final steps of data collection. The following section displays my positionality with the study, as well as the subjectivity of my research team members.

I am a counseling psychology doctoral candidate, who has been extensively trained in Black feminist thought, microaggressions, and multicultural counseling literature. I am a Black woman studying Black girls; I know that I can never be disconnected from influencing interpretations of my participants' data (Dahlberg, 2006). In many ways, the participants' shared experiences triggered my childhood memories that I experienced in predominately White spaces. While my close relation to my research can be viewed as problematic (Freeman, DeMarrais, Preissle, Roulstan, & Pierre, 2007), Black women intellectuals are needed in leading scholarship in Black feminist thought, because our personal experiences allow us to have critical insight on Black womanhood (Collins, 2000). Through field notes, memos, and debriefing sessions with my data collection and coding research team members, we were able to reflect on our personal connections to the data and desire to honor the voices of our participants. I took the stewardship of Black feminist thought seriously through intentionally involving Black feminist scholars in every part of this project (Collins, 2000). From selecting my transcription vendor to forming my coding team, I asked Black women to join me in the quest to explore, interpret, and transcend (Collins, 2000) the experiences of the participants. Upon my growth, reflection, and experience of being a Black woman, I do not take lightly the charge to un-silence the experiences of Black girls (Morris, 2015).

I explored the gendered racial microaggressions of Black girls with a guided and open

approach. That is, I viewed my participants' experiences in the context of their identities, histories, views, and realities (Charmaz, 2009). Similar to Charmaz's (2009) approach to using grounded theory, I took a bridling approach knowing that my world and my participants' world would interact. For example, although I consider myself a young person, my participants—being younger—may have viewed me as older and less relatable. To be more relatable and seen as someone the participants would trust, I wore casual clothes and had my hair in natural styles (Murchison, 2010). In fact, my data collection “uniform” consisted of a jean blazer, jeans, and a Black empowerment shirt that either read “Reclaiming my time” or “Black girl magic.” I asked my data collection team to wear casual dress in the same manner.

Participants

Recruitment. We utilized a purposeful criterion-specific sampling procedure that was determined a priori. The criteria for this study included: self-identified Black girls who are between the ages of 13 and 17 years old and attended high school. The restricted age range was used to capture the experience of teenage girls who are in high school. Black girls younger than 13 years old may have microaggression experiences, but the recognition of their gendered racial microaggressions may be difficult; therefore, the current study was limited to participants in high school. This developmental age range is supported by a previous study that used a similar age range to explore gendered racial identity (Thomas et al., 2011). With the pre-approval of all community recruitment sites, I posted flyers at churches and community centers. I also received pre-approval from certain high school principals for face-to-face recruitment during specified lunch times, or during open work times. Community center directors, youth group leaders, and school program coordinators were also active in sharing the study's information with potential participants, and reminding them of the focus group dates. To ensure the safety of minors in the

study, no personal contact information of potential participants was given to the researcher by any school or community leaders.

Data collection team. The data collection team consisted of three members and me. These members included a graduate student co-facilitator, and a process observer who was an undergraduate student. My dissertation chair also served as a co-facilitator for the first focus group to comment on any needed improvements on the interview protocol. The graduate student co-facilitator had several years of experience in gendered racial microaggression research. The undergraduate process observer had experience and interest in youth groups. All members of the data collection research team identified as Black women. I along with the other members of the data collection team were close in age. At the time of data collection, our ages ranged from early to late twenties. During data collection it was important for all research team members to appear youthful, so they would be relatable to the participants.

Data analysis team. The data analysis team consisted of myself and four other members. These members included my dissertation chair, two graduate students (different people from data collection team), and the undergraduate student who served as the process observer in the data collection team. The two graduate students had experience in Black women's mental health research and qualitative data collection. The roles of the graduate members were to help me develop codes during the first phase of data analysis. The undergraduate member attended coding meetings to assist in establishing codes, and provide her process notes so that each focus group could provide additional context. My dissertation chair served as the research auditor and "critical friend." A critical friend is defined as a person who brings her own lens and experiences to probe and challenge the researcher to think deeper, provide evidence, and consider alternative explanations to their data (Stieha, 2014). The critical friend also serves as a co-generator of

understanding the data, and highlights aspect of the research that the primary researcher may overlook (Stieha, 2014). In this study, my dissertation chair served as my critical friend and audited if my findings aligned within the domain of gendered racial microaggressions. All members of the data analysis team were self-identified Black women. Additionally, I also presented preliminary themes to my dissertation chair's Racial and Gender Health Disparities Research Lab.

Focus group profiles. Focus group participants included 33 self-identified Black adolescent girls between the ages of 14 – 17 ($M = 15$, $SD = .92$). The majority of the participants were high school freshmen (46%) and sophomores (25%) who were recruited through schools, community organizations, and churches in two East Tennessee school districts (see Table 3.1). School District One, was in a metropolitan city with an estimated population of over 185,000 residents that are 75% White and 17% African American/Black (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). School District Two was 25 miles from school district one, had an estimated population of 29,000 residents that reported being 83% White and 7% African American/Black (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). There was a total of four focus groups that varied in school profiles as it related to racial diversity, neighborhood type and student enrollment size. Schools that were identified as *high diversity* schools had study bodies that ranged from 600 to 1,000 students enrolled and had 40 – 80% Black students enrolled (U.S. News & World Report, 2019). Schools that were identified as *moderate diversity* schools had a student population of 1,100 to 13,500 students enrolled with 20 – 30% Black students (U.S. News & World Report, 2019). Schools that were identified as *low diversity* schools had majority White students with student bodies that ranged from 600 to 2,050 students enrolled with less than 20% (the lowest being 3%) Black students enrolled (U.S. News & World Report, 2019).

Table 3.1*Participant Demographics*

	<i>n</i>	% of total
Age		
14	6	19
15	15	48
16	6	19
17	4	13
Gender		
Woman	33	100
Race		
African American/Black	28	85
Bi-racial/Multi-racial	5	15
Ethnicity		
African American	32	97
Caribbean	1	3
Grade Level		
8 th	1	3
9 th	18	55
10 th	8	24
11 th	6	18
School Diversity		
Low*	10	30
Moderate**	2	6
High***	21	64

Note. *N* = 33 participants.

Focus Group 1 included fifteen participants who attended a high diversity school in school district one. In this focus group, participants had a high degree of excitement in anticipating their involvement in the group. Given the increased interest in participating in the focus group and the participants' limited availability to reschedule for another focus group date, I decided to allow all girls interested to participate in the focus group. I also did not want to perpetuate marginalization by turning some of the girls away that came to participate in the focus group. Most of the participants knew each other from school, and afterschool activities at the community center where the focus group was held. Because the girls in this group knew each other so well, participants often talked over each other and "fact checked" the accuracy of each other's story. Due to the size of this group, several participants did not share, but provided nonverbal agreement with many of the statements.

Focus Group 2 included eleven participants who attended several different schools across school district one. In focus group 2, participants attended schools that ranged from low, moderate, to highly diverse. Even though the participants attended a range of schools, they all knew each other through their participation in a community mentoring program. This focus group was conducted during one of their programs, so similar to the first focus group, there was high energy and excitement about participating. There was no "fact checking" in this group, but the participants were very responsive in each other's experiences by often finishing each other's statements, or relating their response to a previously shared incident. This focus group was not as large as the first group, but still large enough where a few girls only commented once or did not speak.

Focus Group 3 had three participants who attended another highly diverse school (different from focus group 1) in school district one. Since this group was significantly smaller

and held earlier in the day, compared to the first two groups, the energy felt different. The group members were slow to warm at first, but the conversation picked up and the participants were more active as the group continued. Focus Group 4 included four students from a school with low student diversity in school district two. In this group, all participants were high school freshmen and stated they were all friends. Like the previous smaller group, participants were slow to participate, but towards the middle, they shared more, and this group ended up lasting the longest, because participants revisited questions toward the end.

Sources of Data

Recruitment Procedure. Before completing the Institutional Review Board (IRB) submission, I identified several schools, community centers, and community organizations that served Black youth and asked if they would be willing to allow me to advertise the current study to their youth and parents (see Appendix A). After IRB approval, I recruited participants through direct, electronic and board postings, and word of mouth from leaders in local schools, churches, youth organizations, and community centers. Those interested in the study were provided with a detailed letter (see Appendix B) about the study, a parental consent form (see Appendix D), and an assent form for the participants (see Appendix E). A small monetary compensation of \$10 and food were provided to adolescents who participated in the study.

Once the participants confirmed their interest in participating in the study, and their parents gave provisional consent, I contacted them with further details of the study and information for scheduling. Before the scheduled interview, participants were sent the parental informed consent form (see Appendix D) and participant assent form (see Appendix E) that included the general purpose of the study and permission to record the focus group. Several dates were pre-selected and focus groups were held at local community facilities. Within these

locations, a private room was reserved to host the participants. Before conducting the interview, all members of the data collection team were trained in general counseling skills relevant to working with youth populations. This training included background readings about gendered racial microaggression and discrimination towards Black girls.

Semi-structured focus groups. Data for the current study was collected through four 60 – 90-minute semi-structured focus group interviews. A semi-structured interview protocol includes prepared open-ended questions used to guide a flexible conversation that allowed the participants to provide an in-depth description of their experiences (Roulston, 2010). Before the primary interview questions were asked, participants were required to complete a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix G). Each focus group opened with a brief name introduction and if time permitted, an icebreaker question (i.e., what is your favorite food?). The participants were told that they would be reflecting on subtle gender and race discrimination experiences. In order to avoid priming the participants, the word subtle was used in lieu of the word microaggressions in the interview questions (see Appendix F). The focus group questions opened with brief introductions to build rapport with the participants. The core questions were designed to capture the racial and gender microaggression experiences they have had as Black adolescent girls. Sample questions included: (a) What are some subtle ways that people treat you differently because of your race and gender? (b) Think of some of the stereotypes that exist about Black women and girls. How have others subtly expressed their stereotypical beliefs about you? (See Appendix F for a full list of interview questions). At the end of the focus groups, participants were debriefed and compensated. Once all participants left, the data collection team debriefed about the group.

Data Analysis and Standards of Quality

Dimensional Analysis

The current study used dimensional analysis in order to build on the existing scholarship of adult gendered racial microaggression research. Dimensional analysis attempts to discover the meaning of interactions in the data through the novel reconstruction of the component of a complex phenomenon (Kools, McCarty, Durham, & Robrecht, 1996; Schatzman, 1991). Once the raw data is obtained, dimensional analysis begins in a three-part coding process of designation, differentiation, and integration (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). Designation is the first step of analysis that involves the researcher building a vocabulary for the data by coding line-by-line (Kools et al., 1996). Differentiation is limiting the data by grouping the vocabulary into larger dimensions and meanings (Kools et al., 1996). Throughout this step, the researcher is also building an explanatory matrix, which is a visual prototype used to help organize and facilitate differentiation (Kools et al., 1996). The current study used the taxonomy of gendered racial microaggressions experienced by adult Black women (Lewis et al., 2016; Lewis & Neville, 2015) as its explanatory matrix, with the understanding that the matrix will be adjusted for emerging themes specific to Black girls. The integration phase is the final development of dimensions using the explanatory matrix (Kools et al., 1996). This coding process is similar to Saldaña's (2013) multi-phase coding process that includes a non-code read through (i.e., first read) followed by open coding, axial coding, and thematic coding.

The interviews were transcribed by a Black owned transcription company, who was asked to transcribe the data verbatim to capture the essence of the participants' voice. Once it was time to start the first cycle of coding (i.e., designation), I tried several types of first cycle coding methods that are commonly used under critical research frameworks (Saldaña, 2016). I

decided to use in-vivo and concept coding methods during the designation phase. In vivo coding often uses line-by-line reading and the verbatim words of participants to name codes (Saldaña, 2016). For example, when we asked participants about stereotypes about Black girls, some stated “they are loud” so the in vivo code was “loud.” Concept coding involves finding a word or short phrase that captured the larger meaning of a “chunk” of data (Saldaña, 2016). For example, if a participant shared a story about getting in trouble for violating the dress code, we would code this as “body policing.” After developing a first cycle coding plan, I held scheduled meetings with my data analysis team, which was comprised of the process observer from data collection and two doctoral students in counseling psychology (coders). The main task of the coding team was to assist me in developing codes during the designation phase (Kool et al., 1996). Over the course of several meetings, each team member individually used in vivo and process coding on each transcript (Saldaña, 2016). In vivo coding was selected because it has been used in studies that use grounded theory (Saldaña, 2016). In vivo was also selected because it was important to capture the language of the youth participants. Process coding is similar to axial coding and was selected to chunk and summarize the participant’s words (Saldaña, 2016). After individually coding, the research team met to discuss codes and memos. Using an intersectional lens, the coding team coded for gendered racial microaggressions and developmental trends. After all transcripts were coded and discussed, the data analysis team used code mapping and created tabletop categories to help transition initial codes to second round coding (Saldaña, 2016). Code mapping is the process of further condensing individual codes by grouping similar codes together, Saldaña (2016) refers to this as “coding the codes.” Tabletop categories is a method of “coding the codes” when chunks of coded data are printed and sorted into categories on a table (Saldaña, 2016). All the codes from the data analysis team members were written on an index

card and as a team, we created categories from our initial codes. This process helped us develop the vocabulary of the data, so we could then transition into the differentiation phase. During the differentiation phase, the developed categories were used to code the data again. The data analysis team was not asked to individually code during the second and final phases of coding. Once categories emerged in the second phase, I met with my dissertation chair, who also served as the auditor and critical friend, to discuss these codes. In these meetings we collectively analyzed and questioned each category to determine if they fit within the phenomenon of gendered racial microaggressions. During the integration phase, I used tabletop categories of all the identified codes to build my themes and subthemes. Several meetings with my dissertation chair and presenting these themes to my dissertation chair's research lab, helped me finalize three core themes. During coding consultations, I was transparent in discussing and sharing my memo notes to explain the theme development process.

Data Trustworthiness

Several measures and methods were used to increase the trustworthiness of the data. First, I conducted a pilot study on emerging adults as part of a qualitative research methods course in the Fall 2016 to inform the protocol of the current study. The pilot study involved emerging adults, between the ages of 18 and 21, who were asked to retrospectively reflect on their previous gendered racial microaggression experiences in high school. This pilot was done to test how the study protocol would be adapted to younger participants. A prepared interview guide was used to navigate through a semi-structured interview (Roulston, 2010). The interview guide, questions, and study protocol were adapted from a qualitative focus group study on the gendered racial microaggression experiences of Black college women by Lewis and colleagues (2016). To ensure that the adapted interview questions remained in an intersectional frame, the

researcher consulted with the principal investigator of the previous gendered racial microaggression study. The first author and principal investigator of the model study (Lewis et al., 2016) is also my academic mentor and dissertation chair.

While collecting data, it is important to practice trustworthiness by member checking, which involves asking participants to elaborate on their statements. For example, ask for clarity, summarize statements, and at the end of the focus group, ask participants if there was any information that was not covered that they would like to share (Morrow, 2005). Field notes and memo writing were used to check and decrease researcher bias (Charmaz, 2014). During data collection my research team and I wrote in a field journal and debriefed after each focus group to discuss our experience and any needed modifications to better execute the protocol. Memo writing is the researcher's personal notes that document emerging hunches, observations on the sample to consider later, theoretical reflections, and how the data connects to the literature (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1996). Memo writing provided transparency between the data analysis team and me when consulting on themes. I continued practicing trustworthiness by re-listening to focus group recordings, reviewing field notes, research team debriefing notes, coding team memos, personal memos, and keeping a research journal.

Finally, the use of both a data collection team, and a data analysis team, was my greatest source of trustworthiness. A triangulation of my data was used through collective coding from the data analysis team and broad research team (Saldaña, 2016). The current study adopted Charmaz's (2006) understanding of theoretical saturation, which is defined as the point when the data has no new emerging patterns versus simple repetition of experiences. During data collection, debriefing sessions with the data collection team were used to discuss and decide on data saturation. In debriefing sessions, right after each focus group and memo writing it was

decided that after the four focus groups, no new patterns of gendered racial microaggressions were emerging from the data. Having the field notes, memos, and debriefing comments of a research team, who specialized in gendered racism research provided multiple coding mechanisms. In the process of consultation and self-reflection, the data remained grounded in Black feminist thought, intersectionality, and the experiences of Black girls. Because my dissertation chair's research lab included both undergraduate and graduate students, there was a wide age range represented. I often consulted with the younger research lab members if the analysis team and I were unfamiliar with pop culture terms. For example, the phrase "looking like a snack" (see further explanation in Chapter 4) was discussed during my dissertation chair's research lab meetings to help us conceptualize the meaning of these words. Additionally, since I had multiple reads of the data over the course of one year, I was able to quickly locate and respond to inquiries about codes, and the group dynamics during consultations with my data analysis team.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

After several coding cycles using dimensional analysis, three core themes were identified along with three subthemes within each core theme (See Figure 4.1). First, I discuss the way these various types of gendered racial microaggressions (GRMS) were communicated to participants, followed by the definition of each core theme and subtheme. Each theme is illustrated by examples and direct quotes from participants. The themes represented in Figure 4.1 are complex, layered, and interconnected to one another. Each theme is presented in greater detail below and illustrated by examples and direct quotes from participants.

Communication of Gendered Racial Microaggressions

Participants reported that gendered racial microaggressions were communicated in several direct and indirect ways. GRMS were communicated on both an environmental and interpersonal level through microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. First, the participants identified standards of beauty, assumptions of criminality, and marginalization were communicated through their environment. For example, participants in one focus group shared that when major retail stores lock up Black hair care products, it sends a direct racial slight and insult to Black women that there is an expectation that they will steal. Some of the participants mentioned that being the only or one of two Black people in their classes made them feel marginalized and uncomfortable. In two of the focus groups, participants discussed feeling uncomfortable that their White peers could freely wear and display confederate flags and Trump paraphernalia. The findings displayed both overt and subtle forms of gendered racism. Often, the participants recounted receiving clear messages of gendered racism and hatred.

In every focus group, participants recalled explicit microassaults, such as being called a nigger and bitch. During data analysis, the analysis team often described the experiences of

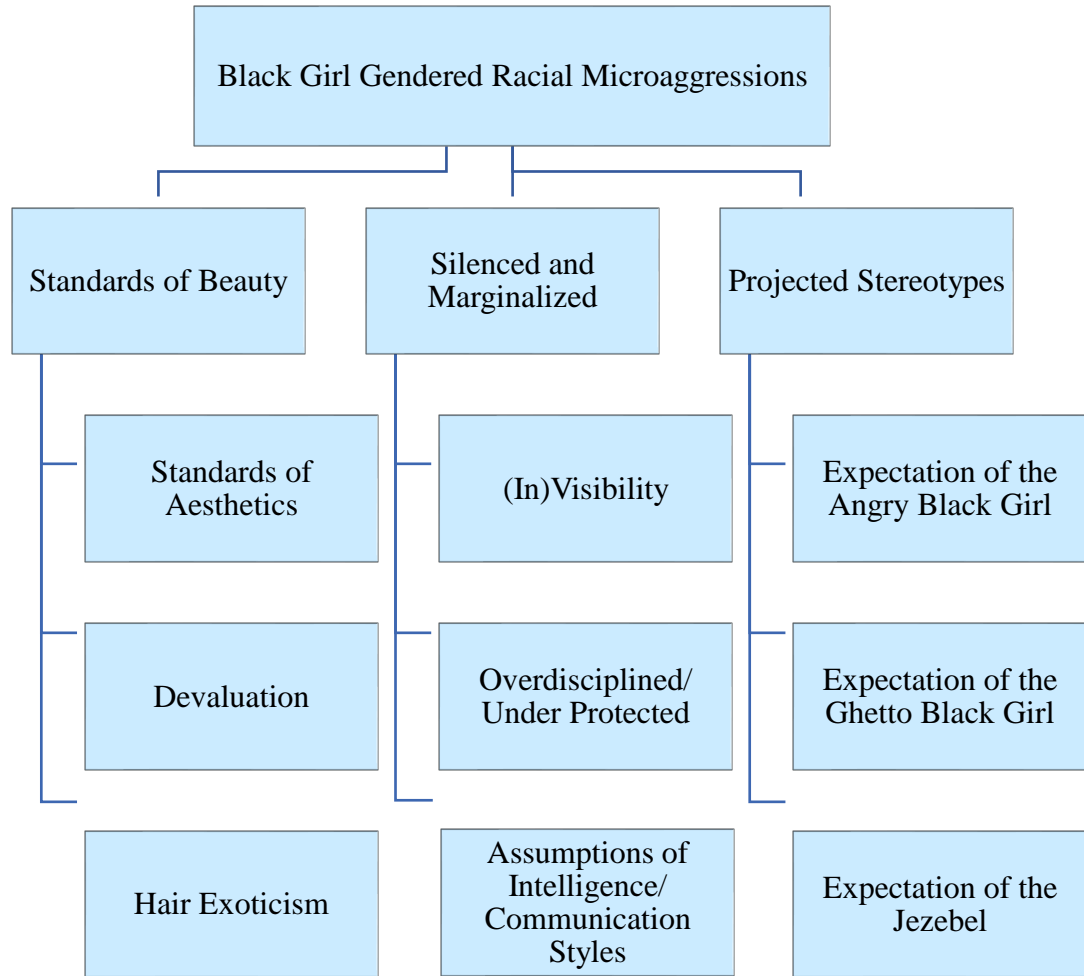


Figure 4.1. Type of gendered racial microaggressions experienced by Black adolescent girls.

Black girls being threatened with sexual violence (i.e., rape) and not being protected when peers threatened their safety as *misogynoir*. Through memos, I came across *misogynoir*, a term coined by Mona Baily (2013) that explains the hatred of Black women through sexism and anti-Black racism in media, intrapersonal, and systemic messages. Another example of *misogynoir* in our findings was when one participant shared how a Latina peer devalued the desirability of Black girls by telling classmates Black girls are not desired and “out of style.” Not only did participants share their personal lived experience of gendered racial microaggressions, but they acknowledged vicarious experiences of gendered racial microaggressions experienced by their mothers and aunts. For example, several participants discussed how they witnessed their mother or older sister experience microassaults from store employees. One participant discussed a situation when she noticed how a cashier was commenting on her mother’s communication style and made assumptions about her educational background by saying she could have only attended an historically Black college. It is important to note that the participants reported microaggressions from White people, other peers of color, Black boys, and Black men.

Standards of Beauty

This core theme included GRMS that communicated assumptions of aesthetics and a devaluation of Black girls’ hair, body type, skin tone, and overall desirability. This theme also includes specific experiences of others’ fascinations with Black girl’s hair through verbal (i.e., questions and comments about their hair) and nonverbal forms of communication (i.e., unpermitted hair touching). Three subthemes included: *Standards of Aesthetics*, *Devaluation*, and *Hair Exoticism*.

Standards of Aesthetics

Standards of aesthetics reflect gendered racial microaggressions about Black girls' physical features such as hairstyles, body type, and appearance. Participants reported receiving verbal commentary and judgements about their beauty traits. Mia¹, a high school freshman, shared:

Oh yeah, like sometimes I'll be in the store or something and a White lady will come up and she'll be like, you're cute for a Black girl. And that makes me feel a type of way, because she didn't have to put in "for a Black girl."

Mia went on to explain that saying "For a Black girl" assumes that when she is compared to White girls, she is not considered attractive and is "Ugly."

Later in the focus group discussion, Mia shared an experience of a White peer commenting on her sense of style, attributing it to an assumption of her sexual orientation. She stated:

[T]his one girl, she made me mad. She was like "When I first met you, I thought you were a lesbian." I was like, "Why?" She was like "cause how you dress." How I dress, I don't dress girly, I wear my pants, my Jordans and a shirt. I don't dress dressy or nothing, but that don't mean...that don't judge me. And she was like "Most Black people that dress like that, they are a lesbian." And I was like "Well, no."

Mia's comment about her attire was less about her sexual orientation, but more about projecting a standard of femininity and sharing that Mia, a Black girl, is too masculine to fit within White European standards of beauty and femininity.

¹ Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities. Due to requirements from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), participants' demographic information, such as age, was not linked to their names.

Tenea, an 11th grader, started a conversation about expectations of her hair being done or not done:

I usually have my hair done all the time. It's not rare—but when you do see my natural hair, it's just like “Oh, she doesn't have her hair done.” It's like “what do you mean, I don't have my hair done?” They're like “Oh, you usually have your weave and stuff.” I'm like “Okay, but that doesn't actually mean that I don't have my hair done.” I mean right now I feel like I have my hair done. It's styled a different way.

Here, Tenea discussed how White people try to define what “having your hair done” means and the standards of aesthetics related to Black girls' hairstyles. During this conversation, Alexa, a high school junior explained, “It's like they expect [Black girls to have] White girl things or expect for us to have White girl hair.” Both participants agreed that wearing their hair in its natural state or wearing a decorative scarf is seen as being “unkempt” or unprofessional by White people.

Across all focus groups, participants shared that people expect Black girls to have natural hair or assume they wear weaves. The assumption that Black girls wear weaves, or have a curlier or “nappy” hair texture was also mentioned across focus groups. If a Black girl does have aesthetics outside the assumed course hair and brown eyes, they received inquiry about being biracial with European descent. In regard to body type, participants shared that they expect Black girls to have big breasts, large booties, curvaceous bodies, and a small waist. Participants also shared experiences of environmental manifestations of standards of aesthetics, such as Black hair care products being locked up at grocery stores or store associates stating that they do not carry “colored people” hair care products.

Devaluation

This subtheme includes experiences of Black girls receiving messages that devalue their hair, beauty, and hygiene. This subtheme also included devaluation of Black girls as romantic partners and reducing their Blackness and girlhood to objects. When asked about messages about beauty standards, Alexa shared:

Hair texture, I guess. Well it's personal to me. This boy, I guess he liked me. And I had my hair similar to this [Alexa had a long sew-in weave]. So, after I took my hair out, I'm natural. So, it's kind of similar to yours [Alexa points to my natural afro hairstyle]. And he seen my natural hair and it just changed his whole view of me. And he just stopped liking me I guess. And then after I took my hair out, he looked [...] at me funny and was like "What happened to your hair. And you look so different?" I guess 'cause I look different with certain hair types, I guess. And he just stopped communicating with me.

Here, Alexa received the message her natural hair was a negative beauty trait and in order to be desired by a boy she liked, she must keep her hair long and straight. Participants also shared how other people devalued their skin through jokes and negative comparisons to objects. In discussing GRMS experiences with White teachers, Dee Dee, a high school freshman shared:

I was doing this little board thing for my teacher and the gym teacher came and he was supposed to sign it. [I had] a brown marker, he go and get it out my hand and say "Y'all have something in common."

Dee Dee explained that her gym teacher tried to jokingly reduce her appearance and skin tone to a brown marker in front of the class. Dee Dee's experience is a literal example of how Black girls' skin tone is often objectified through a comment that reduced her skin to an inanimate

object like a brown marker. Mia discussed the global message that Black girls receive from boys at school:

The only comment is that they're [Black girls] out of style, because now they're saying White girls have what Black girls have. They are thick now or that they have a butt and stuff like that. It's more about body.

Black girl participants in different focus groups shared messages they have heard from Black boys and non-Black peers, which communicate that Black girls are no longer needed as romantic partners and are "out of style." Tenea phrased it as, "It's like [Black boys] are losing faith in [Black girls]." Other experiences of devaluation include peers saying that Black girls do not look attractive wearing make-up because their skin is too dark, and not made for cosmetic products.

Hair Exoticism

Hair exoticism includes specific experiences of participants' hair being touched, smelled, and questioned about the nature of Black hair. This includes both actual touching, asking to touch, and inquiries about the texture of one's hair. Participants shared experiences that made them feel like they were put on display, examined, and physically touched by teachers and peers. These experiences were reported as common and expected experiences. Nova, a high school sophomore, shared:

Yeah, a lot of people expect you to have big curly hair and then when they don't see that, they just don't know how to act. They be like "can I touch your hair. Ooh your hair so soft today. What your hair smell like?" They be like, "girl you smell like coconut."

Adding to Nova's discussion about hair, Ximena, a high school sophomore, commented, "I get that a lot, especially 'cause I have dreads. So, they always want [to know] 'Is it rough? Girl like what do you do? Like, do you even wash it?'" In this quote Ximena shares a microaggression she

has experienced such as comments about her hair texture and assumptions about her hair hygiene.

Many Black girls reported teachers regularly touch their and other Black girl's hair at school. Emory, a high school sophomore shared her experience at a previous school, "I went to a Christian school, a predominantly White Christian school and there's this one gym teacher who would always, always smell me and my sister's hair." All these experiences shared by participants showed how Black girls' beauty and overall desirability is devalued, objectified, and exoticized.

Silenced and Marginalized

The theme of Silenced and Marginalized refers to the ways that participants reported feeling pointed out, ignored, invalidated, or silenced at school or in social settings. Participants also reported experiencing assumptions made about their intelligence and communication styles. Subthemes included: (In)Visibility, Overdisciplined/Under protected and Assumptions of Intelligence and Communication Styles.

(In)Visibility

Black girls experienced feeling invisible, outnumbered, and hyper-visible in school and social settings. Further, many experiences of feeling hyper-visible included participants feeling that school officials disproportionately targeted them and enforced dress code policies against them compared to their White female peers. Ximena discussed how she feels inferior in predominately White spaces as a Black girl:

I don't think necessarily its people, I just think cause a lot of my classes are mostly White and if there is Black people there, I'll be the only one that's fully African

American or it'll be one other. So, I always feel outnumbered or I feel like I'm the only person really in this class. So, I don't think it's actually people that do it to me, I think it's just like what I see, when I go to school or when I go anywhere. It's just what is around me.

Hazel, a high school freshman, shared this comment about some of her teachers:

I notice teachers memorize White people's names more than Black people's [names]. We still have three more weeks of school left. And my teacher still doesn't know my name. He called me [another Black girl's name] today, which is not my name. But he knows the White girl in front of me's name.

Adding to this point, Mia shared, "Yeah. My teacher Ms. Smith she just be like 'girl, girl.' And then I just look around. I be like 'My name not girl.'" Mia also shared that this same teacher did not have any grades entered for her because she did not know her name.

In another classroom experience, Ximena reported:

So, in my English classroom, we have discussion about a book or a certain topic or whatever, and every time I try to speak, somebody talks over me. Or someone acts like they didn't hear me. And I don't, maybe it's because I don't talk that much in class.

Ximena, Hazel, and Mia all shared experiences of feeling invisible by their White peers and teachers in classroom spaces.

On the other end of the spectrum, participants reported feeling hyper-visible at school.

For example, Alexa discussed:

White girls they can wear leggings and Black girls can't. Cause like, they [Black girls] will easily get spotted. They will go searching and investigating to see if you have leggings on. But if it's a White girl, "oh she has pants [on and not leggings]."

Similar to Alexa’s experience, many participants felt that school officials “investigated” whether Black girls were in compliance with the dress codes when they wore certain clothes, such as leggings and shorts. Participants shared several examples of seeing their White female peers face no consequences when they wear leggings and crop tops while Black girls who had long shirts covering their leggings received in school suspension (ISS).

Overdisciplined/Under Protected

Participants shared that their schools seem to have rigid rules and harsher disciplinary policies for Black girls. In some incidents where participants told an adult they were harassed by peers, they felt dismissed, discredited, and unprotected. Gia, a high school freshman, and Mia, a friend who attends the same school as Gia, shared their experience in chorus:

Gia: One day we were in chorus and the substitute [teacher] told us not to line up at the door, but I didn’t hear him. It was a group of me and my friends.

Mia: Yeah and we were all Black.

Gia: And then it was one White person. And I got in trouble, because I had in my headphones and I didn’t hear him. And he was like, “Hey I said don’t line up at the door.” And I got ISS for it, but the other girl didn’t.

In this exchange, both participants noticed that they received a more extreme consequence for the same actions as their White peers. In this conversation, both participants felt that some of their teachers perceived Black girls as “troublemakers” and were the first accused of negative behavior in the classroom.

Mia also shared an experience where she got into a dispute with a White classmate who continuously made racist comments about Black people. Mia explained that before a class art project, she asked her teacher not to seat her next to this classmate. The teacher disregarded

Mia's request and as the class went on Mia's classmate continued to make microaggressive comments about Black people. During a painting activity, the White classmate sprayed Mia in the face with a water bottle. Mia retaliated by dumping a bowl of water on her classmate. Mia shared how her teacher responded to the incident:

She wrote me up. She was like, "I'm just gone write you up. First of all, you wasted my paint." And she said, "Second of all, why you even throwing paint?" I said, "I always tell you when he being racist." She was like, "Well I ain't hear it today." I was like, "Okay, just write me up."

The teacher's dismissal of Mia's concerns about a racist student depicted an attitude that Black girls' well-being and safety is not a priority in the classroom. Additionally, Mia ended up being punished for an encounter she tried to avoid. In more extreme cases, participants shared experiences when White male peers have made verbal comments threatening physical and sexual violence (i.e., hanging and rape). When Black girls reported these incidents to school officials, they felt their peers received little to no consequences. In both cases, the participants received explicit gendered racist comments, but explained that the teacher's response to the incidents made them feel uncomfortable and not safe.

Assumptions of Intelligence/Communication Styles

This subtheme includes assumptions that Black girls are less intelligent and comments about being surprised when Black girls are in advanced placement courses. In addition, this subtheme includes comments that Black girls speak "too proper" and messages that Black girls' communication style is loud, negative, and disruptive.

Talia, a high school freshman, explained an experience of asking for the right change back from a cashier:

I hadn't looked down and realized, "Mm, she gave me the wrong amount of money." So, she was giving everybody they proper change. Everybody that was White and then I went back up there and I'm like, "You didn't give me the right amount." She was like, "I gave you \$7.87 back." I'm like "no, you gave me \$2 and some change back." And she was like, "No I remember giving you 7, da, da, da, da." And then she had to go back to the back and look at the camera to make sure she actually gave me \$2.87. I'm like, "I know how much you gave me. And where am I gonna get the other change from. This is the only money I got in my pocket." And she was getting smart with us, calling us niggers and stuff like that. She was mad.

Alexa, an honor roll student who was enrolled in advanced placement courses, discussed her first encounter with a teacher at her new school:

I walked in there and then my teacher assumed I was in the wrong class, and my name was on her roster. She was like "Sweetie, do you need help finding your class? Are you supposed to be in this class?" She was asking me if I was supposed to be in average classes. And I was like, "No, I'm supposed to be in here." She was like, "What's your name?" And I said "Alexa" and she checked. She was like "Oh, okay, I'm sorry. I just assumed you were in the wrong class." I'm like why would you assume that? That was my very first day of middle school.

Alexa further explained that even after it was confirmed she was in the right class, the teacher remained surprised when she did well on all of the assignments. Alexa's teacher often commented about how smart she was and how she was going to share the good news with her parents.

In addition to being told they do not belong in advanced placement classes, participants also experienced being silenced when they try to contribute to class dialogues. Nova shared an experience when she has tried to contribute to a class discussion:

I don't know if y'all have ever experienced this, but have you ever been in class and people are having an intellectual discussion and then you open up to say something and they look at you like you shouldn't be talking or like they [are] surprised that you can put big words together and it actually makes sense. Girl what? I can read the dictionary too. I think it's cause it's happened to me before. We were having a conversation about the gun violence and my teacher just looked at me so surprised that I had, number one, an opinion, and something that was smart. It didn't sound dumb. I didn't have to use all these cussing words. I wasn't being extra like, [smacks teeth, rolls neck, and makes hand gestures], "Eh." I was just talking. I was just like, "This is what I think. This is how I feel." And she just looked at me like [nonverbally communicating], First of all, who said you had permission to speak.

In these three accounts, Talia and Alexa received the message that they were less intelligent as a customer in a store and a student in the classroom. Nova received nonverbal prompts to be quiet when she shared a profound perspective which is both a GRMS that involves an assumption of her intelligence and communication style.

Participants shared how the ways in which they communicate in school or in social settings with their friends was received negatively by school officials and White people in the community. When hanging out with her friend at the movies, Jade, a high school junior shared:

When we went to the movies to watch Black Panther, we was in the theater, we wasn't even really being that loud and a White police officer walked in and was like "Y'all need to be quiet now."

In the same conversation, Kiki, a high school sophomore explained that at school with her Black female friends:

We really couldn't be doing much. We could just be having a simple conversation and then they get a little [loud] 'cause somebody say something and it might be funny. And we all just laugh or whatever. And then, they [authority figure at school] just come right to us. If a White group was together, then they wouldn't go to the White people. They just be like "Oh can y'all quiet. Oh, y'all Black folks, y'all need to be quiet."

Both experiences highlight that people perceived Black girls as loud and disruptive. Other participants shared similar experiences when they felt that Black girls laughing or having fun was perceived negatively by White peers in school and people in the community. Participants who experienced others questioning their sense of belonging and intellectual capacity as well as negative reactions to their communication style were all messages that both silenced and marginalized these participants.

Projected Stereotypes

The final core theme of gendered racial microaggressions experienced by Black girls are projected stereotypes about Black girls. Collins (2000) asserts that these are controlling images that are socially constructed stereotypes to justify the domination and marginalization of Black women. The three subthemes include: Expectation of the Angry Black Girl, Expectation of the Ghetto Black Girl, and Expectation of the Jezebel.

Expectation of the Angry Black Girl

Expectation of the Angry Black Girl is the projected stereotype that Black girls are aggressive in actions and tone of voice. Participants also reported that peers made assumptions about their ability and desire to physically fight. Alexa shared:

I don't think I talk loud, but people say I do. When it comes to debating, I'm very passionate. So, if I'm debating with you, it might seem like I'm yelling at you, but I'm really just trying to get my point across to you. And people be like "Calm down, don't fight me, what are you getting mad for?" I'm like "I'm not mad." If I'll say "I'm not mad at you, I'm just trying to tell you this." They'll kind of get scared. And I'm like, "I'm not getting angry. I hope we can still be friends after this. I'm just trying to get my point across to you." So, I can be a little aggressive sometimes, but people will assume that I'm gonna fight them or be mean to them or do something to them, because I'm yelling at them. But I try not to and I'm the opposite of a fighter. I do not fight.

Eva, a freshman in high school, explained that people perceive her as angry based on assumptions about her nonverbal behaviors, "I would be like out with my friends and then I would just have my arms crossed cause I'm cold and then they'll just think that I'm mean." She further explained that she has noticed other people's discomfort with her body language when others avoid her or start to stutter their words when they speak to her.

The Expectation of the Angry Black Girl also includes messages that Black girls know how to fight and are willing to fight and defend their White peers. Dee Dee shared that White peers will assume her ability and desire to fight:

[When] somebody mess with them [White peers], they be like, “you can go fight ‘em for me.” [Sucks teeth]. I’m like “it’s none of my business to fight them for you. Cause I’m Black, you think I can fight?”

Alexa shared an experience of her principal’s reaction to a dispute she had with a peer who approached her:

I got into an altercation with this one White girl. After the whole situation went down, we got split up into the office. My principal, he’s actually Black, but I don’t think he like Black people, cause it’s a White school. He came in the room and he started yelling at me. And I actually started crying ‘cause he thought it was my fault until the girl actually explained [...] that she came up to me. I was actually not trying to fight her, I was eating my breakfast and sitting down. And she started swinging at me. So, after she explained that to him, he apologized.

Alexa’s principal, a Black man, assumed the Black girl was the aggressor when the other student was a White girl, which highlights the way Black girls are viewed as more masculine and aggressive when compared to White girls. Other participants echoed Dee Dee and Alexa’s account of peers requesting that they “fight for them” or being assumed to be the more aggressive one or initiating a physical altercation.

Expectation of the Ghetto Black Girl

This subtheme includes personal and witnessed experiences of being called ghetto, assumptions of criminality (e.g., stealing and lying), and assumptions of lower-class status. These messages come from the denigration of Black women’s gender, race, and social class. Lala, a high school freshman, shared “So, one day me and my sister, we was at a store and we were buying something, and she was paying with her debit card and they asked if it was credit or

EBT².” In this same focus group, other participants shared that they’ve gone to the store with their mothers or relatives and witnessed how cashiers have often assumed their family members were on public assistance or excessively check to see if their large bills were real.

Mia shared that some of her teachers have shared coded messages about Black girls:

In one of my English classes, they were talking about single parents, I think it was in Ms. Blues’ [class]. Yeah, they were talking single parents and it was saying that 90% of single parents, single moms are Black women.

Mia along with other peers in this discussion, felt that their teachers communicated their stereotypical expectations for Black girls by sharing specific statistics about Black women. Mia felt that some of her teachers only think that Black girls will end up as single mothers. Presenting class Black women. Being Black, a woman, raising a child in a single parent household is often the archetype of the “Welfare Queen.”

Participants shared several experiences of feeling followed or unwanted by business store employees when they were out shopping with family and friends. Zuri, a high school sophomore reported:

It was me, my mama, and my auntie, we were looking for my birthday outfit and we went to Charlotte Russe... So, we was looking for my outfit and walking around the store, trying to look for the outfit, and then the lady she just kept following us around. She followed us to the dressing room for me to try on the outfit, everything. So, then we [decided to go] to a different store, she literally walked us out the store.

² Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) is an electronic card that serves as a method where federally funded benefits such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can be given to recipients monthly. SNAP was formally called food stamps. In this comment, EBT refers to food stamps and an assumption that the participant is poor and in need of public assistance.

Expectation of the Jezebel

The Expectation of the Jezebel centered around the assumption that Black girls are promiscuous and hypersexual. Participants reported experiences of receiving sexualized messages, slurs, and threats when they declined sexual advances. For example, Mia shared that in general Black girls are viewed as a sexualized addition to a relationship:

So, if a boy has one girlfriend that's they "main" [girlfriend]. And then if they have other girls they talk to or they cheating on her with on the side, they're called side chicks. And most boys they have a White girl as the main and they only use the Black girls to give up their virginity or something.

When asked what type of sexualized messages participants received as Black girls, participants shared several "catcalls" that they have received:

Nova: [Whispering]. "Bring your fine ass over here" or something like that.

Ximena: "Get your fine ass over here."

All: [Laughter].

Dee Dee: For real. They say, "I'm a tear that ass up."

Ximena: They be like, "Come here so I can give you a free sample."

Dee Dee: They be like, "Alright then how much is it?"

Ximena: "Bring that snack over here."

Dee Dee: "Looking like a whole meal."

Participants shared that they often receive messages from male peers requesting sexual favors through catch phrases that refer to their bodies as "snacks" or "meals." Being called a food item is an objectifying comment because it suggests that Black girls' bodies are a common item for others to consume.

Participants also shared that sexualized comments they received seemed connected to their attire. For example, Alexa shared:

At my old school, we have free dress codes. Like we can wear anything we want. I was wearing like, it wasn't a crop top, it showed a little bit of my stomach at the bottom and I had some ripped jeans on. And this White boy, he walked past me and he was like "oh my gosh, look at that prostitute."

Other participants commented that when they were dressed similar to their White female peers, they would be called strippers, prostitutes, or THOTs³. In addition to sexualized comments, participants reported also being touched by male peers in a sexualized way in school. Talia reported, "So, a girl be walking down the hallway, and dudes they be going like, 'oh my gosh, you can hit that. Oh god you can.' It's like they disrespect you, you feel me?"

Summary of Results

The current study found three core themes and three subthemes within each theme. The first core theme, *Standards of Beauty* included subtle putdowns and comparisons about Black girls' aesthetics and appearance, devaluing Black girls as romantic participants, and the intrusive inquiry and touching of Black girls' hair. The second core theme *Silenced and Marginalized* included experiences of participants feeling invisible or hyper visible, assumptions of intelligence and communication styles, and being disproportionately punished and under protected by school officials. The final core theme, *Projected Stereotypes*, included experiences, reactions, and messages that Black girls are aggressive, ghetto, and sexually promiscuous.

³ THOT is defined by the urban dictionary and other pop culture sources such as Hip-Hop music as "that hoe over there." A THOT is a woman who is perceived as having many sexual encounters.

In the next chapter I will discuss my interpretation of the core themes and relate my core themes to Black feminist thought, and previous research on discrimination experienced by Black girls. I will then highlight implications and future directions to the findings.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The purpose of the current study was to explore the gendered racial microaggression experiences of Black adolescent girls. The core themes that emerged in this study were built from the theoretical frameworks of intersectionality, microaggressions, and gendered racism that are grounded within Black feminist thought. The following chapter will include my discussion and interpretation of the core themes and how they are connected to the theoretical frameworks and previous research literature. This chapter will also include limitations of the study, implications, and future directions in research on Black girls' experiences with gendered racial microaggressions.

Communication of Gendered Racial Microaggressions

Participants reported that their gendered racial microaggression experiences were often perpetuated by Black boys, White teachers, peers, community members, and sometimes other non-Black students of color. Previous studies of gendered racial microaggression experiences of Black women have focused on microaggressions perpetuated by White people (Lewis & Neville, 2015; Lewis et al., 2013; Lewis et al., 2016). In the current study, we found that participants often shared that when receiving gendered racial microaggressions about standards of aesthetics and devaluation, they often came from Black boys and other girls of color. These findings displayed the complexity of Black girls' experiences with intersecting forms of oppression that includes marginalization based on both gender and race (Collins, 2000). For gender, Black girls were devalued by White girls and other girls of color, which communicates that they are inferior to "true womanhood" as defined by White, Eurocentric standards of beauty (Collins, 2000). Likewise, Black girls were portrayed as "too" strong, smart, and outspoken, which challenges Black male masculinity and leads Black boys and men to view Black girls as less desirable

romantic partners (Capodilupo & Kim, 2014; Collins, 2000). Participants also shared the way gendered racial microaggressions are communicated to them through humor and compliments from their White teachers, peers, and members of the community. These findings mirror previous studies of microaggressions in higher education and K – 12 schools, which both found that students of color reported receiving subtle putdowns and racial jokes from their White teachers and peers (Harwood, Mendenhall, Browne Hunt, & Lewis, 2012; Kohli, Arteaga & McGovern, 2019).

When we asked the participants about subtle forms of gendered racism, they often shared experiences of overt racism. Upon further probing of participants' experiences by the primary facilitator, some of the microaggressions were often microassaults. The communication of gendered racial microaggressions towards Black girls seemed to be communicated more explicitly when compared to the experiences of adult Black women (Lewis & Neville, 2015; Lewis et al., 2013; Lewis et al., 2016). These findings beg the question as to why Black girls are subjected to microassaults and more explicit forms of gendered racism? One possible reason could be that research indicates that Black girls are often viewed as older than their actual age compared to their White counterparts. For example, Seaton and Carter (2019) found that Black girls who perceived themselves as older than their same-age peers reported more frequent gender and racial discrimination. The criminalization of Black girls in the justice system has contributed to the disparity in punishment due to the adultification of Black girls (Epstein et al., 2017; Morris, 2016). A further conceptualization of this disparity is that Black girls are seen as less feminine than their White counterparts, which perceives the same behavior as more defiant (Morris, 2017). For example, Black girls are often punished by school officials for minor dress code violations or are often called a stripper for choosing to wear clothes that suggest they are

less innocent and “should know better.” Black girls are in the unique position of being simultaneously viewed as adults, and being in a power down position as minors, which may contribute to the greater salience of microassaults.

Other possible rationales for why the participants reported microassaults include the general mechanism of microassaults, and the overarching ways in which gendered racism operates towards Black girls. People choose to communicate more explicit microaggression for three main reasons, (a) ensure anonymity, (b) knowing they’re in the company of others who share or tolerate biases, and (c) a response when one has lost control of his feelings and emotions (Torino et al., 2019). For example, anonymity is granted when participants are called Black bitches, monkeys, niggers, and just being “out of style” by peers on social media. A tolerance of not protecting Black girls against racial and sexual violence is communicated when teachers minimize, and do not respond to students’ explicit threats towards Black girls. A loss of control of one’s emotions is displayed when a cashier calls a Black girl a nigger when she is corrected for giving her the wrong change.

Microassaults also function as a way to suppress Black girls through strictly enforcing school policies and perpetrating controlling images. Collins (2000) discussed that disenfranchising Black girls through education is one of the political ways that oppress Black women because it suppresses their economic advancement. The findings of the current study suggest that the disproportionate punishment for dress code violations, being overdisciplined, and being under protected, communicate that Black girls are deviant, undervalued, and second-class citizens in school. Controlling images ascribed to Black women such as, being sexually deviant, aggressive, and welfare queens contributes to the oppression of Black women (Collins, 2000). The communication of these controlling images is found in the participants’ experiences

of being told they are too loud, ghetto, strippers, and fighters. Collins (2000) further asserts that these dimensions of suppression function to control and keep Black women in a subordinate position. The microassaults shared by participants of the current study displayed an immediate and sharp response to Black girls who try to step out of this subordination. Microassaults work to silence Black girls who dare to be smart, outspoken, and liberated in their youth and beauty.

Finally, another rationale to consider about why participants reported more explicit forms of gendered racial microaggressions is their developmental age. Over the past few years, previous research has highlighted that Black girls are aware of their gendered racial identity and able to recall their experiences of gendered racism (Seaton & Carter, 2019; Thomas et al., 2011). Thomas and colleagues (2011) have asserted that Black girls have a salient gendered racial identity and their experiences should be explored with an intersectional lens. Although previous studies on the oppression of Black girls has shown that Black girls are aware of the gendered racism they experience, due to the developmental age of Black girls, more explicit gendered racial microaggressions may be more salient. That is, Black adolescent girls may be experiencing both covert and overt gendered racism, but they might be able to recall more microassaults due to their developmental age. Perhaps as Black women get older, the salience of subtler forms of gendered racism may increase. However, it is also possible that the salience of microassaults of Black girls might be reflective of the overt forms of oppression communicated to Black girls in society.

One of the ways that microaggressions contribute to a cycle of oppression is through a code of silence that denies marginalized groups the freedom to express their outrage, minimizes their concerns, and provides negative consequences for communicating ideas that counter the dominant narrative (Sue, 2010). Relatedly, gendered racial microaggressions function as a way

to suppress Black girls. One of the ways in which microaggression theory and Black feminist thought intersect, is the creation of controlling images projected on to Black women. Controlling images are negative stereotypes of Black women that are created and used to justify their oppression. These images are designed to legitimize injustice and oppression as natural and a part of everyday life (Collins, 2000; Harris-Perry, 2011). The following sections will discuss how the three core themes operate to define the controlling images of Black girls, describe the negative consequence when Black girls step out of the bounds of these controlling images, and how these controlling images fully operate as stereotypes. The nature of how gendered racial microaggressions are communicated to Black girls will also be further conceptualized in the following section.

Defining the Controlling Images of Black Girls: Standards of Beauty

The participants' experiences with *Standards of Beauty* gendered racial microaggressions were all centered around the goal of dominant group members (i.e., White people and Black boys) defining the standards of Black girls' body, skin, hair, dress, and overall desirability as a romantic partner. Comments about Black girls' hair, body, and skin tone discussed in the *Standards of Aesthetics* in the current study aligned with previous qualitative and quantitative studies on gendered racial microaggressions related to *Assumptions of Aesthetics* (Lewis et al., 2016) and *Assumptions of Beauty and Sexual Objectification* (Lewis & Neville, 2015). When it came to *Standards of Aesthetics*, perpetrators of these types of gendered racial microaggressions communicated rigid and unrealistic standards of beauty. For example, participants reported microaggressive messages that they needed to have large breasts, a big booty, small waist, and long natural hair. On the other end, Black girls experienced stereotypes that they did not naturally have long hair, and there were assumptions that they always wore weaves, or were

“bald headed.” When Black girls “surprised” others with certain aesthetic features, such as having light eyes or loose curly hair, it was assumed that they were biracial with European descent. If being biracial or multiracial was not assumed, some participants were told they were “pretty for a Black girl.” One participant shared that a White classmate assumed that she was a lesbian because she dressed in pants and athletic sneakers (i.e., “Jordan’s”). This assumption was rooted in viewing Black girls’ style and aesthetics as masculine, rather than an assumption of her sexuality. This comment is another depiction of Black girls being viewed as more masculine and less feminine, while White girls are placed on a pedestal for being more feminine, elegant, and delicate. In all of these cases, standards of aesthetics are viewed as a binary element that positions White European features as the epitome of beauty, and views Black African features (i.e., darker skin, larger bodies, and kinky hair) as ugly and inferior (Collins, 2000).

As the dominant group contributes to the definition of beauty for Black girls, there is a continual devaluation of Black girls’ beauty, aesthetics, and overall perceived value in romantic relationships. When participants tried to display their natural beauty by wearing their hair in its natural state, they experienced judgment and rejection from Black boys, White peers, and White teachers. In one focus group, participants reported that the standards of their hair’s cleanliness and condition was often defined by others. This conversation between participants was about if “your hair was done.” They explained that other people did not believe that natural styles was “having your hair done.” Again, when Black girls represent the opposite of White femininity and beauty, their qualities are devalued (Collins, 2000). The devaluation of Black girls’ beauty features has also been communicated as a joke. On the surface this joke appears to be a teacher being friendly with a Black student, but actually this comment communicated a negative evaluation of the student’s dark skin tone. Not only are Black girls devalued, but their physical

appearance is also objectified and dehumanized by being compared to objects like brown markers.

The theme *Devaluation* mirrors and extends previous qualitative research on Black girl's gendered racial identity development (Thomas et al., 2011). When it comes to standards of beauty, Black girls' beauty standards are juxtaposed to European beauty standards. In addition, Black boys internalized these Eurocentric standards of beauty when they preferred to date Black girls with more European physical features (e.g., light skin and straight hair) or White girls (Capodilupo & Kim, 2014). Specifically, the testimony of one participant's experience of being rejected by a Black boy after wearing her hair natural, mirrored the experiences of adult Black women in Capodilupo and Kim's (2014) study on Black women's body image. Reinforcing previous literature, Black girls are susceptible to receiving negative body image messages from Black boys who internalize Eurocentric beauty aesthetics on girls (e.g., long and straight hair). This subtheme extends Lewis and colleagues' (2016) theme of *Assumptions of Aesthetics* in that it included putdowns from Black boys and other girls of color. Findings of the current study complement previous studies that have displayed the struggle for Black girls to self-define their qualities, such as standards of beauty (Joseph, Viesca, & Bianco, 2016; Thomas et al., 2011). Collins (2000) asserted that one of the goals of Black feminist thought is to liberate Black women through the power of self-definition. Gendered racial microaggressions that define Black girl's standards of beauty, take away their power of self-definition, which operates as a controlling image of Black girls' appearance and dating desirability. Therefore, gendered racial microaggressions related to *Standards of Beauty*, continue a cycle of oppression, because it keeps Black girls' beauty inferior to White girls.

In addition to defining and devaluing Black girl's beauty, gendered racial microaggressions can create a controlling image through beauty exoticism. *Hair Exoticism* involved questioning, examining, and spotlighting Black girls' hair as an attraction because it counters the status quo of aesthetics. The experience of Black girls having their hair styles questioned or commented on is similar to those found in previous gendered racial microaggressions studies, but adds the experience of Black girls having their hair touched and petted (Lewis et al., 2016). *Hair Exoticism* is made to make Black girls' feel like their hair is an attraction at an amusement park that is free to touch without permission. Many of the participants reported that their hair is often touched by White teachers. This level of voyeurism around Black girls' hair is a normalized experience for the Black girls in the current study. Although related to sexualizing the Black female body, the display of Black women's body has a long history in American and European culture as evident in the legacy of Sarah Baartman (Gordon-Chipembere, 2011). A Khoisan woman, Sarah Baartman was captured, enslaved, and then later put on display for her physical features in a freak show in Europe (Gordon-Chipembere, 2011). Proceeding her early death, Baartman's body continued to be exploited when her genitals were dissected and displayed in a French museum (Gordon-Chipembere, 2011). The story of Sarah Baartman has been a powerful testament to the gendered racial and sexualized exploitation of Black womanhood. In a collection of tributes to Sarah Baartman authored by Black woman, scholar, Natasha Gordon Chipembere (2011) asserted that the dissection and examination of Baartman's genitals created the "master text" about the black female body. This master text continues to reduce Black women to their genitals, and describe their humanity through "degradation, sexualization, and primitiveness (Gordon-Chipembere, 2011). Black women's body being displayed next to animals created a close association of how White consumers

analyzed and objectified their bodies (Collins, 2000). Black women's bodies are often closely associated with animalistic qualities, which communicates their physical features are similar to humans, but less civilized like an exotic zoo animal put on display (Collins, 2000). If Black girls' natural hair is being viewed as subhuman and exotic, this makes it easier to touch, judge, comment, and demand information about their hair. Perhaps, the participants' intersections of being young, Black, and female, expose them to more daily experiences of peers and adults violating their personal space.

To date, there has been a recent surge of updated literature on identity politics as it relates to Black hair (Brown, 2018; Omotoso, 2018; Smith, 2018). Previous literature explains the history of Black hair and how currently the work force, schools, and the armed forces try to problematize natural Black hair, and define natural hairstyles such as afro puffs, braids, and dreadlocks as unprofessional (Brown, 2018; Omotoso, 2018; Smith, 2018). Although the findings of the current study do not mirror explicit identity politics, the experiences shared add to the existing narrative of hair politics. The *Hair Exoticism* subtheme suggested that Black girls were either praised and complimented for wearing Eurocentric hairstyles, or perceived negatively for wearing hair extensions. Additionally, *Hair Exoticism* included participants being objectified and dehumanized by verbal comments and non-verbal behaviors (i.e., hair touching) when they wore their hair in a natural style. The experience of Black girls wearing their natural kinky and curly hair is reflective of the othering that occurs in the prevailing standards of beauty that Black women seems to never escape or live up to. Collins (2000) explained that having kinky hair is closer to having more African features which, in turn, is perceived to be inferior compared to White standards of beauty. When Black girls wear their natural hair, this is seen as a symbol of self-defined beauty and resistance to one-dimensional standards of beauty (Brown,

2018). When participants in the current study wore their hair in natural styles, or displayed the diversity of ways they could style their ethnic hair, gendered racial microaggressions were communicated as a consequence to their rejection of White beauty standards. These comments and uninvited touching of Black girls' hair on the surface looks like a positive affirmation, but beyond the surface these are messages of beauty devaluation.

Silenced and Marginalized: Responding to the Contradiction of Controlling Images

When Black girls present counter-narratives of controlling images of being loud, troublemakers, or unintelligent, *Silenced and Marginalized* gendered racial microaggressions are used to respond to this contradiction. For example, Black girls either feel invisible in the classroom when teachers do not remember their names, or they are talked over by peers during class discussions. In contrast, Black girls become hyper visible to teachers for negative behavior, which also results in body policing. Participants' experiences in the *(In)Visibility* subtheme depicts the various types of visibility Black girls experience in their educational settings. Black girls are often discouraged from contributing to critical class discussions, or singled out for their clothes, which parallel the ways in which Black women are silenced and called out to give a "black perspective" in professional settings (Lewis et al., 2016). Similar to previous studies on Black girls and dress codes (Morris, 2016), participants felt that there was a double standard when it came to the enforcement of dress codes. Several participants shared how the same outfit on a Black girl would result in an in-school-suspension (ISS; i.e., the removal of students from the regular educational setting because they violated a school policy) whereas it would go unnoticed on a White girl.

The criminalization of the way in which Black girls dress is a direct response to the controlling narrative that Black girls' bodies are hypersexual and need to be better covered

(Harris-Perry, 2011). As asserted by Morris (2016), dress codes become a protected tool used to discipline Black girls and put them in their place, because it can directly outlaw Black girls' natural hairstyles as "unkempt" and assume that Black girls' clothes are intentionally sexual and deviant. Morris (2016) further explained that dress codes are arbitrary and less about having a "uniformed student presentation" and more about punishing an appearance that is deemed "too distracting." In a study examining the disproportionate discipline of Black girls in school districts, Morris and Perry (2017) found that Black girls were three times more likely to receive punishment for minor violations and "subjective infraction" like dress code violations compared to White girls (Morris & Perry, 2017). In addition, Morris and Perry (2017) suggested that these subjective violations offered more room for teachers to perceive Black girls' actions and style of dress as more deviant and less feminine than other female students.

The invisibility and hypervisibility of Black girls contributes to their experiences of being overdisciplined and under protected. The subtheme *Overdisciplined and Under Protected* adds a unique narrative about the assumptions of criminality of Black girls in school disciplinary actions that have not been captured in previous microaggression research. For example, gendered racial microaggression studies have not discussed how Black women could be seen as "rule breakers" while racial microaggression research has focused on the assumption of criminality for men of color (Lewis et al, 2016; Sue et al, 2007). Several Black girls in the current study shared that they were only seen as "troublemakers" and not victims of peer harassment by school officials. Many participants experienced or witnessed other Black girls getting disciplined for dress code violations, or minor infractions, such as lining up early for class. The experiences shared in the subtheme, *Overdisciplined and Under Protected*, suggests that school officials often see Black girls as the perpetrator, rather than a victim in peer-to-peer conflict. When Black

girls are not seen as possible victims of bullying, schools fail to intervene, and Black girls are left to defend their personal safety by themselves (Crenshaw, 2015; Morris, 2016). Findings of this study mirror the reports of previous studies that focus on the criminalization of Black girls in the school system (Epstien et al., 2017; Morris, 2016). Black girls counter the “troublemaker narrative” when they inform school officials of peers who are harassing *them*. When teachers dismiss or invalidate Black girls’ concerns of being harassed by peers, their concerns become silenced. Additionally, if Black girls continue to have their safety threatened by peers, and teachers fail to intervene, “fighting back” may seem to be the only option they can access. The choice in “fighting back” then continues the cycle of being marginalized as “troublemakers” because their actions go against school policy. For example, the participant who got written up for throwing a bucket of water on a peer who was harassing her, was a direct consequence of her not being protected and “having to fight back.”

The subtheme *Assumptions of Intelligence and Communication Styles* suggested that when Black girls show that they are smart and outspoken, they are met with gendered racial microaggressions that are used to minimize their intellect or belittle the ways in which they communicate. For example, when Black girls try to contribute to classroom conversations, teachers silence their voice by reminding them that they were not given permission to speak versus continuing to engage them in the discussion. The *Assumptions of Intelligence and Communication Styles* presented in the current study reflected some of the experiences Black women reported in their professional and academic spaces (Lewis et al., 2016). Similar to previous youth studies, it is assumed that Black girls are loud, rude, or speak “broken English” (Koonce, 2012; Morris, 2016). In the current study, there seemed to be disapproval and disruption when Black girls were laughing and having fun with their friends. On the other hand,

when Black girls entered the classroom of an honors course, their legitimacy of being enrolled in the class was questioned by teachers. Further, when Black girls were doing well in advanced classes, they felt that compliments from teachers that they were so smart was a negative assumption of their intelligence. The teachers' reaction of surprise suggested that they presumed the students would not be as smart as the other White students in the classroom. Likewise, when a participant excelled in advanced coursework, and the teacher informed the student's parents of their accomplishments, this was perceived as a microinsult. This communicated that the parents of this Black student were neither aware nor involved in their child's academic success.

Projected Stereotypes: Operating in Narrowly Defined Controlling Images

The final gendered racial microaggression core theme showed very clear and defined types of controlling images that are used to keep Black girls in a cycle of oppression. The expectation of Black girls being angry, ghetto, and Jezebels highlights gendered racial microaggressions that both maps onto the experiences of adult Black women, and also gives voice to some unique experiences for Black girls. First, in the *Expectation of the Angry Black Girl*, Black girls received subtle messages that the way they communicated was aggressive, and also that their appearance assumed their capability and desire to physically fight. Being perceived as an angry Black girl closely aligned in both qualitative and quantitative research on gendered racial microaggressions (Lewis & Neville, 2015; Lewis et al., 2016). When Black girls were outspoken and passionate in their communication style, they were perceived as aggressive, similar to the *Angry Black Woman* or *Sapphire* stereotype (Collins, 2000; Harris-Perry, 2011). Similar to the *Sapphire*, Black girls were perceived as more masculine when their smaller White female peers either made a joke, or seriously requested that Black girls fight on their behalf. In altercations, Black girls were immediately assumed to be the aggressor when a White peer was

involved. The projection of the *Angry Black Girl* stereotype is supported by the perception that Black girls are not docile and less feminine (Collins, 2000; Morris, 2016).

Given the diversity of Black girls in the study, the *Expectation of the Ghetto Black Girl* emerged in the participants' experiences of being portrayed as ghetto and poor, which in some ways mirrors the Welfare Queen stereotype (Collins, 2000). Although this subtheme was not found in gendered racial microaggressions research with adult Black women, it is similar to the *Assumption of Criminality* found in racial microaggression research (Sue et al., 2007). For example, Black girls being followed in a store can be connected to situations when Black men are followed in stores or avoided by women on the street (Sue et al., 2007). Findings in this study extend previous research on microaggressions by highlighting intersections with gender, race, and social class. The *Welfare Queen* stereotype reveals intersectional oppression based on Black women's gender, race, and class, because it depicts poorer Black women as being lazy, having many children, and being dependent/exploitative of public assistance (Collins, 2000; Harris-Perry, 2011). When a cashier assumed the young participants and their mothers were paying with EBT³ cards, she assumed that these Black girls were lower income and depended on public assistance. Similarly, when groups of Black girls who were accompanied or unaccompanied by adults were followed by store employees, this assumed that Black women did not have their own money and would resort to stealing. Likewise, an English teacher who mentioned that most single mothers are Black women, also communicated using coded language that makes assumptions that most Black girls come from lower-income, and single-parent households. When educators fail to take a critical intersectional approach to their curriculum, they are unaware of the way these gendered racial microaggressions creates bias in the selection and presentation of course material (Lewis, Williams, Moody, Peppers, & Gadson, 2019).

The Jezebel stereotype perceives Black women as hypersexual, promiscuous, immoral, seductive, and unable to control sexual desires (Collins, 2000; French, 2013; Harris-Perry, 2011; Lewis et al., 2016). Findings in the *Expectation of the Jezebel* extends previous research on the sexual scripts afforded to Black girls as they navigate through gendered racial sexualization (French, 2013). Thus, the *Expectation of the Jezebel* can either be a sexual script Black girl internalize or resist. Likewise, the current study adds to microaggressions related to the objectification of Black girls that are similar to the qualitative gendered racial microaggression experiences of Black women college students (Lewis et al., 2016) as well as quantitative research on adult Black women (Lewis & Neville, 2015). Participants shared many experiences of being hypersexualized when male peers asked them to be the “side chick,” or called them “strippers” and “THOTs” for wearing leggings and crop tops. Black girls’ bodies were also perceived to be in the service of others, because in addition to their hair, their butts were touched and grabbed. Rooting back to slavery, the bodies of Black women and girls were used for economic consumption (i.e., birthing more slaves to attend to farm production and serving as wet nurses to White children) and pornographic exhibitions (Collins, 2000). Black women being portrayed as sexually deviant and savage-like has been used to justify their sexual objectification (Collins, 2000). Boys referring to Black girls as “snacks” or “meals” also highlights a modern communication of objectification. To this end, Black girls being referred to as meals suggests that their bodies are offered for the consumption and benefit of others. Collectively, findings in this subtheme showed the sexual objectification of Black girls ranged from jokes to sexualized slurs. The findings extend existing research on gendered racial microaggressions as well as provide a developmental lens of the projected stereotypes of Black girls.

Limitations

The current study adds the much-needed voices of Black girls' experiences in gendered racial microaggression and youth microaggression research. My intentionality in recruiting participants from predominately Black, predominantly White, and a more racially balanced high school, allowed for the inclusion of the experiences of Black girls from a variety of school and community environments. Even though the specific social class of participants could not be determined, the experiences of these Black girls seemed to give voice to girls from lower and middle-class households.

Although this study contributes to microaggression research in several important ways, as in any study, there are some limitations. First, two of the focus groups did not have the recommended range of group members. The optimal number of each focus group was between four to eight participants (Kreuger & Casey, 2000). Two of the focus groups had over ten participants, and not every participant had the opportunity, or felt comfortable, to share her experiences. A possible contribution to the disproportionate size of the focus groups may have been an interaction of the location, focus group date, participant availability, and recruitment impact. For example, the larger focus groups were either during a day where many high school girls were at the community center, or the data collection team conducted a focus group during an event participants were already attending. The groups that had lower attendance either met on a weekend day, or the lead researcher was not able to do direct (i.e. on-site) recruitment at an associated school or organization of the potential participants. More participants tended to be available during the week and after school than compared to a Saturday afternoon. The time of data collection was also towards the end of the academic year for students, which presented additional limitations in making the focus groups accessible to participants. The timing of data

collection and difficulty of conducting focus groups into the summer may have contributed to the decreased attendance in the focus groups scheduled closer to the end of the academic year. The decrease in participation in the last scheduled focus group contributed to determining theoretical saturation; however, it is possible that these logistical issues were also a factor. This limitation also reflects that one of the challenges of conducting research with minors in the community is the issue of transportation. Although the data collection team did their best to collect data at easily accessible venues, participants who were a part of the larger focus groups had limited availability and were not able to come on an alternative date. As someone who is very aware of the marginalization of Black girls broadly, and in the community where I was collecting data, I did not feel comfortable turning away interested youth, in fear of disempowering and silencing these potential participants.

Another limitation of the study was the self-selected nature of focus group research. The group method of collecting data may have been a detriment to potential participants who are not as comfortable talking in groups. Many of the participants in the current study may have been more outspoken, because they are naturally extroverted, or more comfortable speaking because they knew the other participants in their focus groups. The focus group design may have made it more difficult participants who were more introverted and not comfortable with sharing in a group setting. For example, when I was recruiting during lunch at a high school, I met one participant who was very outspoken and open towards me when it was just the school program director and me. When this participant arrived to one of the larger focus groups, she was silent and appeared socially uncomfortable with the other girls. Although this participant went to the same school as the other participants in the focus group, she may have been a part of a different social circle. To address this limitation, future studies could expand their research design to focus

groups and individual interviews to capture the experiences of participants who are less extroverted. Future studies could also have enough researchers on-site to divide large groups into two focus groups, that could be conducted simultaneously in different rooms.

Finally, administrators in school districts were one of the primary gatekeepers to accessing potential participants, which also served as a limitation in reaching participants at predominately White schools. Although recruitment for the current study was approved by two school districts, it relied on the discretion of individual principals to respond, and allow recruitment to occur at their schools. In one county that included over fifteen high schools, out of the eight schools that were contacted, only two schools responded. These schools that responded had a larger representation of Black students, or specific programs for students of color. In the other school district, the principal approved recruitment, but the assigned point person did not respond to me once it was time to schedule on campus recruitment. Consequently, these barriers limited our reach to Black girls who attended predominately White and rural schools. This limitation relates to how the educational system creates institutional barriers when Black feminist scholars try to access the voices of Black girls (Collins, 2000).

Future Research Directions

As stated in LaShawnda Lindsey-Dennis's (2015) literature review of culturally relevant research on African American girls, Black girls are one of the most understudied populations in education and social science research. The dearth of Black girl research grounded in a Black feminist framework, presents many opportunities for future research. The findings of the current study also provided several directions for future research in intersectional microaggressions for youth. Future qualitative studies should explore the coping strategies Black girls use when they encounter gendered racial microaggressions. As highlighted in previous research on gendered

racial microaggression coping strategies for Black college students, it is important to understand the ways in which Black women respond and choose to cope with gendered racial experiences (Lewis et al., 2013). For example, future research should investigate whether Black girls engage in active or passive coping strategies, and whether they consider the power dynamics when deciding how to respond to gendered racial microaggressions (Lewis et al., 2013). Exploring these coping strategies would build a conceptual model, which could then be used to develop a gendered racial microaggression coping strategy measure.

Once a coping strategy measure is developed, future quantitative studies can explore the relation between gendered racial microaggression experiences, coping strategies, and psychological outcome variables. For example, a future study could explore the impact of coping strategies on the relation between Black girl gendered racial microaggressions and psychological distress. Exploring how Black girls choose to respond and cope with gendered racial microaggression is important given the established relation between gendered racial microaggressions, psychological distress, and negative health outcomes for adult Black women (Lewis & Neville, 2015; Lewis et al., 2017).

Other qualitative research can also explore the impact of gendered racial microaggressions on Black girls' sense of self, identity development, and academic achievement. As recommended in a previous study on Black girls' gendered racial identity development, future studies can include Black girls keeping a daily diary of their gendered racial experiences and how they influence their self-perception (Thomas et al., 2011). In addition, applied research could design empowerment intervention programs that target the awareness and coping of subtle gendered racism experienced by Black girls. It would be important to include gendered racial microaggressions in intervention research to enrich the gendered racial social context in

intervention programs that target Black girls' empowerment and identity development (Lane, 2017).

The findings in the current study can be applied to future quantitative studies. Specifically, this study can inform the development of an adapted version of the Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale (GRMS; Lewis & Neville, 2015) for Black adolescent girls since the original measure was developed based on the experiences of Black women. Once we have an adapted GRMS measure for Black girls, we can explore a large range of social, educational, and psychological correlates. For example, having a GRMS for Black girls would allow us to explore the impact of gendered racial microaggressions on Black girls' educational achievement, classroom belongingness, and classroom attainment. A GRMS for Black girls could also allow future research to explore the relation between gendered racial microaggressions and internalizing variables such as self-objectification, body image, and sexual scripts. Finally, a GRMS for Black girls would allow future research to investigate the impact of gendered racial microaggressions, psychological and physical health outcomes, such as stress, anxiety, depression, and hormonal stress responses.

Implications

Implications for Practice

This study presents several implications for clinical and educational practice. The implications of this study can increase awareness of youth-based microaggressions and can inform mental health providers who work with Black adolescent girls. It is important that Black girls are exposed to learning about microaggression, because labeling their experiences can decrease these messages from being internalized (Torino et al., 2019). For example, if a Black girl knows about *Silenced and Marginalized* gendered racial microaggressions, she will not

internalize “being a bad girl” for her teacher’s decision to over discipline her for minor infractions. Previous research on gendered racial microaggressions and health outcomes with Black adult women suggests that gendered racial microaggressions are significantly correlated with psychological distress and negative health outcomes (Lewis & Neville, 2015; Lewis et al., 2017). Thus, it is expected that gendered racial microaggressions are also a source of distress for Black girls. The findings may be applied to helping therapists and clinicians assess and contextualize gendered racial stress with Black adolescent girl clients. From a group therapy perspective, school-based counselors, therapists, and psychologists could develop outreach programs for Black girls to help educate them about gendered racial microaggressions and provide resources for Black girls to cope with gendered racial microaggression that occur in school settings. As recommended by previous literature, it is also important for therapist to be aware of intersectional microaggressions, so that they do not perpetuate stereotypes, or pathologize clients’ presenting concerns (Lewis et al., 2019). The experiences from the participants of the current study can serve as a taxonomy that therapists can use to identify possible gendered racial microaggressions experiences Black girls experience daily.

In addition to clinical implications, findings in the current study have applications for educators. The findings of this study suggest that many of the participants’ gendered racial microaggression experiences took place at school. It is important for educators and school administrators to be aware of the daily gendered microaggressions Black girls experience. Morris (2016) recommended that cultivating a healthy learning environment for Black girls included a strong relationship between teachers and students, and having wraparound services onsite. Gendered racial microaggressions threaten the relationship between teachers and Black girls. Findings of the current study may be used to increase awareness of the types of gendered racial

microaggressions that hinder a positive relationship between students and educators. Beyond intrapersonal interactions, an increased awareness of gendered racial microaggression may be applied in developing course curriculum. An understanding of gendered racial microaggressions can be applied to building critical consciousness in what teachers discuss in the classroom (Lewis et al., 2019). That is, teachers who are critically conscious about intersectional forms of oppression can present course materials and dialogue that challenges versus perpetuates stereotypes (Lewis et al., 2019). For example, if the participant's teacher, who made the comment about most single mothers being Black women, would have had more critical consciousness about gendered racial microaggressions that situation may have yielded a better outcome. First, the teacher would have known not to make that comment in class because it does perpetuate negative stereotypes about Black women. Alternatively, if the teacher wanted to discuss Black single mothers, she could have discussed how race, class, and gender create a system of oppression that specifically impacts Black women.

Implications for Policy and Community Activism

The current study included a social action agenda that aligned with the goals of Black feminist thought by centering the voice of Black girls' gendered racial microaggressions experiences to work towards the emancipation of their modern-day experiences of oppression (Collins, 2002). Thus, the current study provides several policy and social action implications. Findings can be applied to improving school policies that impact Black girls. This study highlights the insidious mistreatment and putdown of Black girls, which could further explain how school policies disproportionately impact the learning and social environment for Black girls. Identifying some of the gendered racial microaggression experiences of Black girls can be used to help develop multicultural competency training for schools and youth-related services.

In the book, *Pushout*, about how school disciplinary policies contribute to the criminalization of Black girls in the school system, Morris (2016) provides a list of recommendations that can be used to repair and resist punitive practices and policies that criminalize Black girls. Responding to Morris' recommendations, the findings of the current study can be used to identify and combat subtle ways in which Black girls are devalued and criminalized by the school system.

Community programs could also use the focus group model of the current study to form support groups that can raise critical consciousness and emotional healing for Black adolescent girls.

In conducting research utilizing a Black feminist thought framework, it is important to bring the knowledge and information back to the community (Collins, 2000; Few, Stephens, & Rouse-Arnett, 2003). Findings of the current study can be incorporated in community forums and discussions for parents and Black adolescent girls who experience these gendered racial microaggressions. The current study could highlight the experiences of Black girls in the community, and also serve as a springboard for conversations that could shed light on other gendered racial microaggressions not discovered in the current study. Sharing the taxonomy of gendered racial microaggressions experienced by Black girls gendered racial microaggressions could provide language for youth and parents to use when advocating and speaking out against school policies that disproportionately impact Black girls. In honoring this goal of bringing this knowledge back to the community of my participants, I plan to host a community program that will share the findings of this study. In making the information of the current study accessible to Black adolescent girls and members of their community, the information will be presented in a creative way. For example, in my community event, I will present my findings and facilitate discussions about gendered racial microaggressions between Black adolescent girls performing poems and spoken word that relate to the core themes in the current study.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to give voice to the Black adolescent girls who experienced gendered racial microaggressions. The goal of this study was to extend and incorporate young Black girls into the gendered racial microaggressions taxonomy. As advocated by Black feminist scholars (Collins, 2000; Harris-Perry, 2011; Morris, 2016), this study had a social advocacy purpose that included bringing to light the intersecting and complex experiences of oppression for Black girls. Based on the discussion of the findings, several conclusions were drawn from this study. I will conclude by emphasizing three concluding points.

The current study extended gendered racial microaggressions literature by highlighting the ways in which gendered racial microaggressions are communicated to Black adolescent girls. Participants shared that microassaults were a common way that gendered racial microaggressions were communicated to them. The data suggested that participants often received explicit forms of gendered racism from peers and adults. Nevertheless, these explicit words and acts can be considered microassaults because they granted the microaggressor anonymity. Reasons that may contribute to how people communicated gendered racial microaggressions to them included adultification of Black girls and the function of microassaults. Black girls are not granted the delivery of subtle discrimination because of their juxtaposition of being a minor while simultaneously being expected to act and behave older than their age. Furthermore, Black girls are viewed as not feminine or docile, which triggers extreme reactions and consequences (i.e., over disciplining and ISS) to their otherwise developmentally appropriate behavior. The findings also suggested that the microassaults participants experienced reflected a culture that devalues and oppresses Black girls. Gendered racial microaggressions also functioned as a way to suppress Black girls who challenged subordinate stereotypes, and spoke out against

mistreatment. The current study confirmed the complexity of gendered racial microaggressions by showing that in addition to White people, perpetrators of gendered racial microaggressions included Black boys, Black men, and other peers of color. It is important to understand the complexities of how and who perpetrate gendered racial microaggressions towards Black girls.

Findings of the current study highlighted both the adjoining and developmentally nuanced types of microaggressions Black girls experience when compared to the experiences of adult Black women (Lewis et al., 2016; Lewis & Neville, 2015). Subthemes such as *Devaluation*, *Hair Exoticism*, *Expectation of the Ghetto Black girl*, and *Overdisciplined/Under Protected* were themes not found in previous gendered racial microaggressions research (Lewis et al., 2016; Lewis & Neville, 2015). Black adolescent girls being devalued for their appearance, while at the same time, having people gaze and touch their natural hair, connects to the history of exploiting Black womanhood (Collins, 2000). The current study extended the conversation about microaggressions by including comments about Black girls' natural hair and uninvited touching and smelling of their hair. Specifically, *Hair Exoticism* extended the concept of *Assumptions of Aesthetics* by being more specific in the ways people focus on Black women's hair. The community sample of the current study introduced gendered racial microaggressions based on race, gender, and class in the *Expectation of the Ghetto Black girl*. These results provided a depiction of how the subtle ways in which the controlling image of the *Welfare Queen* operates for Black girls. One of the major contributions of the current study was how these findings highlighted the ways that Black girls are overdisciplined and under protected in the school system through gendered racial microaggressions.

Finally, the current study's three core themes—*Standards of Beauty*, *Silenced and Marginalized*, and *Projected Stereotypes*—provided a multidimensional map of the ways in

which gendered racial microaggressions work to create controlling images of Black adolescent girls. Findings provided examples of how gendered racial microaggressions are conceptually used to continue a cycle of oppression. The current study's intersectional research framework and multidimensional analysis expanded the dearth of research on Black girls. It is important to understand the oppression of Black girls as complex, in order to have a more encompassing account of their lived experiences. Furthermore, understanding the complexity of Black girlhood allows us to think in multifaceted ways to liberate Black girls from oppression.

In responding to this call of Black girl liberation, I am brought back to ponder the question raised in Dr. Thema Bryant Davis's poem (2017) I shared in my dedication. Dr. Bryant-Davis (2017) asked the question, "who will sing an upbeat Black girl song?" She answered, "we will sing it for ourselves...and sing about our survival (Bryant-Davis, 2017). Although Black girls' experiences of gendered racial microaggressions are by no means "upbeat," this dissertation displayed *their* song of struggle and survival. The current study centered the voices of Black girls as they shared their experiences of everyday gendered racism. As a Black woman who was once a Black girl, my hope for this work is that it centered the practice of Black girls by self-defining their experiences. May the power of self-defining the realities of our oppression be the pin that writes a song that we sing for ourselves, an upbeat song of our survival. May our songs be the key to our humanity, Black womanhood, and liberation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment Letter to Community Organization

Dear Community Center Coordinator [INSERT SPECIFIC INFORMATION HERE]

I am a doctoral student at the University of Tennessee Knoxville (UTK) working on my dissertation research under the supervision of Dr. Jioni Lewis. Since I started my doctoral training, I have had an interest in empowering youth and exploring specific issues that impact Black girls. My community involvement and clinical work have inspired me to explore the day-to-day subtle discriminatory experiences of Black teenage girls.

In an effort to raise awareness about specific issues that can impact the mental health and overall well-being of Black girls, I would like to ask for your assistance in helping me conduct a focus group study of the experience of Black girls. This study is for individuals who identify as Black girls between the ages of 13 and 17 years old. Focus groups will be between 90 – 120 minutes and all participants will receive refreshments and \$10.00 as a token of appreciation. All interested participants will require parental consent to participate in the study. All participants and parents will receive detailed information about the study before agreeing to participate.

I am reaching out to you in hopes that your organization will allow me to solicit participants among your members and possibly hold my focus group at your facility. As a token of my appreciation for your assistance in advertising my study, I would like to offer to host a youth empowerment workshop for all of your members. The workshop could be focused on stress management, mental health, and well-being. I can also cater this workshop to align with specific goals of your organization.

A potential benefit of this study is to learn more about issues specific to Black girls. At large, this study will help identify some unique developmental concerns that may impact the overall well-being of Black girls. It is my hope that this study can be applied to better understand and address mental health concerns of Black girls.

I would like to schedule a face-to-face meeting to further discuss my study and possibly advertising my study to your members. Please email me at _____ or call at _____ to discuss an appropriate time to meet. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Cecile A. Gadson
Department of Psychology
University of Tennessee

Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Letter

Participant Recruitment Letter (Youth version)

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Cecile Gadson and I am a doctoral student working under the supervision of Dr. Jioni Lewis in the Department of Psychology at the University of Tennessee. We would like to invite you to take part in a discussion group that will explore the life experiences of Black girls. If you self-identify as a Black/African American girl, in high school, and between the ages of 13 and 17, we want to hear from you! During these discussion groups, we would like to hear about your gender and racial experiences as a Black teenager girl. Your participation in this project is very important to us!

During the focus groups, you will be asked questions about your experiences of being a Black girl. The focus group will last for approximately 90 to 120 minutes and take place the at the [insert local community center] on [INERST DATE AND TIME]. This study is completely voluntary, and your responses will be kept private.

To express my appreciation, all youth participants will receive **\$10.00 and FREE FOOD!** If interested please email Cecile Gadson at cgadson@vols.utk.edu or call at _____ to receive more information and RSVP for to discussion meeting. The focus next focus group meeting will be held [INSERT BOOKED DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION OF FOCUS GROUP].

You may also contact us if you are interested but cannot make the date listed above.

Thank you for your time and we look forward to hearing from you.

Cordially,

Cecile A. Gadson, M.A.
Doctoral Student
Department of Psychology
University of Tennessee

Jioni Lewis, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Department of Psychology
University of Tennessee

Participant Recruitment Letter (Parent version)

Dear Parents/Guardians,

My name is Cecile Gadson and I am a doctoral student working under the supervision of Dr. Jioni Lewis in the Department of Psychology at the University of Tennessee. We would like to invite your daughter to take part in a discussion group that will explore the life experiences of Black girls. If they self-identify as a Black/African American girl, in high school, and between the ages of 13 and 17, we want to hear from them! During these discussion groups, we would like to hear about their gender and racial experiences as a Black teenager girl. Your teen's participation in this project is very important to us!

During the focus groups, your teen will be asked questions about their experiences of being a Black girl. The focus group will last for around 90 to 120 minutes and take place at the [insert community center or organization's meeting place] on [INSERT DATE AND TIME]. This study is completely voluntary, and responses will be kept confidential.

To express my appreciation, all youth participants will receive **\$10.00 and FREE FOOD!** If your teen is interested please email Cecile Gadson at cgadson@vols.utk.edu or call at [insert phone number] to receive more information and RSVP for to discussion meeting. The focus next focus group meeting will be held [INSERT BOOKED DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION OF FOCUS GROUP].

You may also contact us if your teen is interested but cannot make the date mentioned above. Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Cordially,

Cecile A. Gadson, M.A.
Doctoral Student
Department of Psychology
University of Tennessee

Jioni Lewis, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Department of Psychology
University of Tennessee

Appendix C: Recruitment Flyer (redacted)

TEENS ARE WANTED FOR A PROJECT
TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE AS
A BLACK GIRL

**CONTACT TO
RSVP AND
FOR MORE
INFO**

**WE WANT TO HEAR
FROM YOU!**



WHO Girls who identify as Black/African American//Age 13-17//Attending high school

WHAT A small group discussion about gender and race
Participant is private

WHEN

CONTACT CECILE GADSON

Appendix D: Parental Consent Form

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM –FOCUS GROUPS

Project Title: The gendered racial experiences of Black girls

Responsible Project Investigators: Cecile A. Gadson, M.A. and Jioni Lewis, Ph.D.

Introduction/Purpose:

This is a research project. Your teenage child has been invited to participate in a focus group that will explore the life experiences of Black girls. Cecile Gadson, a doctoral graduate student from the Psychology Department at the University of Tennessee will be conducting this study under the supervision of Dr. Jioni Lewis, an assistant professor in the Department of Psychology. Trained research assistants will be helping Cecile with these focus groups. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of Black girl's day-to-day gender and racial experiences.

Procedures:

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked questions about her personal experience of subtle racism and sexism. The focus group will last for approximately 90 to 120 minutes and take place at the . This study is completely voluntary, and your child can stop participating at any time. This focus group will be audio recorded to aid us in recording participants' answers.

Risks:

Participation in this focus group is not expected to cause any harm outside of what is normally encountered in daily life. It is possible that participants may become uncomfortable or upset by some of the questions. If the participant becomes offended by any question they may choose not to respond, can choose to discontinue their participation at any time during the study or can contact the focus group organizers after the focus group who will refer the participant to community services. In addition, if your child experiences any psychological distress during and after this study you can contact University of Tennessee Psychological Clinic at (865) 974-2161 or Helen Ross McNabb at (865) 637-9711.

Benefits:

At large, your child's participation in this study will help identify some unique developmental concerns that may impact the overall well-being of Black girls. Your child's participation is that you may learn more about issues specific to Black girls. It is our hope that this study can be applied to better understand and address experiences that the well-being of impact Black girls.

Alternatives and Subject's Rights:

There will be no negative consequences if participants decide not to participate. Your child has the right to discontinue her participation at any time without penalty. Participation is completely voluntary, and your child can choose not to participate in this research study at any time. Voluntary participation means that participants have the right and free will to choose whether to participate in the focus group. Participants can also skip any questions that they prefer not to answer. Your child has the right to discontinue their participation at any time during the focus group without penalty. If your child chose to withdraw from the study, I will immediately exclude all her verbal contributes from the data. If your child decides not to continue her

participation, we will pause the focus group to allow her to exit the meeting room and sit in the waiting area outside the meeting room. The child will be asked to contact her transportation (if she was dropped off). A research staff member will accompany the child until their ride has arrived. Choosing not to participate will have no effect on your child's status or future relationship with any affiliated community organization, group, or church.

Confidentiality:

Several safeguards will be taken to protect your child's identity. All of the responses will be confidential. In addition, the researchers will keep all focus group information confidential. This means that parents and any affiliated community organization, group, or church staff will not have access to what is said during the focus group. Researchers and participants will be the only members in the room once the focus group has started. All parents and personnel of the affiliated venue, community organization, group or church will not be permitted in the room while the focus group is in progress. Focus groups have inherent confidentiality risks, such that, the privacy of the session cannot be absolutely guaranteed. Therefore, we request that all participants respect the privacy of the session and do not discuss information that other participants have shared after the session is over. Again, we request that participants respect the privacy of the session. We cannot guarantee full confidentiality. We will minimize the risk of confidentiality by transcribing the focus group data using code numbers and pseudonyms only. All master files containing identifying information (i.e. age, sex, name, and contact information) will be kept in a secure location at the University of Tennessee. Only investigators involved in the research project and their research staff will have access to identifying information. The audio recordings will be kept indefinitely on a password protected electronic file. The master files containing identifying information will be destroyed 5 years after the completion of this study.

Financial Information:

As a token of appreciation for your child's participation, she will be provided food during the focus group. If your child completes the focus group, she will be given \$10.00 at the end of the session. Completing the focus group is required before payment will be received.

Contact Information:

Any questions you may have about this study may be directed to me, Cecile Gadson at cgadson@vol.utk.edu or . For additional information regarding the rights of human participants in research, please contact my supervising research professor, Dr. Jioni Lewis at alewis@utk.edu. You may also contact the University of Tennessee IRB Compliance Officer at utkirb@utk.edu or (865) 974-7697. The IRB is a review board which monitors the research process and ensures the ethical and legal conduct of human subjects' research at UT.

Consent:

I am the legal parent/guardian of the participant and I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I also confirm that my child is in high school and between the ages of 13 to 17 years old. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. If I have additional questions, I have been told who to contact. I agree to allow my child to participate in the research study described above, and I agree for her to be audio recorded.

I also give permission for the research team to contact my child at a later point with follow up questions or clarification of my provided information.

I understand that I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Child's (Participant's) Printed Name

Parent/Guardian's Printed Name

Parent/Guardian of Participant's Signature

Date

Contact for Future Studies:

I give permission for the research team to use my contact information to invite my child to participate in future research studies.

Yes _____ No _____

Child's (Participant's) Printed Name

Parent/Guardian's Printed Name

Date

Parent/Guardian's Signature

Date

If **yes**, please check your preferred method of communication and provide your contact information.

Phone call _____ Text message _____ Email _____

Phone number: _____

Email: _____

Appendix E: Participant Assent Form

PARTICIPANT ASSENT FORM –FOCUS GROUPS

Project Title: The gendered racial experiences of Black girls

Responsible Project Investigators: Cecile A. Gadson, M.A. and Jioni Lewis, Ph.D.

Introduction/Purpose:

This is a research project. You have been invited to participate in focus group that will explore the life experiences of Black girls. Cecile Gadson, a doctoral graduate student from the Psychology Department at the University of Tennessee will be conducting this study, under the supervision of Jioni Lewis, an associate professor from the Psychology Department at the University of Tennessee. Trained research assistants will be assisting Cecile with these focus groups. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of Black girl's day-to-day gender and racial experiences.

Procedures:

As a participant in this study you will be asked questions about your personal experiences of subtle racism and sexism. The focus group will last for approximately 90 to 120 minutes and take place at the . This study is completely voluntary, and you can stop participating at any time. This focus group will be audio recorded to aid us in recording participants' answers.

Risks:

Participation in this focus group is not expected to cause any harm outside of what is normally encountered in daily life. It is possible that participants may become uncomfortable or upset by some of the questions. If you become offended by any question you may choose not to respond, can choose to discontinue your participation at any time during the study or you can contact the focus group organizers after the focus group who will refer the participant to community services. In addition, if you experience any psychological distress during and after this study you can contact Youth Villages at (865) 560-2550 or Knox County Children and Youth Center at

Benefits:

At large, your participation in this study will help identify some unique developmental concerns that may impact the overall well-being of Black girls. You may learn more about issues specific to Black girls. It is our hope that this study can be applied to better understand and address experiences that impact the well-being of Black girls.

Alternatives and Participant's Rights:

There will be no negative consequences if participants decide not to participate. You have the right to discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. Participation is completely voluntary, and you can choose not to participate in this research study at any time. Voluntary participation means that you have the right and free will to choose whether to participate in the focus group. Participants can also skip any questions that they prefer not to answer. You have the right to discontinue your participation at any time during the focus group without penalty. If you chose to withdraw from the study, I will immediately exclude all your verbal contributes from

the data. You have the right to discontinue your participation at any time during the focus group without penalty. If you chose to withdraw from the study, I will immediately exclude all of your verbal contributes from the data. If you decide not to continue, we will pause the focus group to allow you to exit the meeting room and sit in the waiting area outside the meeting room. You will be asked to contact her transportation (if you were dropped off). A research staff member will accompany you until your ride has arrived. Choosing not to participate will have no effect on your status or future relationship with any affiliated community organization, group, or church.

Confidentiality:

Several safeguards will be taken to protect your identity. All of the responses will be confidential. In addition, the researchers will keep all focus group information confidential. This means that parents and any affiliated community organization, group, or church staff will not have access to what is said during the focus group. Researchers and participants will be the only members in the room once the focus group has started. All parents and personnel of the affiliated venue, community organization, group or church will not be permitted in the room while the focus group is in progress. Focus groups have inherent confidentiality risks, such that, the privacy of the session cannot be absolutely guaranteed. Therefore, we request that all participants respect the privacy of the session and do not discuss information that other participants have shared after the session is over. Again, we request that participants respect the privacy of the session. We cannot guarantee full confidentiality. We will minimize the risk of confidentiality by transcribing the focus group data using code numbers and pseudonyms only. All master files containing identifying information (i.e. age, sex, name, consent/assent forms, and contact information) will be kept in a secure location at the University of Tennessee. Only investigators involved in the research project and their research staff will have access to identifying information. The audio recordings will be kept indefinitely on a password protected electronic file. The master files containing identifying information will be destroyed 5 years after the completion of this study.

Financial Information:

As a token of appreciation for your participation, you will be provided food during the focus group. If you complete the focus group, you will be given \$10.00 at the end of the session. Completing the focus group is required before payment will be received.

Contact Information:

Any questions you may have about this study may be directed to me, Cecile Gadson at _____ or _____. For additional information regarding the rights of human participants in research, please contact my supervising research professor, Dr. Jioni Lewis at _____. You may also contact the University of Tennessee IRB Compliance Officer at utkirb@utk.edu or (865) 974-7697. The IRB is a review board which monitors the research process and ensures the ethical and legal conduct of human subjects' research at UT

Assent:

I am participating with my parent/guardian’s signed permission and I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I also confirm that I am in high school and between the ages of 13 to 17 years old. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. If I have additional questions, I have been told who to contact. I agree to participate in the research study described above, and I agree to be audio recorded.

I also give permission for the research team to contact me at a later point with follow up questions or clarification of my provided information.

I understand that I will receive a copy of this assent form.

Participant’s Printed Name

Participant’s Signature

Date

Contact for Future Studies:

I give permission for the research team to use my contact information to invite me to participate in future research studies.

Yes _____ No _____

Participant’s Signature

Date

If **yes**, please check your preferred method of communication and provide your contact information.

Phone call _____ Text message _____ Email _____

Phone number: _____

Email: _____

<i>place all forms under chair.</i>	
<p>Agreements</p> <p><i>Agreements will be written on a flip chart so facilitators and participants can refer (if need) to them during the discussion.</i></p>	<p>Next, we are going to go over some ground rules to help guide us through today's conversation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please talk one at a time and speak up as much as possible. This will make it easier for us to hear each other. • Feel free to respond to each other about these topics, not just answer my questions. This will help us have a good discussion about each topic. • Please respect one another's opinions. There will be a range of opinions and experiences on the topics, and we do not expect everyone to agree with each other. We do, however, ask that everybody show respect when others are talking. • We would like today's discussion to be as confidential as possible. This means that, ideally, you won't talk about what other participants said outside this room. If you do talk about what was said here to others, you should not use any names. Also, please don't say anything that you don't want others to know. • Because we only have 90 to 120 minutes, we may have to shorten the discussion and move on to another question. • During today, the girl who speak before you may say something similar to you and that is great! It is okay to repeat responses if they relate to your thoughts and experiences. We hope that you listen to each other and as we go along new thoughts or recalled experiences may come to mind after you have already responded to a question. If this happens to you, feel free respond to a question more than once. • Are there any questions about today's discussion before we get started?

<p><i>Turn on recorder and begin group.</i></p>	<p>We would like to tape record today’s conversation. This helps us remember what you said. The tapes will be kept in our office. Nobody else will hear them. [insert RA name] will be also taking notes during our session to help us remember what went on. I will now turn on the recorder.</p>
<p>Icebreaker</p> <p><i>Pass out name tag with markers to each participant. Send no more than 5 minutes on this section.</i></p> <p><i>Facilitator will start icebreaker go first.</i></p>	<p>Let’s begin. We are passing out name tags to help us remember each other’s first names so we can call each other by first names during the discussion. You can choose a name other than your own if you’d like. Please write this name on your name tag. Please refer to each by the name of their tags. Let’s find out some more about each other by going around the table and introducing ourselves.</p> <p>Please give your first name and, just for fun, tell us one of your favorite foods. I will start... My name is _____ and one of my favorite food is _____.</p>
<p>Opening/Framing Question- lead facilitator</p>	<p>We all have personal and social identities. Personal identities are how we self-identify. Social identities are how we identify with a group of people with similar characteristics, such as race and gender. These identities influence our experiences in many ways. Sometimes you might experience things because you are Black, sometimes as a girl, and other times as a Black woman. Today, I am interested in your experiences as a Black girl. Black girls often have experiences in which their experiences are subtly not heard, or believed, discriminated against, and made to feel uncomfortable because of their race and gender. During our time here today, I would like to reflect on various experiences and messages that relate to being subtly discriminated against as a Black girl.</p>
<p>Main Interview Questions- lead facilitator</p>	<p>1. I want you to think of some of the stereotypes that exist about Black girls. <i>Pause for thinking.</i> Tell me about those stereotypes? <i>Have girls respond to first part of question.</i> How have others subtly expressed their stereotypical beliefs about you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If girls do not understand, follow up with this: Can someone tell me what is a stereotype? <i>Pause to get response and have group agree on that definition.</i> Can you give an example of a common stereotype about a group of people like...basketball players? <i>Rephrase</i>

	<p><i>definition of stereotype and examples.</i> Okay, so we agreed that stereotypes are [insert definition] and these include assumptions such as [insert example].</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. What are some subtle ways that people treat you differently as a Black girl? 3. In what ways have others made you feel “put down” because of your cultural values or communication style (the way you talk) as a Black girl? 4. Can you tell me about a time other have subtly expressed that they think you’re inferior (below/lower/less than) to them? 5. In what ways have others made you feel invisible or ignored you as a Black girl? 6. What types of messages do you hear about standards of beauty as a Black girl? 7. Describe a situation in which you felt uncomfortable, insulted, or disrespected by a comment that had racial and sexual overtones. 8. What are ways that people have treated you as an object? 9. As a Black girl, how have people suggested that you do not fit in because of your race and gender? 10. Can someone tell me what is an affirmation? What are some examples of affirmations or someone affirming someone? As a Black girl, are there experiences and/or people that affirmed you? If so, in what ways did this help with some of your negative race and gender experiences you shared today?
<p>Transition Questions- Co-facilitator <i>These questions are not top priority but if there is time then will be asked as to follow up.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where do these experiences take place? • Who have been the messengers of these forms of racism and sexism? What relationship do you have to the messengers (professor, boss, colleague, peer, friend, partner, parent, sibling, relative) • What are some of the ways that you dealt with these experiences?
<p>Standard Facilitation Questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank you for sharing. • Does anyone want to respond to what she said? • Does anyone else want to respond? • What were you thinking as she was sharing? • _____ do you want to answer this question?

<p>Standard Elaboration Questions- Co-facilitator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What I heard you say is _____. (Simply summarize or paraphrase.) • Do you want to add anything else?
<p>Ending Question- Co-facilitator <i>Start to wrap up with 5 to 10 minutes left of promised end time.</i></p> <p><i>RA/note taker turn off recorder.</i></p>	<p>So today you shared several experiences of subtle racism and sexism. Some of you said... Does that sound correct? Is there anything about your gendered racial experiences that we haven't talked about today that you'd like to mention here? Do you have any questions about that? Thank you, ladies, for all of your responses today.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At this time, we are going to turn off the recorder and debrief about our discussion, pay you, and sign out.
<p>Debrief <i>Make sure participants remain seated while debrief form is being reviewed.</i></p>	<p>Here is a debrief form that is information about your talk today, local resources, and educational information related to the topics we discussed today. As you check out, you will each receive a copy.</p> <p>Please remove your name tag and place it with your clipboard. Please see [INSERT RA'S NAME] to sign out, hand you your copy of your assent and debrief form and receive your payment. Also, please take some food with you!</p>

Purpose of Research (will not be read):

Although growing literature on gendered racial microaggressions has examined the experiences of Black women, a deficit remains in studies that focus on the gendered racial experiences of younger Black women. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the gendered racial experiences of Black girls.

Research Questions (will not be read):

1. What are the gendered racial microaggression experiences of Black girls?

Registration Procedures:

After all participants have signed in, submit their parental consent they will be invited to get food and then to sit in a circle. If parents are dropping participant off, they will be notified of a time to pick up their child. Parents will be sent home a copy of their signed consent form. Once all parents or non-related person have exited the room, the participants will be asked to take a seat. When everyone is seated, the facilitator will go over the assent and have the participant ask questions then to sign for assent form.

Check out Procedures

RA/lead facilitator will have participants sign out and Co-facilitator will give them their payment, copy of signed assent form, and debriefing form. Participants will be asked to return their clipboard with their demographic form, researcher's copy of the assent form, and name tag used

during the session. RA/lead facilitator will make sure that participants walk out with their debrief form and not walk out the room with their name tags. Parents will be informed that the study is over, and they can pick up their participant or enter the room if they have any questions for the research team. Research team will separate all documents and clean up room. Before exiting the space and after everyone has left, the research time will have a debrief about the group. Research team will check out and close out room. Lead researcher will take all materials and return documents to secure location.

Main interview questions adapted from:

Lewis, J. A., Mendendall, R., Harwood, S. A., & Hunt, M. B. (2016). "Ain't I a woman?": Perceived gendered racial microaggressions experienced by Black women. *The Counseling Psychologist, 44*, 758-780.

Youth focus group protocol, introduction, and standard prompt questions adapted from:

Bliesner, M. L., Roller, L.A., Moore, C., & Gavin, L. (2007). Collecting qualitative data on youth perceptions regarding teen pregnancy and HIV/STI prevention: A focus group guide. Scotts Valley, CA: ETR Associates.

Thomas, A. J., Hacker, J. D., & Hoxha, D. (2011). Gendered racial identity of Black young women. *Sex Roles, 64*, 530-542.

Appendix G: Participant Demographic Questionnaire

DIRECTIONS: Please tell us about yourself by filling in or circling the following information. It would help if you complete as much information as possible, but you may skip any question you do not want to answer.

1. Age_____
2. In terms of racial group, I consider myself to be:
 - a. Asian/Asian American
 - b. Black/ African American
 - c. Latino/Hispanic (Non-White)
 - d. White/ European American
 - e. Native American/American Indian
 - f. Bi-racial/Multiracial
 - g. Other, please specify:_____
3. In terms of my ethnic group I consider myself to be:
 - a. Caribbean
 - b. African
 - c. African American
 - d. Other Black ethnicity_____
 - e. Multi-ethnic: (please list all ethnicities): _____
 - f. Other:_____
4. To which gender identity do you most identify:
 - a. Woman
 - b. Transgender woman
 - c. Gender variant/non-conforming
 - d. Not listed (please list):_____
 - e. Prefer not to answer
5. What grade are you in currently:
 - a. 8th
 - b. 9th
 - c. 10th
 - d. 11th
 - e. 12th
 - f. Other:_____
6. What is the name of your school?_____
7. What city do you live in?_____

VITA

Cecile A. Gadson was born in Columbia, SC and raised in Germany and Beavercreek, OH. She is the daughter of Vivian and Isaac Gadson and proud baby sister to her brother, Antonio. She received her undergraduate degree in Psychology from Winthrop University. She earned her master's degree in Counseling Psychology from Towson University. She entered the counseling psychology doctoral program at the University of Tennessee in 2014. She defended her dissertation on May 23, 2019. In Fall 2019, she will be completing her pre-doctoral internship at Florida International University's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). She will graduate with her doctoral degree in Summer 2020.