

2018

Resiliency Factors in African American Female Students in Single-Gender Educational Settings

Phyllis Lynette Hill
Walden University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>

 Part of the [African American Studies Commons](#), [Education Commons](#), and the [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu.

Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Phyllis L. Hill

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Kathleen Lynch, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Felicia Blacher-Wilson, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Laurie Bedford, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2018

Abstract

Resiliency Factors in African American Female Students in Single-Gender Educational
Settings

by

Phyllis L. Hill

MA, Alabama A & M University, 2005

BS, Oakwood University, 2002

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Leadership Policy & Change

Walden University

August 2018

Abstract

Resiliency is a critical factor in educational success; the gap exists in the research regarding the effect of resiliency in the educational success of African American female students. The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological research (IPR) study was to explore and describe the lived experience of single-gender education through African American female student alumnae to capture and distill their shared experience of educational resilience and competence. Framework drew on gender-relevant education, social capital, racial identity and socialization. Research perspective that participants were viewed consisted of critical race feminism theory and competency versus deficit or risk perspective. Research questions focused on how African American female student alumnae of single-gender educational settings described their experiences in and out of school as they relate to resiliency and competence. The IPR design consisted of 3 interviews per participant; 1 focused on the past, 1 focused on the present, 1 integrated past and present experiences. Interpretive phenomenological analysis was used to analyze data. Results showed the components that factor into the African American Academic Achieving Female (A4F) include racial identity and socialization, gender relevant education, support systems within cultural and social capital, Guts, Resilience, Initiative, Tenacity (GRIT), Cultural (Re)Appropriation Unity (CRU), personal spiritual relationship. Recommendation for the A4F framework to be used as a foundation to foster growth of the A4F. Social change implication is understanding how African American female alumnae of single-gender schools describe their shared experience of A4F on their lives to foster social change for the African American students.

Resiliency Factors in African American Female Students in Single-Gender Educational

Settings

by

Phyllis L. Hill

MA, Alabama A & M University, 2005

BS, Oakwood University, 2002

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Leadership Policy & Change

Walden University

August 2018

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the loving memory of my grandmother, Laura Naomi Raibon, who always encouraged and instilled in me that I could do anything that I set my mind to. She was a loving and caring educator, wife, mother, and grandmother who would give you her last dollar. Thank you to my mother and father, Joe Alston & Huldah Raibon who pushed me, encouraged me, and sometimes threatened me, to keep pushing beyond what I thought I could do, to do what God has purposed for me to do through His power. Thank you to my children, Loni, Don Wesley, and De'Oni Dew, who made sure that I knew that they were always watching me and that my giving up on my dreams would tell them that it was ok to give up. Thank you all for believing in me!

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Dr. Lynch, dissertation chair, for encouraging, teaching, leading and inspiring me to keep going. Dr. Blacher-Wilson, second committee member, for providing insight and direction. Dr. Evans-Winters for helping set the foundation for this study. Thank you to my family who always reminded me what I was working toward and pushed me beyond what I thought I could do. This is the first page in the next chapter of the book that is my life, thank you for being a part of this wonderful journey.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	vi
List of Figures	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Background.....	1
Problem Statement	4
Purpose of the Study	7
Research Questions	8
Conceptual Framework.....	8
Resilience	11
Gender-Relevant Learning.....	12
Social Capital	13
Racial Identity and Socialization	14
Critical Race Feminism Theory	17
Postwomanist Research	18
Competence Versus Deficit/risk Within Critical Race Feminism Theory.....	19
Nature of the Study	20
Definitions.....	21
Assumptions.....	23
Scope and Delimitations	23
Limitations	23
Significance.....	23

Summary	24
Chapter 2: Literature Review	25
Introduction.....	25
Literature Search Strategy.....	25
Resiliency.....	26
Gender Relevant Learning	33
Support Systems within Social Capital.....	37
Racial Identity and Socialization	41
Critical Race Feminism Theory	41
Competence versus Deficit/risk within Critical Race Feminism Theory	44
Summary	45
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	47
Research Design and Rationale	48
Research Questions	48
Role of the Researcher	50
Methodology	54
Participant Selection Logic	55
Instrumentation	61
Researcher-developed instrument.....	61
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection	62
Data Analysis Plan.....	64
Threats to Validity	66

Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	67
Ethical Procedures	70
Summary	71
Chapter 4: Results	72
Introduction.....	72
Setting	72
Demographics	73
Participant Attributes	76
Data Collection	82
Walden Participant Pool Data Collection	82
SurveyMonkey Participant Identifier.....	83
Facebook.....	83
Snowball Sampling	84
Data Analysis	85
Analysis of Survey Data	87
Analysis of Recorded and Written Interview Data	87
Transcription	87
Coding	88
Emergent Themes	90
Generational Strength	92
Experiences of Racial Diversity.....	95
Appreciation for Single-Gender Environment.....	98

Experiences of Cultural Diversity	108
Overcoming Hardships, Barriers & Obstacles	115
Mentors, Role Models and Support Organizations	118
Formation of Spiritual Relationships	125
Feelings of Empowerment	128
Results	132
Research Question 1	133
Research Question 2	135
Discrepant Data.....	136
Summary.....	136
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations	138
Introduction.....	138
Interpretation of the Findings.....	142
Emergent Revised Conceptual Framework	144
African American Academic Achieving Females (A4F).....	145
Cultural (Re)appropriation Unity (C. R. U.).....	147
G. R. I. T. (Guts, Resilience, Initiative, Tenacity).....	147
Support Systems in Cultural and Social Capital	148
Limitations of the Study.....	150
Recommendations.....	150
Implications.....	152
Conclusion	152

Appendix A: National Institutes of Health Protecting Human Research

Participant Certificate	174
Appendix B: Survey.....	174
Appendix C: Interview Protocol 1	176
Appendix D: Interview Protocol 2	179
Appendix E: Interview Protocol 3	182
Appendix F: Confidentiality Agreement	186
Appendix G: Research Question 1 and Interview questions	188
Appendix H: Research Question 2 and Interview Questions.....	193

List of Tables

Table 1 *Study Recruitment Breakdown* 64

Table 2 75

List of Figures

<i>Figure 1.</i> Educational resilience in African American females.....	9
<i>Figure 2.</i> Survey Monkey response volume.	59
<i>Figure 3.</i> Codes.....	90
<i>Figure 4.</i> African American academic achieving females (A4F) framework that emerged from research.	139

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Background

Researchers have shown that male and female students learn differently. Pizzo, Dunn, and Dunn (1990), reported that when presented with new and more difficult information, female students at all levels required a significantly quieter environment. Jenkins and Pengiram-Jadid found that learning preferences for female students include, but are not limited to, “motivation, persistence, structure, authority orientation, and kinesthetic modality” (Honigsfeld & Dunn, 2003, p. 203). Bruster (2009) provided similar support for such learning preferences in exploring African American females. According to Rex and Chadwell (2009), there is a need for more research exploring how students’ learning styles differ based on gender.

Hale (1986, 2016) explained that schools are more focused on equalizing outcomes rather than equalizing learning opportunities. Educational research is needed to address how African American students can be better served academically and how resilience plays a part in the academic achievement of this population of students. This interpretive phenomenological study focused on the factors that help facilitate the adage “it takes a village to raise a child.” (Jackson, 2017 p. 13) This village often consists of extended family, teachers and professors, coaches, and family friends (Waters, 2015). The educational system has developed many programs that address the needs of the African American male student and placed limited attention and focus on African American female students (Evans-Winters, 2015; Price, 2015).

According to Gurian, Stevens, and Daniels (2009), in single-gender educational settings female students are more inclined to be themselves, gain leadership skills, and learn free from the interference and examination of male students. Gurian et al. (2009) and D'Mello and Govindaraju (2016) explained that during the middle school years, girls begin to exhibit many traits that can be identified as stressors. Stressors such as body image, teasing, sexual harassment, bullying, family issues, and decrease in academic confidence, can begin as early as middle school and affect a girl's self-confidence. Stress in African American female students is compounded when racism and classism are added to the equation (Evans-Winters, 2011, 2014). Girls make decisions that affect how they interact with boys on an academic level; they consciously "dumb themselves down" so that they are not viewed as being smarter than boys (Evans-Winters, 2011, p. 36). Gurian et al. (2009) identified seven key factors that research indicates affect female students at progressively earlier ages: "body image, peer teasing, sexual harassment, relational aggression, bullying, drop in academic confidence, and family problems" (p. 203). The presence of boys in the educational setting amplifies these stressors, as girls concern themselves with how the male students view them.

Tsolidis and Dobson (2006) explained that the argument for the growth of female only classes is based on the concept that the different gender learning styles, along with the negative effect that male students have on the learning experience of female students. This has increased the need for gender-specific educational research. According to Tsolidis and Dobson (2006), female students learn better in the areas of science and math when they are in female only classes that stress communication and cooperation. Gurian

and Ballew (2003) identified 10 learning-style differences, as well as the way the brain-based differences of male and female students affect their learning. The learning-style differences include deductive and inductive reasoning, abstract and concrete reasoning, use of language, logic and evidence, the likelihood of boredom, use of space, movement, sensitivity and group dynamics, use of symbolism, and use of learning teams (Gurian & Ballew, 2003, p. 16-21).

There is also evidence of differences in the ways students learn based on their cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Jensen (2009) defined poverty as “a chronic and debilitating condition that results from multiple adverse synergistic risk factors and affects the mind, body and soul” (p. 6) According to Jensen (2009), there are four risk factors that affect families from low socioeconomic homes; these are emotional and social challenges, acute and chronic stressors, cognitive lags, and health and safety issues. These factors directly affect a student’s academic performance. Students from low-socioeconomic homes are faced with conditions that are not always recognized and addressed in the academic sphere of a child’s life.

The conceptual framework of Evans-Winters (2011) provides the basis for this study, which focuses on the resiliency of African American female students and the scholarly literature relating to single-sex (gender-specific) education, the role single-gender education plays in the academic resiliency of African American females, and the role resiliency plays in the success of African American females in single-gender educational settings. Barajas (2011) and Cunningham (2010) addressed educational resilience in African American female students who succeed academically. This research

addresses Evans-Winters (2015) call to connect culture and educational politics by utilizing gender-and race-based approach as they relate to resilience when conducting qualitative research in education.

Problem Statement

While there is research on the differences in how male and female students learn, (Gurian Institute, 2012-2013; Gurian et al., 2009; Gurian, 2002; Honigsfeld & Dunn, 2003) there is a gap in the research as it relates to the role of educational resiliency in learning of African American students in general and African American females who were educated in single gender environments specifically. In this study, I explored the experiences of African American female alumnae of single-gender educational settings by examining their recollections of their personal experiences of educational resilience in and outside of school. There are seven interrelated, integral parts or what Ginsburg and Jablow (2015) refer to as “ingredients of resilience” (p. 21). The 7 *crucial Cs* are components that factor into a person’s resilience are competence, one’s ability to effectively handle situations; confidence, belief in abilities which is rooted in competence; connection to family, friends, community and school provide a sense of security; character, knowing right from wrong and making decisions based on that knowledge; contribution, acknowledging their personal importance; coping, utilizing coping mechanisms to overcome obstacles and adversities; and control realizing that one can control the outcomes of decisions and actions (Ginsburg & Jablow, 2015). The literature on African American female students focuses on the deficit and risk factors of African Americans, such as teenage pregnancy, promiscuity, drug usage, and dropout

rates; there is a gap when it comes to the resilience and competence of African American females (Evans-Winters, 2014). There are specific factors that affect and drive the academic success of African American students' family, peers, community, school, along with social and cultural indicators (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Cokley et al., 2012; Dye, Fuller, Burke & Hughey, 2017; Jensen, 2009, Evans-Winters, 2014) these factors positively affect resiliency (Scarf et al., 2017, Dias & Cadime, 2016, Davidson-Arad & Navaro-Bitton, 2015). The gap in the research emerges when exploring how resiliency factors affect the educational success of African American females (Evans-Winters 2011, 2014).

African American female students are unique in that they carry the three-pronged burden of classism, racism, and sexism (Evans-Winters 2011, 2015). This population is resilient, due to their ability to overcome adversity (Williams & Bryan, 2013). They bounce back and are often defiant when labeled or defined based on other demographic groups (Evans-Winters, 2015). "Black women focus on strength and resilience and recognize the tragedies of their lives, but they do not identify their lives as tragedies" (Boylorn, 2013 p. 2). The fact that African American female students confront and overcome the multipronged burden of racism, sexism, and classism can be attributed to their strong support systems that aid with positive ways to cope with social stressors (Evans-Winters & Girls for Gender Equity, 2017; Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). However, educational resilience has not been a major focus of research in African American females. What we know about African American females and learning, we know from a perspective of deficit/risk versus competence (Evans-Winters, 2003; Evans-

Winters & Esposito, 2010; Evans-Winters, 2015; Price, 2015). As a result, we are not able to nurture or fully leverage the resilience of African American females to their educational advantage. Single-gender educational settings provide an isolated environment in which the three-pronged burden is minimized and sexism is removed. In this context, the experience of resiliency in African American female students' lives can be highlighted without sexism being a mitigating factor. Studying the resilience of African American females from single gender educational environments allows their experiences to be interpreted in terms of race and class as opposed to race, class, and gender.

African American females are measured against White males, Black males, and White females (racism, sexism). This comparison is important because of the implications that it has on how society views African American females. This dynamic may in turn negatively affect how they view themselves. Social factors that exist inside and outside of the academic setting affect and complicate the resilience of this population. The fact that African American female students are faced with this multipronged burden (racism, sexism, and classism) and their ability to overcome it can be attributed to strong support systems that aid with positive ways to cope with social stressors (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). Identifying how resiliency works will aid in the success of all female students and African American female students specifically. This population of students face many adversities, including being classified as double minorities (African American, female) in addition to a large degree being overlooked in research projects that look at resilience and overcoming adversity. Educational resilience

has not been a focus when studying African American females. A large portion of this population tends to come from single parent, and low socioeconomic homes (Mather, 2010; Wagstaff, Cooper, & Neff, 2017). These environmental factors tend to work against a student's desire to excel academically; increased negative factors can contribute to the academic achievement of this population. Students from these communities historically complete fewer school years and experience more academic difficulties because of living in communities with higher crime, violence, teen pregnancy, drugs, and joblessness (Smith, 2017). Evans-Winters (2003) explained that other undesirable consequences, such as teenage pregnancy, promiscuity, drug use, and abuse, accompany a higher dropout rate. What we know about African American females and learning we know from a deficit/risk versus competence perspective. Previous research about African American female learning is inadequate in that it only addresses the deficit/risk perspective and does not address the competence and resilience of this unique population (Evans-Winters, 2003; Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Evans-Winters, 2015; Price, 2015). We have an inadequate picture of the role of resilience in the role of education of African American females in single-gender educational settings.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological research study was to explore how African American female alumnae describe their lived experiences in single-gender education programs to capture and distill their shared experience of educational resilience in and outside of school. Phenomenology does not present a problem that must be solved

or a question that must be answered, sound phenomenological studies always begin with curiosity or passes through a questioning phase (Van Manen, 2014).

Research Questions

1. How do African American female alumnae of single-gender educational settings describe their educational experiences as they relate to resiliency?
2. How do African American female alumnae describe the effect of the single-gender schooling as it relates to resiliency in their lives outside of school?

Conceptual Framework

I utilized the work of Evans-Winters (2003, 2014), Gurian (2002), Delgado and Stefancic (2012), and Gilligan (1993) for the foundation of the conceptual framework in the present study. Each of the concepts helped provide a lens through which to view the study participants. The framework guided the study by providing a foundation for the research and assisted in making decisions about sorting, coding, analyzation, and interpretation of data. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) defined a conceptual framework as a graphic or narrative that explains the key factors that are going to be studied and presumes that there is some level of interrelationship between the components. I developed conceptual framework for this interpretive phenomenological study, which draws on theories from several areas. Boylorn (2013) explained that “by definition, theories describe, explain, predict, increase awareness, foster understanding, and critique” (p. 4). Theories applied to the conceptual framework consists of two parts: the content and the perspective or lens. The content consists of three components: gender

relevant learning theory, social capital, and racial identity theory. The perspective or lens through which the participants were viewed is comprised of critical feminism race theory and the competency perspective on minority learning and research. The three content elements were used to analyze educational resilience of African American females along with the two perspective elements, viewing the participants through a lens of critical race feminism and competence and how they combine to affect educational resilience of African American female students.

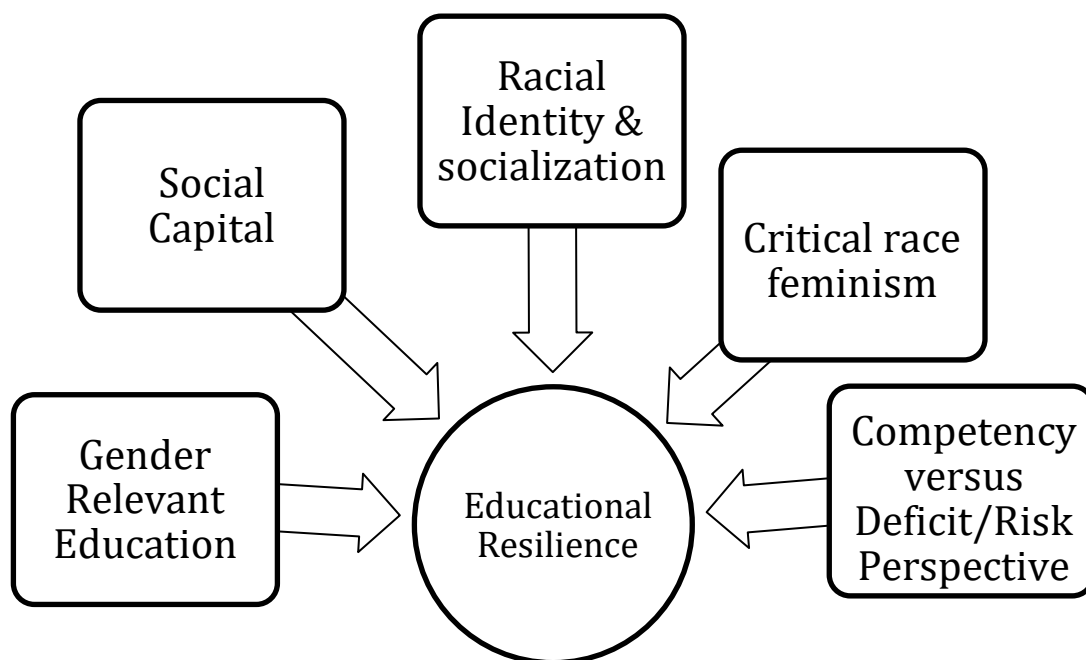


Figure 1. Educational resilience in African American females.

Figure 1 is a representation of the conceptual framework of educational resilience in African American females as it pertains to African American female students. I utilized the content of Evans-Winters (2003, 2014), Gurian (2002), Delgado and Stefancic (2012), and Gilligan (1993) for the basis for this conceptual framework. The phenomenon of interest in this study is educational resilience in African American females. The

framework utilizes two factors to understand educational resilience as it relates to African American females: content and perspective or lens. The content explains the process of their identity formation. It consists of gender relevant education, social capital, and racial identity and socialization. The perspective explains how they are viewed by society.

The lens through which the alumnae were viewed is the perspective, which consists of critical race feminism and the competency versus deficit/risk perspective.

Content factors:

- Gender relevant education emphasizes gender-based research that utilizes brain-based research to promote educational settings that are single-gender and focus on the students' abilities based on gender differences and preferences for the sake of this study it removes gender from the three pronged-burden (classism, racism, sexism) of the African American female (Dwarte, 2014, Gurian, et al., 2009).
- Social capital recognizes the strong contribution of support systems (family, mentors, extended family, church, and community) on the academic or educational resilience of African American alumnae (Al-Fadhli & Kersen, 2010; Gauntlet, 2011).
- Racial identity and socialization focuses on the racial identity and socialization factors that increase a student's ability to positively identify and socialize based on information provided by social capital members and opportunities that promote positive racial identity and socialization (Brown, 2008; Evans-Winters, 2014; Jackson, 2017; Kim & Hargrove, 2013; Williams & Bryan, 2013).

Perspective factors:

- Critical race feminism theory takes critical race theory and adds the feminine component to provide a theory that addresses the multipronged approach that includes the struggles that African American females face due to their double minority status (Delgado & Stafancic, 2012; Evans-Winters, 2015).
- Competency versus deficit/risk perspective moves from viewing minorities through a negative lens, it makes the shift that enables one to look at those positive factors that are inhabited in the resiliency of African American female students (Bryant, 2017; Evans-Winters, 2011; Henfield & Washington, 2012; Kim & Hargrove, 2013; Noguera, Pierce, & Ahram, 2015).

Resilience

According to current research, resilience provides educators with a paradigm with which to guide future educational practices (Butler, 2015; Nicoll, 2014). An education paradigm based on resilience consists of: “mindsets, social-emotional competencies, and positive, supportive social environments (family, school and community)” (Nicoll, 2014 p. 50). The increasing amount of research in the past two decades has shifted from focusing on student deficit/risks to a paradigm of competence and resilience, which takes a more optimistic view of the social, emotional, and academic development and growth of students. Research in resilience moves our focus from dysfunction to success academically and socially in the lives of students who are faced with adverse situations.

When students change perspectives from deficit/risk to one of growth, competence and resilience moves students into a more positive realm academically and socially (Butler, 2015). According to Nicoll (2014), there are a minimum of seven major

categories that have been shown to affect the academic and social growth of students, including curriculum, bioneurological functioning, school environment, family system, educational setting environment, peer and community relationships, and student social-emotional competence (Lewallen, Hunt, Potts-Datema, Zaza, & Giles, 2015).

Gender-Relevant Learning

The conceptual framework addresses gender differences in learning. Gilligan (1993) explained that the developmental differences of men and women affect their social and personal relationships; this is referred to as a “developmental liability” and increases adolescent separation (p. 9). According to analysis of the relationship between a mother and child (Gilligan, 1993) the differences in how the personality of each sex is formed in early childhood, is an extension of observations made on how the different sexes play during the middle childhood years. This perspective concludes that each sex reaches puberty at different times and with different social experiences and impersonal orientations. Male students reach puberty later than female students and tend to be distracted academically by the physical development of girls during puberty (Gurian et al., 2009). It is during puberty that the development of identity in females tends to be more of a psychological risk than for males. Gurian et al. build on Gilligan’s foundation concerning the learning differences of female and male students. Their research has provided the impetus for academic institutions to better serve their students through single-gender educational settings and schools. This has proven beneficial for students to increase academic achievement without the distractions of a coeducation setting. Dwarte (2014) explained that the reemergence of single-sex education could aid schools in

addressing the growing needs of an overwhelmingly diverse student population. Further research should be conducted to determine whether the needs of African American students can be better addressed in a single-gender setting. Dwarte examined how single-sex academic programs affected the educational needs of African American students.

Social Capital

According to Gauntlett (2011), social capital is not what is owned but what is personally available. It is based on values that are shared, trusted, and cultivated through a community of people who are woven together. Evans-Winters (2011) explained that students are able to survive barriers related to race, class, and gender because of the support provided by people and resources within the community. Coleman (1988) explained that social capital produces human capital. Human capital fosters the growth of better learners. Adolescents are more confident in their own opinions, have positive self-identities, and are more emotionally intelligent, all of which contributes to academic success. Human capital is a by-product of social capital and is dependent on relationships that occur within the family and social support network. Human capital and social capital complement one another within family relationships and aide in the academic success of students. Gauntlett explained that social capital is dependent on people coming out of themselves and being helpful and supportive to others, just because it is a good thing to do and without expecting anything in return. Social capital can be a useful tool to move students from academic lethargy to academic success.

Al-Fadhli and Kersen (2010) explained how there are different kinds of social capital that influence the educational aspirations of African American students. Putnam

defined social capital as “... features of social life – networks, norms, and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives” (p. 380). They identified three areas of social capital: religious, family, and cultural in their study. Al-Fadhli and Kersen also explained that social capital effects on academic achievement vary based on gender. This variance can be attributed to the African American females increased exposure and representation in church and civic activities. Educational achievement is strongly connected to family social capital. Students’ benefit when parents and family members are involved in the students’ academic success (Al-Fadhli & Kersen, 2010). Al-Fadhli and Kersen reference several research studies on the positive effects of social capital on academic achievement, showing that African American and Hispanic students are more successful academically when parents are involved in school activities.

Racial Identity and Socialization

Peters (1985) defined racial socialization as the “tasks Black parents share with all parents—providing for and raising children... but include the responsibility for raising physically and emotionally healthy children who are Black in a society in which Black has negative connotations” (p. 161). Brown further explained that racial socialization is used to guide the interaction, communication, and behavior as it addresses the cultural heritage of African Americans. It addresses how they should feel about being African American in a society hostile toward or confused about African Americans. These practices can include information about the racial status as it pertains to one’s identity (individual and as a group), relationships based on individual and group positions, and

where one falls in the hierarchy of society. Families utilize this process to guide the beliefs and attitudes of a child concerning race, and how and where they fit in based on this context. According to Brown, the forms of racial socialization include but are not limited to behavior modeling and messages that specifically address situations, as well as specific exposure to objects, environments, or context. Behavior modeling involves adapting one's behavior to address the current situation based on what one observes as positive behavior of others. Messages that specifically address situations are those that are taught in context of how to act in specific situations

According to Brown (2008), the increasing amount of research on racial socialization show that there is a positive effect on the academic achievement of African Americans, in addition to their psychological well-being and development. In Brown's review of research on ethnic-racial socialization, it was determined that students receiving messages that emphasized racial pride and education on one's culture and heritage resulted in positive academic and mental health outcomes in addition to positive self-esteem. Indicators suggest that the role of racial socialization is important to the resiliency of African Americans.

Social support systems have historically been instituted in the African American community, consisting of family, extended family, church, community, and individuals identified as relatives with no actual blood tie. These entities have assisted with raising children and providing positive role models in addition to providing social, emotional, and academic support. This extended network of social support within the African American community aids with the ability to overcome adversity and excel academically.

In the African American community, the extended family provides a wide range of support that is tangible and instrumental to the development of youth, including advice, emotional support, and information. The extended family is comprised of grandparents, aunts, uncles, and family friends, often referred to as aunts and uncles but having no blood relation.

African American families have historically formed bonds with community and church members (Brown, 2008; Jackson, 2017; Williams & Bryan, 2013). This has become an important component of the social support network within African American families. The importance of the church is second to the family and is an important social support institution that aids in the psycho-educational development of students by providing role models who provide additional coping mechanisms to promote resiliency in students (Brown, 2008, Evans-Winters, 2014).

Racial socialization and social support can be classified as a key component for resilient African American students. There has been very little research concerning the influence these factors have on the resiliency of African American students, and even less on that of female students. Brown (2008) found that the role of cultural factors is important in the African American's ability to overcome adverse situations. The study is different from others in that it is an empirical demonstration on the significance of cultural factors and their effect on the level of resilience in African American students.

Variations that add to the research of resilience include those that address "race, gender, socioeconomic status, ability/disability, and language" (Kim & Hargrove, 2013 p. 307). American Psychological Association task force of 2008 found that in order to fully

understand resilience in African Americans one must address “cultural integrity,” due to the unique position of African Americans in American society (Kim & Hargrove, 2013, p. 307). Researchers have shown that the “culturally unique” factors of racial socialization and racial identity directly affected the educational resilience of African American students (Kim & Hargrove, 2013, p. 307). Researchers have also shown that when students embrace their racial identity and socialization, and take pride in their unique qualities, there is a positive effect on academic resilience.

The majority of studies on African American females focus on negative factors that include social, emotional, and physical influences. These influences can negatively affect students and are occasionally the cause or effect of various negative aspects, including family, community, environmental, or academic. This study is one of only a few that has focused on the resilience of African American female students and the factors that positively affect their academic success in single-gender educational settings.

Critical Race Feminism Theory

Delgado and Stefancic (2012) addressed the intersection of race, gender, and class through critical race theory, a movement started by scholars and activists who were interested in the relationship of race, gender, and class. Feminism and critical legal studies are the foundation of critical race theory. Delgado and Stefancic identified several basic tenets that fall under the auspice of critical race theory. They began their list with the concept of ordinariness, which is the fact that because racism is not addressed or acknowledged, it is difficult to cure. The second is the convergence of interest, which advances both the White elite and working-class Caucasians, materially and physically,

respectively, providing little incentive for racism to be diminished. *Social construction* explains the fact that race is a construct of society to be manipulated when and if it is convenient and advantageous for the majority group (p. 8). The racialization of minority groups based on the current labor market and its needs is referred to as differential racialization. Delgado and Stefancic define differential racialization as “the process by which racial and ethnic groups are viewed and treated differently by mainstream society” (p. 160). The fact that people of color find it easier to communicate with one another than with the White population is the “unique voice of color.” Delgado and Stefancic (p. 160). The tenet that applies to everyone is the fact that everyone has more than one identifiable demographic (race, gender, etc.). This research pulls together the unique identities of gender, race, and class. The increased popularity in critical race feminism theory and critical race theory has increased the awareness in opposing versions in offsetting gender and racial oppression in educational research and law (Evans-Winters, 2015).

Postwomanist Research

The term womanist was conceived by Alice Walker in 1983 to address the multiple platforms that women of color face as opposed to those of the White women and the feminist movement (Evans-Winters, 2015). “Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender” (Alice Walker, 1983, pp. xi–xii). Womanism and Black feminism are interchangeable and come from the point of view that the main objective of the self-definition of African American women Boylorn (2013). The framework of this study was based on Evans-Winters (2011) combination of Black feminism or womanism and postmodernism to form what she terms post-womanist research. Postmodernism is

defined as a philosophy that serves to question essentialism, challenge metanarratives, and speak against the notion of scientific method or one particular way of knowing (Evan-Winters, 2011). In her attempt to bring the tenets of postmodernism and Black feminism together, she asked the question of how the influencing entities, Black family, Black community, and school influence the education of African American female students.

Research exists on the comparison of the experiences of feminist identity development of women from different cultures and races. The comparison of existing models and the development of feminist identity as they pertain to women from different racial or ethnic groups (Boisnier, 2003). Boisnier, looked at models of womanism and feminism to determine what part race plays in the identity development of Black and White women.

Competence Versus Deficit/risk Within Critical Race Feminism Theory

Competence versus deficit/risk within critical race feminism theory begins by examining deficit/risk thinking and determining why there needs to be a shift, especially as it pertains to the education of African American females. Henfield and Washington (2012) explained that deficit/risk thinking in an education setting is the belief in the preoccupation and categorization of the differences of African American students and classifying them as obstacles to learning (Evans-Winters, 2011). Deficit/risk thinking presents African American students as at-risk, incapable, disadvantaged, and unintelligent (Kim & Hargrove, 2013, Noguera, Pierce, & Ahrum, 2015). This thinking often causes teachers to decrease their academic expectations for African Americans students.

Deficit/risk thinking focuses on the lack of biological, hereditary, and environmental factors and blames the victims, in this case, African American students.

Competence versus deficit/risk occurs when educators move from blaming the student for what they cannot do or what they do not know and look at the factors that address their academic achievements, utilizing their cultural identity to affirm high academic expectations (Henfield & Washington, 2012). Educators must look at what is culturally relevant to African American students and utilize that knowledge by incorporating it into instruction that is culturally relevant to the students lived experiences (Henfield & Washington). Moving from deficit/risk to competence involves viewing risk and the ability to positively adapt. This antideficit/risk view involves the analysis of resilience through adjustment and risk reduction, viewing the support system or protective factors as family, community, and academic support that attribute to the resilience and success of students.

Nature of the Study

This interpretive phenomenological research study investigated the lived experience of single-gender education by African American female alumnae in an effort to capture and distil their shared experience of educational resilience. Alumnae participants provided a mature perspective on their experience, with the ability to integrate past and present influences into the meaning single-gender education and academic success had for them and their lives (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2014). Phenomenology investigates the meaning aspect of lived experiences as they correlate with one another (Van Manen, 2014). Heidegger's interpretive phenomenological

research method promotes the understanding and explanation of the lived experience of the human (Horrigan-Kelly, Millar, & Dowling, 2016). Phenomenological questioning awakens any time we are given cause to pause and reflect on a certain experiences (Van Manen, 2014).

Definitions

Academic success: have or relating to performance in academic courses; success as a degree or measure of succeeding, favorable or desired outcome (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2016). For the purpose of this study, academic success is referred to as a favorable or desired outcome relating to performance in academic courses.

Black feminism: an act of self-definition that describes one's state of mind, directs ones' research questions and methodology, announces one's embracement of Afrocentrism and mainstream feminism, and proclaims one's awareness of the interlocking systems of race, class, and gender oppression (Evan-Winters 2011).

Competence: the ability to handle situations effectively (Ginsburg & Jablow, 2015).

Competency versus deficit/risk perspective moves from viewing minorities through a negative lens to looking at those positive factors that are inhabited in the resiliency of African American female students (Bryant, 2017).

Critical race feminism: the intersection of critical race theory and feminism (Few-Demo, 2014)

Deficit/risk perspective: presents African American students as at-risk, incapable, disadvantaged, and unintelligent (Kim & Hargrove, 2013, Noguera, Pierce, & Ahram, 2015).

Educational resilience: the ability to recover from or adjust to problems adversities and stress (Evan-Winters 2011).

Gender relevant education: single gender school

Guts, Resilience, Initiative, Tenacity (G. R. I. T): perseverance and passion for long-term goals (Duckworth, 2013).

Postmodernism: philosophy that serves to question essentialism, challenge metanarratives, and speak against the notion of scientific method or one particular way of knowing (Evan-Winters 2011).

Post-womanist: a merge between Black feminism and postmodernism, which serves as a framework for the study of African American female students based on Dr. Evan-Winters' premise that it exposes racism within the White feminist discourse and it challenges the tenets of Black feminist theory that are grounded in essentialism (Evan-Winters, 2003).

Racial identity and socialization: focuses on the racial identity and socialization factors that increase a student's ability to positively identify and socialize based on information provided by social capital members and opportunities that promote positive racial identity and socialization.

Resiliency: is the ability to recover from or adjust to problems, adversity, and stressors in life (Evans-Winters, 2014).

Single-gender: For purposes of this study, this term refers to female or male only educational settings or schools.

Social capital: a complex multidimensional collection of assets that facilitate collaboration for a mutual benefit that creates shared norms, beliefs, networks, values, institutions, and social relations within a society (Bhandari & Yasunobu, 2009).

Womanist: A black feminist or feminist of color. Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender (Alice Walker, 1983, pp. xi–xii)

Assumptions

It was assumed that the participants in this study would answer the survey and interview questions honestly and be able to reflect on and talk about their educational experience.

Scope and Delimitations

Limitations of this study included the small number of participants based on limited number of single-gender schools and educational settings. An additional limitation included the limits of generalizing qualitative research results.

Limitations

Patton (2015) identified several potential study limitations. These included sample size, interview data limitations, and inexperience of the interviewer.

Significance

This study adds to the limited research on the resilience factors of African American females. It contributes to the knowledge base concerning what role single-gender educational settings play in the resilience of African American females. It

involved an analysis of the role that resilience plays in the success of African American female alumnae from single-gender schools, in addition to how resilience enabled this population to achieve in single-gender educational settings. This study “nurtures a measure of thoughtfulness and tact in the practice” with regard to gaining insight into the lived experience of African American female students in single-gender educational settings, and how their academic resilience is cultivated (Van Manen, 2014, p. 31). By this, I mean that it gives a voice to African American female students in single-gender educational settings concerning their experiences in and outside of school and provides a description of how these factors affect their educational resilience. It involved an investigation of how African American females are influenced by family, community, and school to achieve academically. The goal of this study is to contribute to the body of knowledge on the role of resilience in the lived experience of African American female alumnae.

Summary

Chapter 1 introduced the study, the statement of the problem, research questions, the significance of the study, assumptions, and the study limitations. Chapter 2 reviews the literature and research related to gender-specific education, African American female alumnae and the resiliency factors that contribute to their academic success. Chapter 3 presents the methodology and procedures used in the study. Chapter 4 contains the results of analyses and findings that are presented as a result of the study, and Chapter 5 contains a summary of findings, conclusions from the findings, a discussion, and recommendations for future studies.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Most research concerning African American students has been focused on African American male students. Previous research on African American females has been focused on a deficit/risk perspective. There is limited research that addresses the resilience of African American females, and little to none that address African American females of single-gender educational settings and their experiences as they relate to resilience (Evans-Winters, 2015; Price, 2015). The literature review resulted in 97 articles, 33 books, and 10 dissertations that have been organized to reflect the conceptual framework. The article organization and framework consists of content (gender relevant education, social capital, support systems, and racial identity and socialization) and perspective (critical race feminism, postmodern womanism, and competency versus deficit/risk perspective.).

Literature Search Strategy

The literature review was conducted using EBSCO host, Academic Research Complete, ERIC, and Google Scholar, in addition to utilizing the reference sections of various books and scholarly articles. The search terms included *African American students, single-gender education, gender based education, educational resilience, womanism, resiliency, social capital, critical race theory, achievement gap, racial identity and socialization, and academic achievement*. I contacted Dr. Evans-Winters for additional resources concerning the resilience of African American female students and Michael Gurian and the Gurian Institute for research sites and sources based on gender

relevant education. These people and organizations are important to the literature review based on their extensive research in their respective areas of study. Dr. Evans-Winters' research on the resiliency of African American female students is groundbreaking in terms of identifying resiliency factors in African American females and how they affect them academically. Evans-Winters' (2011) postwomanist research is a conceptual framework that merges Black feminism (womanism) and postmodernism to form postwomanist research. Postwomanist addresses how the Black family, Black community, and school affect the academic experiences of African American female students and alumnae as an extension of this research. It addresses how the intersection of race, class, and gender affect the academic experiences and overall self-concept of African American female students who excel in the face of adversity (Evans-Winters, 2015, Waters, 2015). Michael Gurian and the Gurian Institute are important in the field of gender relevant education and brain-based research concerning gender learning style differences.

Resiliency

The American Psychological Association (2014) defined resiliency as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, and even significant sources of stress—such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stresses. Southwick and Charney (2012) and Southwick (2011) noted that there are outside factors or resources that contribute to resiliency. These factors or resources include family, friends, and organizations ranging from cultural, religious, government, and community organizations (support systems) (Butler, 2015; Pennington,

2015; Shean, 2015). According to Southwick and Charney (2012), researchers have developed several tests to gauge resiliency. These tests include Connor-Davidson Resiliency Scale, Response to Stressful Experiences Scale, Dispositional Resilience Scale, and the Resiliency Scale for Children and Adolescents. None of the available assessments measures adequately captured a profile of the educational resilience of African American female alumnae of single gender education.

According to Southwick and Charney (2012), several factors attribute to the resiliency of a person. Resiliency is not biological, psychological or social, but a combination of the three that must be studied in order to accurately determine how this phenomenon affects one person and not another. Southwick and Charney interviewed individuals who were classified as highly resilient. Their research revealed 10 resiliency factors: “realistic optimism, facing fear, moral compass, religion and spirituality, social support, resilient role models, physical fitness, brain fitness, cognitive and emotional flexibility, and meaning and purpose” (Southwick & Charney, 2012, p. 13). This list is neither exhaustive nor definitive. Researchers recognize that there are many factors that attribute to a person’s ability to bend and not break from the stressors of life.

The level of a person’s resiliency is a high indicator of success, this is evident from the cancer ward to the Olympics, and from the classroom to the boardroom (Barajas, 2011; Butler-Barnes, Williams, & Chavous, 2012; Southwick & Charney 2012; Williams & Portman, 2014). These researchers also pointed out that resiliency can be the difference between failure and success. It is becoming more evident that modern society is lacking key social and community connections that are required for a person to be

resilient. According to Vespa, Lewis, & Kreider, 2013) this is evident in the increased number of single person households from 17-27% between 1970 and 2005 per the 2012 U. S. Census, and the lack of personal investment into relationships with other people.

Southwick and Charney (2012) listed various hormones and neurotransmitters that assist with the response to stress and resilience. These hormones and neurotransmitters include cortisol, epinephrine, norepinephrine, serotonin, dopamine, neuropeptide Y, oxytocin, and brain-derived neurotropic factors. Groundbreaking research on genetics by Columbia University examines certain factors that affect DNA and how it is “expressed” (Champagne, 2011, p. 5). Their research examines the role genetics plays in a person’s response to stress. Epigenetics (Champagne, 2011; Southwick & Charney, 2012) is an emerging research topic in the area of resilience. Epigenetics is the study of how internal and external triggers react biochemically and elicit the needed response to stressful factors. Neuroplasticity, the nervous systems ability to respond to stimuli, is extrinsic and intrinsic, and reorganizes based on connections, functions, and structure. Neuroplasticity has the ability to weaken or strengthen the brain according to its use (Gurian et al., 2009; Southwick & Charney, 2012).

Optimism is one’s ability to view the future with hope and confidence that everything will turn out well; Southwick and Charney (2012) define optimism as “a future-oriented attitude, involving hope and confidence that things will turn out well” (p. 25). Researchers use the Life Orientation Test to measure one’s optimism level. Southwick & Charney (2012) identified two optimism styles, dispositional or trait optimism and situational optimism. Dispositional optimism is stable from situation to

situation, while situational optimism is dependent on the situation and may change from one situation to another (Pennington, 2015, Shean, 2015, Taylor, Larsen-Rife, Conger, Widaman, & Cutrona, 2010). Realistic optimists deal well with reality and know how to determine if a situation is salvageable or if they should focus on a solvable problem. Optimism can increase one's level of resilience through positive emotion and behavior. Increasing one's positive moods and emotions can lead to more creativity, better health, increased knowledge acquisition, better relationships, and psychological resilience (Pennington, 2015, Shean, 2015, Southwick & Charney, 2012).

Southwick and Charney (2012) identified being able to reappraise difficult situations, cope in ways that are focused on problems and directed by goals, and giving ordinary events new meaning, as three coping mechanisms. With the first coping mechanism, being able to reappraise difficult situations, the optimist is able to use adversity as a challenge and utilize it to find new opportunities. The second mechanism, coping in ways that are problem focused and goal-driven, utilizes active problem solving strategies that require skills such as planning, goal setting, decision-making, conflict resolution, and support from social networks. The third mechanism, giving ordinary events new meaning, recognizes that one's life is meaningful and has purpose.

Southwick and Charney (2012) explain the correlation between Fredrickson's broaden and build theory of positive emotions and the results from various other studies that support the theory that one's scope of attention is expanded and mind is open to new information, and connections that are creative and meaningful through positive emotions.

Neuroscience is connected to optimism through learning that takes place in the prefrontal cortex; it is also largely hereditary and can be increased through learning.

In their research, Southwick and Charney (2012) found that resilient individuals also have a strong sense of right and wrong, which increases during stressful life events. One's selflessness or altruism, giving without expecting to receive and concern for others are strong indicators of a high "moral compass." Southwick and Charney (2012), explain that research in social science show a connection between resilience and altruism. Their theory is that positive social interests and reduced stress could be related to a shift in one's attention to others from self. Altruism tends to build resilience in children who come from homes and communities that are highly stressful.

Southwick and Charney (2012) report that religion or spirituality is another coping mechanism for people dealing with trauma or hardship. They cited Gaber's definition of religion "as a path to God, the Source of Being: and spirituality as "the essential human endowment in which direct experience of God can take place" (Southwick & Charney, p.19). In their interviews, Southwick and Charney found that spirituality and religion were a recurring theme that resilient subjects continually turned to during their periods of stress. Many circles clearly recognized that there is a connection between resilience, religion, and positive mental and physical health. What is not clear is why. Attending religious services regularly may attribute to ones increased altruism, optimism, and purposeful meaning of one's life, in addition to regular interaction with role models who are positive and resilient. These relationships encourage one to interact positively with others through service and generosity. People who are in

regular attendance at religious services tend to have more access to stronger social support systems. One's relationship with God often assists in strengthening one's internal strength, and self-esteem (Butler, 2015, Southwick & Charney, 2012). Southwick and Charney (2012), cited several studies that link prayer, meditation, and mindfulness to resilience. These studies used several different assessments to determine the level of connection that participants attributed to prayer and meditation. The assessments measured spiritual support, self-esteem, satisfaction, and meaning in life.

Southwick and Charney (2012) identified one's social support network, as one that consists of people who care about supporting one another. This network of people can consist of close friends and family members (Butler, 2015). In their study, Southwick and Charney (2012), identified strong personal relationships and the ability to address and solve problems in a group setting instead of as an individual. Generosity, altruism, and compassion are measurable acts of resilience and are indicative of the adage "I am my brother's keeper."

Southwick and Charney (2012) explained that stress is decreased and self-worth is increased when social networks are positive and rich with coping strategies that lead toward increased physical and mental health. One can gather strength from reaching out to mentors, family, and friends during times of loss. The communication must be genuine and go deeper than superficial conversation to effectively support one in the social network. Werner, as well as Werner and Smith, showed that mentors are imperative to the support system of children who come from homes that are abusive or low socioeconomically (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Role models have been known to

come in different forms and from different parts of one's life. A role model can be friends, family, clergy, teachers, coaches, and co-workers (Marshall & Wingfield, 2016, Butler, 2015, Pennington, 2015, Shean, 2015). Youth even look to high profile athletes, as well as political and historical leaders, as mentors or role models. Role models that exhibit resiliency within families can span generations, from grandparents, to parents, and to children who raise resilient children because of their heritage.

Children benefit greatly from contact with individuals who show that they support them, encourage them, and are committed to their success. Southwick and Charney (2012) explained that children who have been abused or neglected thrive when they have love, support, and encouragement that are unconditional and nonjudgmental. Dedicated mentors foster resilience in adolescents, as well as attitudes towards attendance, good grades, maturity, and restraint from the use of alcohol and drugs. Mentors foster positive mental health with decreased anxiety and depression. This is not to say that adolescents cannot be resilient without mentors. According to Southwick and Charney (2012), mentoring is effective when it comes from a family member who is not the parent. Aunts, uncles, grandparents, older siblings, or cousins who have a clear understanding of the cultural, personal, and family history of the adolescent are able to relate from a position of knowledge and empathy.

Role modeling is a form of "observational learning: learning that takes place not by being taught, but merely by watching what someone else is doing" (Southwick & Charney, 2012 p. 122). This goes beyond imitating one's actions; it includes the observation of rules and behaviors that will guide one's actions when placed in similar

situations. The mentee is able to take those lessons learned from observing the mentor and model future thoughts, behaviors, emotions, and values in ways that positively fit one's situation and personality (Southwick & Charney, 2012).

Resilience is a social capital factor that affects communities in addition to individuals. Social capital deals with one's community, community organizations, neighborhood, individual, and the relationships that exist between these entities (Southwick & Charney, 2012).

Gender Relevant Learning

There have been consistent disparities in research that have resulted in excluding or grouping critical theory building when it comes to women's development and how it differs from the development of men. Developmental theorists have historically focused on the development of males; there are several factors that could attribute to this, one being that researchers have historically been males and the fact that the feminine mystique is one to which they are unable to relate (Gilligan, 1993).

Gilligan, (1993) explained how Freud's negative depiction of the psychological development of the female can be redirected to provide a more accurate account of how girls develop a better sense of sympathy and empathy, not taking on the self-defining term of Freud's "preoedipal relational modes" in the same way as boys (p. 8). Girls' interactions on a personal and social level are in direct contrast to the lives of boys and how they develop. Gilligan (1993) explained Lever's philosophy that girls must learn to play like boys in order to be successful professionally or live lives dependent on men.

Puberty is the time when the chasm between boys and girls grows on the social spectrum and is identified as “the second individuation process” (Blos, 1967, p. 162) in which the development of females becomes more problematic. Boys exhibit increased libido and girls exhibit what Freud refers to as “repression” of “masculine sexuality” in order for their feminine sexuality to grow, which moves girls toward adulthood. It is at this time that identity development is more apparent. Gilligan (1993) further elaborates that based on McClellan’s research, sex differences are one reason that there has been an extension of empirical research on human behavior. Women view competitive achievement differently than men, operate from a different psychological perspective, and are aroused in different ways. According to Gilligan (1993), there is a disconnection between femininity and success. Female adolescents have problems combining their goals based on their feminine aspirations with the masculine aspects that are acquired in school. Research by Piaget, Lever, and Chodorow reinforced the fact that while males focus on the rules and their social perspectives are positional, females focus on relationships and their social perspectives are more personal (Gilligan, 1993). The differences in how male and females learn are evident in how female students describe their academic experiences and the level of their academic achievement. A chasm exists between the academic achievement and graduation rates of male and female students (Johnson, 2017; Maye, 2014; Palmieri, 2014).

The moral development of women has been a mystery for so long because those conducting research have mainly been men. The unique traits of women, their “goddess,” and sensitivity for others have been viewed as deficit based on studies conducted by men,

because men conducted these studies and they tend to focus from the male perspective. The moral development of women comes as the result of recognizing the importance of women in the life cycle of humans. When placed in the life cycle of men, women's place can only be adequately analyzed when as much attention that has been placed on men is placed on women. Theorist, psychologist, and sociologists have focused on studying men to the point that there is no language, understanding, or recognition to describe the females need for connection, and this creates a problem when it comes to proper interpretation of the development of women and their needs (Gilligan, 1993).

Gilligan (1993) explained that males and females experience attachment and separation differently. In addition, both genders view danger differently; men view it in terms of connection while women view it in terms of separation. These differences account for how each gender reacts and interacts when it comes to dealing with separation and/or danger. Resiliency research supports the 25-year-old study conducted by Judith Wallerstein's explaining that children are healthier and do better when they have healthy bonds and relationships in and out of school (Gurian, 2002). Girls develop better emotionally and academically when "a web of trusted relationships" surrounds them (Gurian, 2002, p. 198).

There are many factors to consider when exploring gender differences and their effect on education. Gurian, Stevens, and King (2008) explained chemical differences based on gender. The hormone testosterone is responsible for aggression and competition in males, this chemical is present in females, but at a lower level. According to Gurian et al. (2008), healthy competition increases girls' self-confidence. Conversely, competition

during puberty is more evident when girls begin competing for the attention of boys (Gurian et al., 2008, p. 10). Estrogen is a group of hormones that is found at higher levels in girls than boys. The estrogen levels found in their bodies in addition to various other aspects affect aggression levels in females. The neurotransmitter serotonin is 30% higher in girls than boys, serotonin is known for how it affects one's mood and anxiety level. In addition, the neurotransmitter dopamine is known for its ability to stimulate pleasure and motivation in both girls and boys. Oxytocin is the hormone responsible for social relationships and bonding, this hormone is higher in females than males throughout one's lifetime, aiding in how one develops and maintains relationships with others. This hormone aids in the establishment of relationships and bonding between female students and teachers (Maye, 2014; Palmieri, 2014).

Male and female brain differences are the subject of ongoing research by the Gurian Institute. Their research focuses on the unique differences in how male and female students learn. Research by the Gurian Institute focuses more directly on the male population but does include data concerning the differences between how the female and male brains function. According to Gurian et al. (2008), these brain differences affect the academic achievement of male and female students. Gurian et al. detailed how there is a strong need for female mentors for female students in education, as well as in the corporate world. Peer to peer mentoring and support systems are imperative when it comes to the advancement and retention of females in business and education (Gurian et al., 2008, p. 61)

The corpus callosum are nerves that serve as connectors for the brains right and left hemispheres. This bunch of nerves is larger and denser in girls than in boys and is responsible for the increased “cross-talk” (Gurian, et. al, 2008, p. 6) between brain hemispheres. There is an additional connection called the anterior commissure, which is larger in girls than boys, that accounts for girls being able to multi-task and their being able to verbalize how they feel emotionally, connecting to their feelings with the feelings of others. According to Gurian et al. (2008), the American Psychological Association conducted a study in 2006, which confirmed that there is a gender stress gap and females are reportedly more stressed than males. Females tend to deal with stress by “tending and befriending,” nurturing others. The hormone oxytocin is the hormone that factors into this key gender difference.

Stressors for girls are different from the stressors for boys. Factors that contribute to stress in adolescent girls include body image concerns, peer teasing, sexual harassment, relational aggression, bullying, drops in academic confidence, family problems (such as separation, divorce), mental illness, health issues, and financial troubles. These stressors in addition to those caused by racial disparities can have an adverse effect on the academic success of African American female students when coupled with issues that may arise in school (Evans-Winters, 2011; Gurian et al., 2009; Johnson, 2017; Maye, 2014).

Support Systems within Social Capital

Social capital represents the strong familial, community, and religious connection that aids in the academic resilience of African American female students. African

American female students benefit from extended relationships, and these relationships positively affect their academic achievement and give them something toward which to strive. Social capital connections go beyond financial and human capital and serve as mentors, role models, counselors, and often confidants who provide students with a support system that aids in their achieving their academic goals (Butler, 2015; Evans-Winters, 2011; Hoyle, 2017; Johnson, 2017; Maye, 2014; Pennington, 2015; Shean, 2015).

Putnam's definition of social capital includes characteristics of social organizations that include networks, social trust, and norms that assist in the cooperation and coordination of activities and aspects that benefit all parties involved (Majee & Hoyt, 2011). According to Majee and Hoyt, (2011) social capital is connected to financial and human capital in that it draws on the connections with community members from both economic and social settings. Coleman (1988) identified the function of social capital as one that assists members in the acquisition of resources and allows one to reach their goals. Social capital consists of four elements: networks, norms, resource, and trusts. How the actors interact with one another helps identify these components.

According to Gurian et al. (2008), the study by Massachusetts Department of Education indicated that mentoring is one of the most integral parts of a student's academic success. Formulating relationships with one adult outside of one's family who is caring and nurturing provides adolescents with an advocate who they can turn to in times of stress and turmoil or for guidance and support. Gurian et al. (2008) and Marshall and Wingfield (2016) explained that mentors matter. Students feel connected, and cared

about by someone whom they look up to and admire. It is important that mentors build rapport with students and listen, while maintaining an authoritative connection. Teachers must form relationships that show students that they are cared about, and this relationship is often most important when it comes to motivating and inspiring students. The student-teacher relationship helps increase self-esteem, increase academic achievement, and establish a learning environment that is caring (Butler, 2015; Hoyle, 2017; Johnson, 2017; Maye, 2014; Pennington, 2015; Shean, 2015).

Southwick and Charney (2012) identified several factors that contribute to functioning within a social support network. These factors are altruism, healthy competition, reciprocated support, and trust, all of these lead to a common cause and sense of community within a group. Support within these groups consists of soliciting assistance and occasionally having to reach out for help from those within the network. These support networks “create health-promoting social bonds” and “foster social support” (Southwick & Charney, 2012, p. 107).

Alfred (2009) and Woolcock and Narayan (2000) reference Putnam’s division of social capital into two categories: bonding and bridging. Bonding is the form of social capital that flows horizontally and is consistent across like-minded individuals or social groups (families, co-workers, neighbors, church members). Studies have shown that this occurs among people of the same socioeconomic status who are able to assist one another in getting by but do not have access to enough resources that would allow one to get ahead. Coleman (1988) expounded on this concept by explaining that the family can be one of the most influential effects on a student’s education (Kim & Hargrove, 2013).

Bonding fortifies the core values and culture, which lead to the homogeneity of a group or community. Bridging on the other hand consists of resources from other social groups that provide one with the opportunity to get ahead, thus forming a bridge from one social community into another (i.e., bosses, those with higher socioeconomic status).

Where formal social networks do not exist, social networks are formed through the personal connections of students' parents, providing those students with a sense of social connectedness and mutual assistance. This form of social capital is termed social closure (Coleman, 1988). Social capital in the form of bonding, has the downside in that it can limit one's desire to expand one's horizons or viewpoints past that of the group or change behaviors that may not be normal for the current connection (Carolan, 2012). Conversely, bridging provides one with an outside view of one's current environment. It provides resources, opportunities, and experiences that would not otherwise be available.

Al-Fadhli and Kersen (2010) differentiated three dimensions of social capital, consisting of religious, family, and cultural forms of social capital, and each of these components has its own unique factors that affect the academic success of students. Religious social capital has differing effects based on gender. This could be because African American females tend to spend more time involved in church activities than males. Family social capital benefits students whose parents are involved in the academic portion of their lives. There is greater academic effect on African American and Hispanic students whose parents are involved in their school life than in White students (Al-Fadhli & Kersen, 2010). Cultural social capital occurs when students are exposed to cultural events that may not normally have been accessible within their normal environment. This

exposure leads to greater academic achievement (Al-Fadhli & Kersen, 2010). Cultural social capital, family social capital, and religious social capital expose adolescents to an environment that encourages and fosters positive racial identity and socialization skills. The “village” that aids in raising children or the extended family has become rarer. The teacher/mentor is one of the most stable entities in the life of middle and high school aged children. How do these factors affect resiliency in female students?

Racial Identity and Socialization

Butler-Barnes, Williams, and Chavous (2012) defined African American racial identity as the significance of and meanings individual’s attaché to their racial group membership based on Sellers et al.’s 1998 definition (p. 3). This identification is important as adolescents develop and identify their personal identities in relation to their values and how they connect to others within their community. This aids in the development of pride in the contribution and heritage of African Americans. Researchers have suggested that this serves as a psychological buffer toward the many negative views and stereotypes of African Americans (Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin, & Cogburn 2008). Racial identification is directly tied to the higher value placed on one personally and academically and leads to one being more academically successful (Chavous et al., 2008). This positive identification is a protective barrier against racial discrimination and assists in academic achievement.

Critical Race Feminism Theory

Critical race feminism theory is grounded in critical race theory, which examines the roots of racism from a structural viewpoint (Sleeter, 2011) and addresses the

intersectionality of race and gender (Collins, 1998, Marshall & Wingfield, 2016). Delgado and Stefancic's (2012) critical race theory addresses this unique status from the perspective of race, gender, and class. Researchers have expounded on this theory through the inclusion of a feministic perspective that addresses the unique factors that are radical components of African American females and their experiences (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010, Evans-Winters, 2015). Critical race theory finds its foundation within the areas of critical legal studies and feminism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Specifically, Evans-Winters and Esposito (2010) explained how critical race feminism expounds upon critical race theory in order to address the academic experiences of African American females. The five tenets of critical race theory lend themselves to the development of educational research that addresses the formulation of educational policy and curriculum according to Evans-Winters and Esposito. The five tenets include (a) race and racism as the defining factors of how society functions; (b) it challenges claims concerning the aspects of colorblindness, equal opportunity, neutrality, meritocracy, and objectivity; (c) is committed to social change; (d) gives voice to those who are oppressed and marginalized; (e) and its scope and function are interdisciplinary in nature (Delgado Bernal, 2002, Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). The intersection of critical race and feminist theories has great implications on the academic success of African American girls, in that it directly addressed the needs of women of color (Evans-Winters, 2011, Waters, 2015). Several factors affect the resilience of African American alumnae; critical race feminism theory provides researchers with a lens through which this population can be viewed.

Critical race feminism (CRF) provides African American women with a theoretical framework that addresses oppression from multiple angles based on race and gender, and provides a platform for the study and eradication of oppression based on class, gender, and race in education. According to Evans-Winters and Esposito (2010), the investigation of critical race feminism theory in education affects African American girls academically in the following ways:

- providing a theoretical lens that gives the experiences and perspectives of women of color a voice due to its differences from men of color and White women;
- focusing on the multiple ways women of color are discriminated against based on the intersection of class, gender and race within the patriarchal, White, male oppressive system;
- addresses the multiple identities of women of color;
- the scope and breadth of CRF is multidisciplinary; and
- calls for the study and eradication of gender and racial oppression through the use of multiple theories and practices.

The need for a framework that addresses the resilience of African American females in academics is apparent in the lack of research that addresses this population. This population needs to be acknowledged and celebrated based on their ability to navigate the waters of adversity and achieve academically.

Competence versus Deficit/risk within Critical Race Feminism Theory

African American female students have historically been viewed from a deficit/risk perspective. This perspective is based on the barriers and negative proponents that effect the education of African American males with the academic needs of African American female students falling through the cracks (Evans-Winters, 2011, Evans-Winters, 2015). African American female students are stereotyped as masculine, aggressive, and promiscuous, which leads to them being overlooked in the educational setting or praised when their demeanor does not match the stereotype, rather than for their academic achievements. There is an increasing need for research methods to move away from a deficit/risk-oriented perspective toward one of competence and resilience. African American females are typically viewed in terms of drug use and abuse, dropout, sexual promiscuity, and early pregnancy in addition to being aggressive. The research from a competency perspective may be lacking due to scholars limited knowledge of the large number of successful African American females who overcame adverse social and economic conditions. Evans-Winters (2011) called for an increase in the number of studies that address the academic resilience and fortitude of African American females and the shift from a deficit/risk to competence perspective.

Milner (2007) explained that the deficit/risk discourse is sometimes evident in the thinking and belief systems of educators, policy makers, practitioners, and researchers. This is evident in educational settings where educators are preoccupied with racial differences, and expect students learning to be impeded based on these differences and can cause educators to decrease their academic expectations of African American

students (Evans-Winters, 2011; Henfield & Washington, 2012, Evans-Winters, 2015). Kim and Hargrove (2013) reiterated that this deficit/risk framework portrays African American students as at-risk of failure, disadvantaged, incapable, and unintelligent. This type of research feeds the negative stereotype placed on all African American students and tends to have a negative influence on how educators view and interact with these students. Despite this negative light, African American students are competent, resilient and still achieve academically. This study explores how African American female alumnae describe their lived experiences in single-gender education programs in an effort to capture and distil their shared experience of educational resilience in and outside of school.

Summary

Chapter 2 involved a discussion of the limited research on African American female students through the lens of a competence perspective versus a deficit/risk perspective. The majority of research has historically focused on African American male students, when African American females are studied they are studied from a deficit/risk perspective. The primary focus of the literature focused on specific aspects of the conceptual framework that are addressed in this study resilience, gender relevant education, gender differences in education, support systems in social capital, racial identity and socialization, critical race feminism and the shift from deficit/risk to competence perspective. The resilience of African American female students has limited research studies that eliminate specific factors of the three-pronged burden; by studying them in single-gender educational setting, the effects of resiliency on this population can

be illuminated. The conceptual framework guided the literature review and is utilized in Chapter 3 to discuss the methodology, participant selections, data collection, and the analysis of the study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological research (IPR) study was to explore how African American female alumnae describe their lived experiences in single-gender education programs in an effort to capture and distil their shared experience of educational resilience in and outside of school. An IPR study was conducted based on a foundational conceptual framework developed by Evans-Winters (2003, 2015) utilizing gender relevant education, social capital, racial identity and socialization along with competency versus deficit/risk perspective. Evans-Winters' approach to post-womanist research, combines postmodernism and Black feminism (womanism) in the study of the resilience of African American females in urban schools. The goal of this IPR study is to contribute to the body of knowledge on the role of educational resilience in the lived experience of African American female alumnae and those factors that contributed to their resilience (Smith, 2009). This IPR study uses critical race feminism (womanism) and competence versus deficit/risk perspectives to view the components of gender relevant education, social capital (support systems) and racial identity and socialization to determine how and or if they factor into the resilience of African American female students.

Chapter 3 explains the research design and the rationale for choosing an interpretive phenomenological design. It explains the role of the researcher, details the methodology, including participant selection, researcher developed instrument, the

procedures for recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. The chapter concludes with issues of trustworthiness, ethical procedures, and a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Questions

1. How do African American female alumnae of single-gender educational settings describe their experiences as they relate to resiliency?
2. How do African American female alumnae describe the effect of the single-gender schooling as it relates to resiliency in their lives outside of school?

An IPR study was conducted of African American female alumnae who attended single-gender schools based on a conceptual framework developed by Dr. Evans-Winters (2003), called post-womanist research. This framework combined postmodernism and Black feminism (womanism) to study the resilience of African American female students in urban schools. The intersectionality of race, class, and gender (Waters, 2015) are addressed in relation to how an individual's learning and education are affected based on post-womanist research. Post-womanist theory is best suited for the research problem and questions because it addresses the relationship between race, class, and gender in terms of how they affect the educational resilience of African American females.

The study was qualitative in nature with an interpretive phenomenological approach. In addition to being an exploratory approach, qualitative research may involve the "study of social institutions (schools) and their transformations through interpreting the meaning of social life, the historical problems of dominations, alienation, and social

struggles and a critique of society and the envisioning of new possibilities” (Creswell, 2007 p. 27). The research of the educational resilience of African American females and gender-specific education can best be conducted by interviewing alumnae of single-gender schools to address the differences in academic and social growth of female students from gender-specific educational environments and what part resilience plays in their academic achievement.

Creswell (2013) explained that a “phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (p. 76), reducing the commonality of the experiences to a universal description. Patton (2015) explained that the goal of phenomenological analysis is to embrace and enlighten the essence, meaning, and structure of the lived experience of a phenomenon as it pertains to an individual or group. The focus on the lived experience aligns well with the study of resilience in African American female alumnae of single-gender schools, who share the experience of resiliency in their education or lives. The alumnae from single-gender schools provided an intensive sample for studying this phenomenon (Smith, 2009). The study participants were alumnae of secondary and post-secondary schools. Where gender was removed for all four participants, classism was still an issue for three of the four participants who attended on scholarship. Three of the four participants received some sort of scholarship during their matriculation at their specific institutions.

Creswell (2013) explained that it is not the intent of qualitative research to generalize findings, the intent is to shed light on a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Creswell further explained that phenomenological studies range from one to 325

participants, where there are additional research members and funding. He suggests no more than four or five people, in order to study the phenomenon in greater depth, and better identify patterns and themes that help describe and illuminate the phenomenon. There was only one researcher for this study, and the sample size of four participants was optimal for the purpose of this study as the fundamental concern of IPA revolves around the experience of the individual, which is more about the quality of the experience than quantity of the participants and benefits from the complexity and the concentration of the human experiences (Smith, 2009).

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher within an interpretive phenomenological study is to explore through interviews, the shared lived experience of the participants from their point of view, and distil the universal essence of the shared experience (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). As the researcher, I, served as the primary instrument for data collection. According to Henfield and Washington (2012), in phenomenology, as multiple interviews are conducted, each one gathers information concerning the lived experience of the phenomenon (Coleman, 2012; Smith, 2009; Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015). Each participant participated in three interviews each, my role as the research instrument remained the same through all three interviews. I was able to view and respond to nonverbal and verbal communication during the interview, which provided additional time to process, clarify, and summarize information, as well as check for understanding and accuracy (Merriam, 2009).

While I never attended a single gender school, I shared with the participants the experience of personal and professional accomplishment while overcoming obstacles. At the same time, there were no personal or professional relationships that existed between the participants and myself in any capacity. Additionally, there were no supervisory or instructor relationships that would result in power over the research participants. The research study was conducted via email and telephone interviews with alumnae of single-gender schools. As an African American female, teacher, and former student, my perspective on the phenomenon and the participants is positionality with regard to the research (race, gender, class, etc.; Merriam & Associates, 2002). I would be considered an “insider” to some extent because I and participants share the same gender and racial demographics. “Black women researchers can offer information about black women that others can’t.” (Boylorn, 2013 p. 3). Boylorn (2013) offers that as a Black woman researcher, I offer a point of view that is advantageous for collecting and analyzing data about the lives of black women. My perspective as an “outsider” came into play in the single-gender educational setting of the participants. Because of this, I was considered an insider-outsider researcher in this study (Hellowell, 2006).

As a research strategy, Guba & Lincoln (1981) define reflexivity as “the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, the ‘human as instrument’” (p. 183). Reflexivity provided me with additional insight into the phenomenon being studied, by providing information about my relationship to the study and participants, and explaining how personal influences may be interpreted in study findings (Jootun, McGhee, Marland, 2009; Probst & Berenson, 2014). Reflexivity also details biases, experiences, and values

that were brought into the study (Creswell, 2013). Positionality had a direct effect on how I gathered and accessed data in addition to the interpretation and reporting of data (Merriam, 2009). The self-management of reflexivity can enhance the validity due to the increased insight pertaining to data that would not be apparent to the eyes of an outsider. Thus, the insider-outsider positionality with regard to this study presented the researcher with a double-edged sword in the sense that bias needed to be managed, but also it provides the potential for greater insight (Boylorn, 2013; Evans-Winters, 2014). Challenges that face African American female researchers include the unavoidable bias that may influence study interpretations along with the fact that African American women may take knowledge that is typically situated in the life that is lived as an African American woman and treat it as common knowledge to be discarded or reject in terms of concrete findings and valid information to be utilized according to Boylorn (2013) this viewpoint is the objectivity of an outsider with perspective usually available only to an insider. The techniques used to manage this “dual positionality” (Boylorn, 2013 p. 2) will be discussed later in this chapter.

Bracketing was used to set aside my preconceptions and not impose my understanding of the phenomenon to shape the collection of data or allow them to have an impact on the construction of the research findings (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010; Fischer, 2009). Bracketing is a technique of enhancing the trustworthiness by closing off personal biases. Bracketing allowed me to set myself apart as a researcher who was; articulate, curious and quizzical, insightful, honest and transparent, open, organized, precise, self-critical and self-aware, willing to be wrong by being open to new knowledge and

understanding as it was presented from each participant and identified through emerging themes (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010, Fischer, 2009). Of the eight steps outlined by Hamill & Sinclair (2010) and supported by research seven were used as outlined. I wrote the topic and issues (Burns & Grove, 2003) and revisited them throughout the research project to ensure that my culture, ideas and values were not dominating those of the participants. A reflective journal was kept digitally throughout the research, data collection, and analysis processes. An audit trail (Kahn, 2000) was developed for audibility, credibility, dependability and transferability (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). I used scholars for feedback to check data interpretation, themes and conclusions. Participant feedback was used to check interpretation of data as well as transcript accuracy. Peer/supervisor reviewed interview schedule and questions for openness and understanding. Literature review themes were checked to ensure that findings were supported by evidence. The only step that was not followed as outlined by Hamill & Sinclair (2010) was to conduct data collection and analysis prior to the literature review, which would safeguard questions from being phrased or data analyzed based on existing literature. I conducted two separate literature reviews, one prior to collecting and analyzing data and one after data analysis to include current literature. According to Kiikkala & Astedt-Kurki, (2015) personal researcher-based bracketing consists of the following at different levels which are supported within the literature: beliefs (Chan et al 2013), experience (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010, Chan et al 2013), external (phenomena) suppositions (Gearing, 2004), feelings (Ahern, 1999), internal (researcher) suppositions: personal, history, culture, experiences and values (Gearing, 2004), own inner life, self-knowledge (Motari, 2008),

own interests and role conflicts (Ahern, 1999), values (Ahern, 1999, Chan et al, 2013), each has different meanings across methodologies.

Methodology

Methodologies considered for this study-included ethnography, case study, and phenomenology. My decision against ethnography was based on its primary focus on culture, as well as the extended time for data collection. The case study methodology did not consider the subject's experiences. Phenomenology is dedicated to exploring and distilling the lived experience of the phenomenon in question and has become a feasible means of conducting qualitative research in education (Aagaard, 2016). The phenomenological approach best fit for this study since it takes into account how African American female alumnae describe their lived experiences in single-gender education programs in an effort to capture and distil their shared experience of educational resilience in and outside of school. The difference between most other research methods and phenomenology is that “studies the world as we ordinarily experience it or become conscious of it – before we think, conceptualize, abstract, or theorize it” (Van Manen, 2014, p. 65).

The philosophical tenets of Heidegger laid the foundation for the development of the interpretive phenomenological research methods which promotes the illumination and insight into the lived experience of the human (Horrigan-Kelly, Millar, & Dowling, 2016). This considers several key tenets included in Heidegger's phenomenological philosophy; “the concept of being, being in the world, encounters with entities in the world, being with, temporality, spatiality and care structure” according to Horrigan-Kelly

et al. (2016). This study focused on the participants' interpretation of these key tenets based on their lived experiences in a pursuit to explore said experiences as represented by the past, present and future. Phenomenology is a philosophic method of questioning, not of answering, discovering or drawing conclusions. Many "possibilities and potentialities for experiencing openings, understandings and insights" exist as a result of this questioning (Van Manen, 2014, p. 29).

Participant Selection Logic

Maxwell (2013) stated that with research studies, the selection of participants is justified by the study goals and conceptual framework or theory being studied. This is termed a "purposeful selection" and supports conclusions being generalized (Maxwell, 2013, p. 78). Maxwell (2013) explained that researchers conduct qualitative studies to describe, interpret, and explain specific criteria as they pertain to the phenomenon and answering of the research question(s). Purposeful criterion sampling was used in this study. The participant population consisted of African American female alumnae of single-gender schools. Thus, the criteria for participant selection was race (African American), gender (female), and graduates from a single-gender school. Conducting the research with women who attended single-gender schools allowed for me to focus on the essence of educational resilience of African American female alumnae and explore how they describe their lived experiences by removing sexism from three-pronged burden (classism, racism, and sexism) that encompasses them (Evans-Winters 2011, Evans-Winters, 2015). The participants should have a common consequential and discernible

experience of educational resilience within the single gender education setting (Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015).

The study required participants who were reflective, self-aware, and articulate. “Phenomenology is more a method of questioning than answering, realizing that insights come to us in the mode of musing, reflective questioning, and being obsessed with sources and meanings of lived meaning” (Van Manen, 2014, p. 27). These characteristics were measured and identified through their responses to the survey questions in addition to their willingness to openly share and describe their lived experiences in single-gender education programs in an effort to capture and distill their shared experience of educational resilience in and outside of school. The SurveyMonkey data were used for participant selection. The survey was used for the purpose of collecting data to select participants with the appropriate criteria, insight, and ability to articulate and interpret their thoughts and experiences. I administered a survey through SurveyMonkey. SurveyMonkey is an internet-based program that provided immediate availability of data for me. Participants were invited to participate via Facebook, LinkedIn, and through the Walden University Pool. The survey was given to African American, female alumnae of single-gender schools across the United States. Survey questions included the following: How did you come to attend your alma mater? How is your alma mater different from your past educational experiences? What barriers, problems, and hardships have you experienced throughout your life that has made you who you are today? How did you deal with those barriers, hardships or problems? Respondents were provided with a place to include their contact information if they wished to participate in the study.

Respondents were contacted via email concerning their selection to be a part of the study. The completion of the survey was purely voluntary. A smaller sample was selected based on survey answers and specific resilience indicators and their response to the invitation to participate.

The purpose of the survey was to identify study participants. I created the survey (Appendix B) and uploaded it to SurveyMonkey.com after obtaining IRB approval. I initially coded each survey response manually by inputting the survey responses from SurveyMonkey into an Excel spreadsheet and then added the information to NVivo for a second round of analysis. SurveyMonkey is a free online survey system that provides additional features for a monthly fee. I purchased the monthly subscription for a couple of months to use the feature that allowed me to download survey responses by question and participant in an Excel spreadsheet and PDF format. Each of the survey participants accessed the survey via a link on the Walden Participant Pool; various people shared it on their Facebook page, Facebook Black Educators Rock page, Walden Ph.D. Facebook page, or email from myself or participant friend. The survey data analysis took place in several rounds.

The initial round took place after seven respondents completed the survey process. I downloaded the demographic data onto an Excel spreadsheet and used that to track the status of the invitations to participate that were emailed to each of the survey respondents. The Invitation to Participate (Appendix F) was sent more than once to several of the survey respondents. Interviewing started as soon as the first participant responded with the consent to participate. The initial survey did not include Question 1

(What single-gender school did you attend?); Question 2 (What dates and grades were you in attendance at the above-mentioned school?); Question 3 (Did you graduate from this school?); or Question 8 (How did you hear about this study/survey (Facebook, Walden Participant Pool, friend, other, etc.)?). I added each of these questions after the first six respondents had completed the survey, and I emailed each of the first respondents to gather this additional information. Of the seven initial survey respondents, only three responded to the email and answered the four additional questions. Figure 2 reflects this information.

The highest number of survey respondents occurred in March of 2016. Three women completed the survey in February six in March one in April, and three in May. There was no activity during the month of June, so I proceeded to begin analyzing the interview data of the three study participants. In July, two additional respondents completed the survey because of snowballing through Valerie. Esther was the last respondent to complete the survey in July. I uploaded the survey spreadsheet and PDF into NVivo to identify fundamental themes that might be represented throughout the survey and interview data. Questions and respondent demographics were manually coded for each of the survey and interview responses before being categorized into themes. After the survey data were coded and categorized, I could gather a clearer picture of how African American female alumnae from single-gender education environments reflected on their experiences.

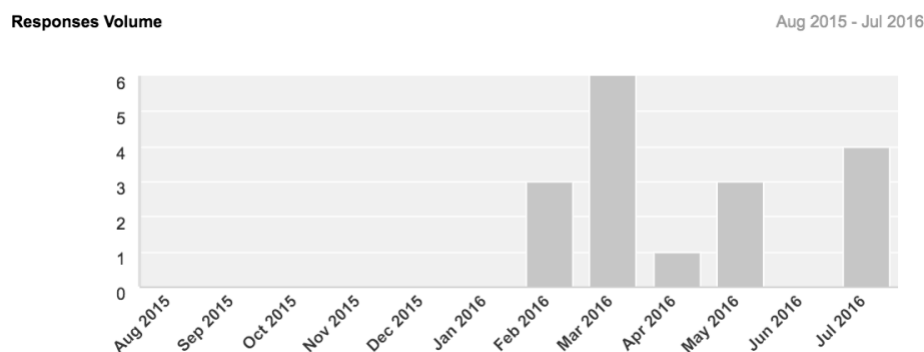


Figure 2. Survey Monkey response volume.

The study utilized a sample size of four participants. Miles et al. (2014) provided support for this small sample size. Patton (2015) explained that the comparison of groups of people within one or more programs can be analyzed across demographic groupings or programs. What is important is the fact that each group holds specific characteristics that are unique to their group. A qualitative interpretive phenomenological study is most feasible as it uses a small sample size and is capable of delving more in-depth with its participants. Small samples provide more meaningful data and generate results grounded in theory and supported by the conceptual framework. The factors that contributed to the selection are a small sample size, which included time and means constraints in addition to suggestions from Walden Scholars. They suggested that data saturation occurs at no more than six participants, and thematic saturation at 12 participants for a qualitative study. The study ended with four participants, at this point in the study there was enough information for the study to be replicated. It was at this point in the study that no new information was being obtained and further coding was no longer attainable. Data

saturation for this study was achieved with four participants (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Themes were repeated which was an indication of data saturation.

Patton (2015) explained that analysis is the organization of data for in-depth study and comparison of how participants respond and describe their experience of a phenomenon. Patton further explained that the phenomenological study approach “seeks to grasp and elucidate the meaning, structure and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for a person or group of people” (p. 482).

The intersection of race, class, and gender were addressed as they pertain to how an individual’s learning and education are affected based on post-womanist research, critical race feminism, and resilience (Evans-Winters 2011). Post-womanist theory was best suited for the research problem and questions because it addresses the relationship between race, class, and gender in terms of how it affects the educational resilience of African American female alumnae.

The study was qualitative in nature with interpretive phenomenological approach in that it focused on the meaning of the specific phenomenon (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2014). According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research commences with assumptions that are used to inform the research problem that speak to the meaning of individuals attributing to a human or social problem. An interpretive phenomenological approach was used to collect data from alumnae of single-gender schools, which was later analyzed to determine if there were inductive and deductive patterns reflecting how African American female alumnae described their lived experiences in single gender education programs in an effort to capture and distil their shared experience of educational

resilience in and outside of school. This culminated with the voices of African American female alumnae, a reflexive researcher contributed to the limited research on resilience of African American females. An interview approach to researching the educational resilience of African American females and gender-specific education allowed me to explore the differences in academic and social growth of female students in gender-specific educational environments.

Instrumentation

The data collection method involved three interviews, and the instrumentation utilized for data collection were three interview protocol instruments (Appendix C, D, E). The advantages of interviews were the ability for information to be communicated between two people with the intent of addressing and collecting in-depth information through asking questions and observing participant responses (Janesick, 2011; Patton, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I developed each question in the interview protocol with the intent to provoke thoughtful, answers that were rich with information that could answer the overarching research questions. I facilitated the interviews in a conversation like manner in order to elicit answers that were rich in information, and the interviews were scheduled in advance by communicating with alumnae to ensure that participants were available and that the interview would not interfere with important schedules (Creswell, 2007; Janesick 2011; Patton, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2012)

Researcher-developed instrument

According to Southwick and Charney (2012), several tests have been developed to gauge resiliency. These tests include Connor-Davidson Resiliency Scale, Response to

Stressful Experiences Scale, Dispositional Resilience Scale and the Resiliency Scale for Children and Adolescents. Of the four-scale mentioned by Southwick and Charney (2012), none addressed the needs of this study because of the focus on the lived experience of African American female alumnae. None of the available measures adequately captured a profile of African American female alumnae resiliency.

The interview protocols were developed based on the themes that emerged from a review of the literature, the purpose of the study, and the research questions. The interview questions were employed to gather information from participants based on their description of the lived experience as African American female alumnae in single-gender education, in an effort to capture and distil their shared experience of educational resilience. The study participants were four African American alumnae of single-gender schools. Two secondary and two post-secondary participants were selected based on their answers to the survey questionnaire taken online via SurveyMonkey.com. I developed the interview questions based on the research questions and the literature review for this study.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

African American female alumnae were provided with an online questionnaire, taken via SurveyMonkey.com to determine their initial qualifications for the study. Rubin and Rubin's (2012) guidelines for interview procedures were used as a foundation. Once I determined which alumnae met the study criteria, based on surveyMonkey.com results, the selected participants were contacted via email to request their participation in the

study and obtained pre-interview consent. The interviews were conducted once the consent form had been returned, via email.

The interviews took place via telephone and email, during a time when the participants were comfortable and able to focus and concentrate on the interview without interruptions. Each interview was transcribed and a summary was emailed to participants for review to ensure that the interpretations gathered from each interview accurately depicted the participants' perceptions and experiences. Data were collected through three 30-minute interviews. Each of the three 30-minute interviews had a specific purpose in the study; the first interview focused on the alumnae's past academic experiences, both recent past and further past in her life. The second interview addressed the alumnae's present experiences in her life as they pertain to the effects of single gender education on their lives. The third interview focused on the alumnae's reflection on their past and present experiences and how they relate to resilience and competence in their lives. The interviews were recorded with Live Scribe Smartpen. Transcription took place using Dragon Naturally Speaking and Echo Desktop. The data collection instrument consisted of using three interview protocols per participant.

Participants were recruited through various online sources, the Walden Participant Pool, a SurveyMonkey link on my personal Facebook page, and two additional groups Facebook pages (Black Educators Rock and Walden Ph.D. Scholars), which allowed for snowball sampling recruitment to begin in February of 2016 and end in July of 2016 (see Table 1). Snowball sampling is recruiting participants through those who have already participated in the study. This is discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Snowball

sampling was used to achieve increased recruitment of study participants (Valerio et al., 2016). The surveys were conducted via SurveyMonkey.com, an online survey system that allows individuals or organizations to create surveys free of cost and distribute them through email or social network via a link. The first survey was issued in February of 2016, and the last survey was issued in May of 2016. After several attempts to recruit the fourth participant through snowballing, it was determined after two months of no further survey activity on Surveymonkey.com that the study would move forward with three participants. At that time, Esther responded to the invitation to participate after data collection for the first three participants was complete and the interviews had been transcribed. Esther's interviews were completed while analyzation of the data from Valerie, Angela, and Jackie was taking place. Esther completed the three interviews via email, and her data are included in the study. Esther's data provided the study with greater depth by providing the experiences of an alumna from a Historically Black Institution.

Table 1

Study Recruitment Breakdown

Walden Participant Pool	Facebook	Friend referral	Unknown (did not indicate)
4	4	5	3

Data Analysis Plan

Several qualitative data analysis software programs were available at the time of the study. Janesick (2011) provided examples of websites (phenomenologyonline.com,

dissertationdoctor.com), journals (The International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, Qualitative Inquiry, The Qualitative Report, and International Review of Qualitative Research) and software (Atlas-Ti, The Ethnograph, NVivo, and MAXQDA) to assist the qualitative researcher with data analysis. Miles et al. (2014) provided an extensive list of qualitative data analysis software in addition to those mentioned by Jansick (AnSWR, CAT, Dedoose, DiscoverText, HyperSEARCH, QDAMiner, Qualrus, Transana, and WeftQDA). Each of the software packages offered features that would be helpful to the qualitative researcher, and each highlighted its own unique features.

NVivo has been in existence for several years, and it is one the prominent companies in the field of qualitative data analysis. Only NVivo offered the ability to incorporate spreadsheets based on responses and word-tree text queries. The software has the ability to export HTML and PDF files. PDF files provided me with the ability to open and read data on most tablets and electronic reading devices. For these reasons, NVivo was chosen for the data analysis portion of the study. In selecting NVivo, I had reservations about compiling and storing data on a strictly web-based system due to confidentiality. Although internet security protocol has increased over the years, there are always ways to breach security and/or lose information that is stored in the “cloud.” NVivo for Mac met all the analysis requirements needed for this study. Thus, NVivo for Mac was used to code and analyze the data. NVivo was used to conduct the interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) of the survey and transcript. This produced a thematic account and model of how African American female alumnae subjectively describe their experience of single gender education as it relates to resilience and competence.

Threats to Validity

Validity is derived from the Latin term *validus*, which means strong. The strength of an interpretive phenomenological study is not assessed in the same way as other studies. Its strength is assessed in terms of acceptability and convincibility, in addition to biases, presuppositions and assumptions that are taken for granted. Additional criteria for assessing interpretive phenomenological studies are my ability to suspend bias, use original insight into the phenomenon, and use the scholarly depth of sources. This is different from other forms of qualitative studies that measure validity through content, criterion-relation, and construct identification. Neither does a phenomenological approach use classifying procedures, coding, or labeling (Van Manen, 2014).

An interpretive phenomenological study is valid when the essence of the experience is understood and the knowledge that one was looking for is acquired through relevant descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). This was reached through what Van Manen (2014) and Moustakas' (1994) term *Epoche* or *bracketing*. By setting aside personal biases, such as preconceived notions about research questions and study participants, bracketing was utilized. Upon employing bracketing, all statements in the interviews were given equal value (Cope, 2014). Moustakas refers to this process as *horizontalizing*. In effect, the biases of the researcher do not result in more weight being given to data consistent with those biases. Bracketing is a process that is reflective and requires that the researcher consider personal beliefs and feelings by setting them apart and asking the participants to be reflective throughout the research process (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2014, Yuksel and Yildirim, 2015).

When it comes to the structure of the phenomenon, phenomenological studies are based on the existence of a phenomenon rather than the actual facts. “Doing phenomenology means to start with lived experience, with how something appears or gives itself to us. Eventually it requires that we understand the various aspects and practices of the epoche and the reduction proper. But phenomenology is best begun in the living of our ordinary life” (Van Manen, 2014, p. 32) It is ethically commendable for the researcher to verify the accurateness of the descriptions provided by participants about their experiences and concerning their reflection on their original experiences. This validation of the experience quality does not validate the phenomenological study quality in quantitative terms. It is more important and difficult to ensure that the underlying meaning and interpretations of the descriptions are valid, appropriate, and original in a qualitative study. The following question were used to guide the notion of validity in this IPR study: Was the phenomenon represented in a scholarly manner and were the themes true to the original study (Van Manen, 2014)?

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of this IPR study can be assessed through the acceptability, convincibility, biases, presuppositions, and assumptions that are normally taken for granted (Johnston, Wallis, Oprescu, & Gray, 2016). I went through great lengths to suspend biases and utilize original insight into the phenomenon of the resilience of African American female students in single-gender educational environments in an effort to capture and distill their shared experience of educational resilience in and out of school. This interpretive phenomenological study considered the essence of the

experience of the study participants to acquire a deeper insight into the experiences of the African American female alumnae and their shared experience of resilience. I set apart the focus of the study and gave all statements equal value during the analysis process, utilizing epoch or bracketing; Moustakas (1994) refers to this as *horizontalizing*.

As a high achieving, African American woman who was not educated in the single gender environment, I brought a unique perspective to the study which added special insight. There is the potential for bias, what I did to mitigate that was have a discussion with Dr. Evans-Winters, in addition to member checking. Each participant verified the accurateness of the interview responses by emailing transcripts of each interview to the participant for accuracy and validity regarding responses to each question. Each of the four participants verified that the transcripts were an accurate account of the interviews.

Reliability was established through member checks and reflexivity; each participant took part in viewing findings and ensured that my interpretations were an accurate representation of their lived experiences (Akram & Hogan, 2015; Clancy, 2013; D'Silva et al., 2016; Porbst & Berenson, 2014; Noble & Smith, 2015). The relationship between myself and the participants exist concerning gender and race; this placed me as an insider, and the single-gender educational setting put me as an outsider. The validity of the study is stronger due to the three-interview structure and transcript authentication by the study participants (Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015).

Reliability was established through member checks and reflexivity. According to Merriam & Associates (2009), member checks consist of participants taking part in

viewing findings and ensuring that interview interpretations are representative of their lived experiences. Member checks consisted of participants reviewing of the data collected through interviews transcription for accuracy and clarification (Given, 2008). Reflexivity addressed the relationship that existed between myself and participants. In this study, I was considered an insider in terms of race, gender and resilience and an outsider in terms of not being educated within a single-gender academic setting. Participants' review of study findings ensured that interpretations were accurate, complete, and fair (Patton, 2002). Reflexivity represents an essential part in the researcher's attempt to reduce bias (Horrigan-Kelly, Millar, & Dowling, 2016). This necessitates the researcher recognizing and understanding how their culture, ethnicity, gender, beliefs and values may influence the interpretive phenomenological study. I was aware at the onset of the study of the similarities that existed between participants and myself, this was kept at the forefront during the data collection and data analysis (Horrigan-Kelly, Millar, & Dowling, 2016).

Participant reviews removed the question of credibility of the study findings (Cope, 2014). Since the researcher is considered the instrument in qualitative research, there is a stronger need for the research project to include information about the researcher in order address any biases, credibility, and reactivity issues (Cope, 2014). The three-interview structure and authentications of interview transcripts by checking verbal and nonverbal aspects of the interviews, further enhanced validity. The critical analysis and attention to detail were validated by thorough description of comprehensive data analysis and recurrent review of the transcripts, yielding a manner of achieving data

saturation and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Confirmability and vividness were addressed through the use of thick, rich quotes that personified the emerging themes” (Cope, 2014 p. 90). The interview questions were field-tested on a reading specialist, retired accountant, recent college graduate, and the store manager of a large sporting goods store, all of whom are African American females to ensure that the meaning was understood.

Ethical Procedures

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Walden University and its policies and procedures guided the informed consent for this project. These consisted of obtaining permission from Walden University’s IRB committee, and obtaining permission to conduct research using adult participants. I completed The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research training course “Protecting Human Research Participants” was completed on October 4, 2014, Certification Number: 1583948

Additional research procedures included providing participants with the consent form through email. This approach provided an implied consent to participate in the study prior to my seeking formal participant consent in-person. The participants were provided with background information, the purpose, procedures, data collection procedures (interview), and examples of interview questions. This was a voluntary study, and so I honored each prospective participant’s decision on whether to participate. The study brought with it minor risks to the participants, which included fatigue, stress, or becoming upset. All information gathered during the research was confidential and the

participants were kept anonymous. As Walden University requires, I will destroy the data within a 5-year timeframe.

Summary

Chapter 3 provided insight into the research design and the rationale for choosing an interpretive phenomenological design as opposed to a case study or ethnographic study. It explained the role of the researcher as an insider and outsider, detailed the methodology, including participant selection, researcher developed instrument, the procedures for recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. The chapter concluded with issues of trustworthiness, ethical procedures in how the researcher intended to explore and describe the role of resiliency in the lived experiences of African American female alumnae of single-gender schools, minimizing their three-pronged burden within single-gender educational settings.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological study was to explore how African American female alumnae describe their lived experiences of single-gender education programs to capture and distill their shared experience of educational resilience in and outside of school. The following research questions were addressed in the study

1. How do African American female alumnae of single-gender educational settings describe their experiences as they relate to resiliency?
2. How do African American female alumnae describe the effect of the single-gender schooling as it relates to resiliency in their lives outside of school?

In this chapter, the setting of the study, along the demographics of study participants are discussed. I also explain how the data were collected and analyzed, the results of the study, and how the conceptual framework evolved based on the findings are explained.

Setting

Survey respondents were recruited to participate in the study through the Walden University Participant Pool in addition to various social media channels, alumnae from single-gender schools, and friends. The research setting for each interview was not traditional in terms of research settings and each participant brought her own experience to each interview. Because the recruitment of participants came from across the country, each participant brought her own setting (i.e., contextual perspective) to the research.

Two brought a high school setting and two brought a college setting (one predominately White institution [PWI] and the other a Historically Black College University [HBCU]). The participants in the study were able to “bring” a setting into the study based on the environment that they attended the single-gender school in addition to the place in which they were physically sitting during each of the interviews such as, home, work, or traveling. The interview settings consisted of telephone and email. The telephone interviews were conducted in the evenings after the participants and researcher were free from the responsibilities of work. I used a speakerphone to conduct the phone interviews so they could be recorded with the Livescribe recorder pen. Each of the participants stated that this was the most convenient way for them to participate because each one was in a different state than I reside. Participants were given the option to complete each interview via email, Skype, or by telephone. Twelve interviews were conducted in total (four participants, three interviews each). Four of the 12 were carried out via email, and eight were completed and recorded via telephone using Livescribe. Each of the participants shared information about current life events, including significant career changes, marital issues, and financial problems in addition to typical day-to-day stressors.

Demographics

Seventeen women responded to and completed the survey ranging in age from 26 to 55 years old. Each of the survey respondents attended a single-gender high school or college with the exception of one (she attended a coed school and only participated in gender-specific physical education classes), her data were eliminated from the study. Of the 16 eligible survey respondents, 13 indicated that they graduated from their respective

institutions. Of the 16 respondents, four accepted the invitation to participate in the study. The four participants found out about the study from the Walden Participant Pool, Facebook Black Educators Rock page, or a Facebook friend who took part in the study (snowballing).

Two of the study participants attended a single-gender high school, and two attended a single-gender university, one of which was a PWI and the other a HBCU. I chose to study alumnae from single-gender high schools or colleges because they would be able to tell a more in-depth story of their experiences and provide the study with a deeper, richer analysis of how attending a single-gender institution affected their resilience.

Table 2

Participant Demographic Information

Pseudonym	Level	Dates Attended	Grades attended	Age Range	Survey	Interview
Dakini	High School	1992-1996	9-12	36-40	X	
Annette	N/A	N/A	N/A		X	
Rachel	N/A	N/A	N/A		X	
Nadine	High School	N/A	N/A		X	
Barbara	High School	1970-1975	8-12	56-60	X	
Norma	College	2008-2011	Undergrad	26-30	X	
Deborah	High School	1990-1994	9, 11-12	36-40	X	
Francesca	High School	1997-2001	9-12	30-35	X	
Nia	High School	1976-1980	9-12	51-55	X	
Katherine	College	2002-2006	Undergrad	30-35	X	
Nadine	College	2003-2007	Undergrad	30-35	X	
Nancy	College	2004-2006	Undergrad	30-35	X	
Angela	High School	1992-1993	10-12	36-40	X	X
Jackie	High School	1984-1988	9-12	46-50	X	X
Valerie	College	1990-1994	Undergrad	40-45	X	X
Esther	College	2001-2005	Undergrad	30-35	X	X

Participant Attributes

Jackie is a medical doctor between 46 and 50 years old; she is a self-proclaimed people pleaser who grew up in a home that was in chaos and constant crisis. Her single mom was a hands-off parent, who per Jackie “was not emotionally present for her.” Her mother remarried an exconvict who had addiction issues with drugs and alcohol. Her older sister was a crack addict who had been diagnosed with schizophrenia. Jackie's younger brother had developed problems with alcohol during her high school years and experimented with drugs due in part to the influence of their stepfather's children. Jackie told me that her young nephews had problems in school and with the criminal justice system while growing up. During this same time, she had cousins who were involved with drugs, prostitution, and were in and out of jail. Jackie had no father figure in her life. Her mother and grandmother were the constant adults in her life. Jackie is a wife, mother, and physician. She has had constant struggles with her weight and finances and had marital issues during the time that she participated in the study. Her extended family stays in crisis mode and turns to her as the problem solver. She attended her alma mater from the 9th through 12th grades from 1984-1988. Jackie’s mother started the registration process at the single-gender school. Jackie recalled that memory:

I was already registered for and prepared to attend my local coed high school when my mother notified me that she’d registered me for the Martha’s School for Girls entrance exam. I had no desire to attend ... but I took the entrance exam anyway. To please my mother, because I am, by nature, a people pleaser

She was impressed on her tour and had a “good feeling” about the school. She participated in track and field, Model United Nations, and the Science Club in addition to several other extracurricular groups and clubs. She described herself as being a quiet young lady who liked to read and play outside. She did not like to cause trouble and was a responsible and reliable babysitter during her high school years.

Angela is a single, special education teacher between 36 and 40 years old. She and her twin sister attended a coed Baptist school through the 9th grade, and in the 10th grade, their parents moved them to St. Anne’s. St. Anne’s is a Catholic, single-gender secondary school located in one of the Mid-Atlantic States of the United States. Angela did not recall any hardships or barriers growing up, but she understands now that there may have been some financial aspects that she was sheltered from because the single-gender school was more expensive than the coed school. She feels like the single-gender aspect of the school intrigued her parents. The fact that the girls had fellow Amateur Athletic Union basketball (AAU; traveling) team members who also attended St. Anne’s made the transition from one school to the other less uncomfortable.

Both Angela and her twin sister attended the single-gender school and both are educators. I asked her twin to participate in this study, but she was not able to participate at the time. Angela said that being service oriented runs in her family, as several family members are teachers. She and her twin played in an AAU league in addition to running track and playing volleyball. Angela grew up in a two-parent home. Her father was in the military and this exposed her to different cultures when they had to relocate. When asked about barriers and hardships while growing up, her response was that she was sheltered

regarding the financial hardship that she and her twin sister's education may have placed on their family. Her parents made sure that Angela and her sister knew about Black history, by purchasing board games and supplementing what they were being taught in school. Angela works with the deaf ministries department of her church. She is the creative party planner when it comes to functions for family and friends. She plans birthday parties and scavenger hunts along with other events for nieces, nephews, and children of friends. Angela said that due to scheduling, she does not attend any of her alumnae functions even though she lives just 20 minutes from her old school. She worked for 6 years in a self-contained, special education, nonpublic setting before going to work in the public-school sector. She expressed the importance of having a personal relationship with God, and that being an important part of her life.

Valerie is a crisis consultant between 40 and 45 years old whose father was also in the military. She shared the following:

What many don't realize is that I am one generation removed from poverty. My family stems from part of the rural south, and I used to spend the summers in a home that had just recently gotten indoor plumbing and had the air conditioner in the window. We would pick blackberries for the blackberry cobbler.

She attended a coed high school and during her college search found that the programs offered at the single-gender college were best aligned with what she was looking for in a postsecondary institution. Valerie is the oldest of four girls, and her relationship with her younger sisters fluctuated between sister, friend, and mom throughout their childhood. As an athletic tomboy, she had relationships with boys in high school that were both platonic

and romantic. She had a boyfriend in high school, and her family was confused with her desire to go to school so far away from home. Valerie was born and raised in the South and wanted to attend college in another region. College was her first time being in a predominately White environment. She had classmates who had never interacted with non-White individuals before going to college and occasionally found herself being treated like the voice of the African American population. She was a scholarship student surrounded by wealthier families and legacy students whose mother, aunts, grandmother, and great grandmothers had attended the school. She attempted to fit into the small African American community at the school and discovered halfway through her sophomore year that this did not work for her. Her family is goal-oriented and are happy about her currently pursuing a postgraduate degree online, but never really focused on the fact that she attended a gender specific university, although her father was excited by the fact that her alma mater is one of the seven sister schools.

Her initial career goals revolved around self-gratification. She wanted to be an attorney working in entertainment or corporate law. She worked in the legal field for several years and hated going to work despite the financial advantages. She recalled, “when I was fired or delivered and led into teaching, I found my passion.” Valerie is now more service-minded and has made several mission trips, one that took place shortly after our interviews were complete. She realizes that as an African American and especially as a woman that she has to work harder, do more, be better, and be more focused to succeed. Valerie is aware that all her actions affect the African American community in one way

or another, especially because she now resides in a predominantly African American community. Valerie's godmother was an entrepreneur and very influential in her life.

Valerie is now in the process of starting her private consulting firm to work with charter and private schools developing the curriculum that aligns with common core standards. She currently serves as a crisis consultant as she transitions into her entrepreneurial role. It was Valerie who at the end of our last interview asked if during my collection of data, I had the opportunity to speak with any African American women who had attended a predominately Black single-gender college or university. She had a HBCU in mind and wondered if the feedback or information that I collected looked different when I looked at African American alumnae that attended a PWI that was single-gender as opposed to those who attended an HBCU. Valerie is responsible for the increased depth of this study; she passed on the survey link to three friends of a single-gender HBCU. They were the last three respondents to complete the survey, resulting in the fourth study participant, Esther.

Esther is an attorney between 30 and 35 years old, who attended a single-gender HBCU after attending a Catholic school from the 1st through 12th grades, and being one of not many Blacks in elementary and secondary, she was the last participant to take part in the study. She grew up in a two-parent home; her aunt, mother, and grandmother were all teachers, though never her official teachers. Esther recalled being classified as the “smart, Black girl” who was vocal about her beliefs in addition to being athletic. Esther’s friends knew that she was proud of being Black and would stand up for herself if the need arose.

Esther endured depression during her years in junior high school and continues to experience bouts of depression as an adult. Her grandmother passed away when she was 10 years old, and she lost her aunt 4 years later when she was 14 years old. Esther still deals with the pain from this loss. She grew up as part of a large family despite being an only child. Her maternal grandmother had 13 siblings, and her maternal grandfather had 15 siblings, so she has a large family across the country. She has suffered from weight issues since she was 11 years old.

Her mother and grandmother attended HBCUs, and hearing about her alma mater from a counselor at the school where her mother taught and whose daughter also attended the school peaked her interest in the HBCU. She was also told stories about the school from a neighbor's son when he came home from attending the brother school. Her mother would not allow her to apply to any school that she did not visit; Esther described feeling as though she was “meant to be” at Rockefeller from the moment she arrived. She submitted her application the day that she visited during the fall of her senior year. Esther is a proponent of single-gender education and had several friends in college who attended single-gender middle and high schools growing up, and she loved to hear the rich stories of their experiences in that environment. Esther is the only African American who practices law in her hometown, where she currently resides.

The interview portion of the study took place between April 2016 and August 2016. Jackie completed the first interview via email. The second and third interviews were conducted via telephone and recorded using Live Scribe. Angela and Valerie completed all three interviews via phone and Live Scribe. Esther completed all three

interviews via email because of her schedule constraints. It was more convenient to conduct interviews via telephone due to different geographical location of the participants and researcher.

Data Collection

Data were collected in two phases: survey and interview. The survey portion of the data collection was used to determine if the participants fit the study criteria. Information drawn from the survey is included in the survey analysis section. The survey was distributed through various electronic/internet modes. I utilized SurveyMonkey.com for the collection of survey data. The survey link was shared through the Walden University Participant Pool, on my Facebook page, Black Educators Rock Facebook page, and Walden Ph.D. Facebook page. Seventeen alumnae completed the survey portion of the study and four alumnae completed 12 interviews, three interviews per participant. The geographical locations are identified by region for the sake of anonymity of this study. Two of the four participants, Valerie and Esther, live in the southeast area of the United States, and two, Angela and Jackie, live in the Midwest region. The schools that each attended are also in the same regions; each participant did not necessarily go to school in the same area in which they currently live or grew up.

Walden Participant Pool Data Collection

The Sona System, Walden Participant Pool is a web-based management system used for the human subject pool. It provides Walden students and professors with support in acquiring study participants by posting the descriptions of their study for participants to view and sign-up for electronically. The software is compliant with all regulations.

Researchers, who are connected to Walden, publish their studies on the community site and participants can see studies and determine in which studies they would like to participate. It provides researchers with a way to reach a diverse community of participants, along with providing participants with the opportunity to view and analyze studies in order to determine if they qualify for participation in specific studies.

Researchers are emailed a login name, password, and instructions for setting up their study after they obtain IRB approval. The Walden Participant Pool emailed me my username and password after I received IRB approval Walden University's approval number for this study is 02-10-16-0045523 and it expires February 9, 2017 along with instructions for accessing the research site and uploading my study information.

SurveyMonkey Participant Identifier

The survey respondents were recruited through various online sources, including Walden Participant Pool, Facebook, and email. Alumnae were asked to complete the survey to determine their eligibility to participate in the study. The survey (Appendix B) consisted of 10 open-ended questions written to gather information about potential participant experiences in the single-gender educational setting and the ability to elaborate and expound on those experiences. Once I determined that the respondent met the study criteria and communicated effectively about her experiences, the invitation to participate in the study was emailed to the participant (Appendix F).

Facebook

Survey recruitment on Facebook consisted of posting the SurveyMonkey link on my personal Facebook page in addition to posting the link on the Black Educators Rock

Facebook page and Walden Ph.D. Scholars Facebook page. Several friends posted the link on their personal Facebook pages and asked people to share and participate if they met the qualifications of the study. Several of the survey respondents shared the link on their Facebook pages and emailed friends asking them to participate, which resulted in snowball sampling.

Snowball Sampling

Researchers who identify research participants through other people or respondents, use snowball sampling who are able to provide access to a phenomenon or perspective that is being studied (Smith, 2009, Atkinson & Flint, 2001). Snowball sampling assisted in the recruitment of participants. Several participants contacted fellow alumnae through email, text messages, and Facebook to participate in the study. Of the four alumnae who took part in the survey and interview process, half (Jackie and Esther) were recruited using the snowball sampling technique.

A cousin of a friend who attended a single-gender high school took the survey along with some of her friends who also attended single-gender institutions. I asked each of my participants for referrals of women who they felt would be interested in sharing their experience of resilience in single-gender schools. Several of the women completed the survey but did not respond to the invitation to participate in the interview portion of the study. Snowballing was initiated in the attempt to reach a greater number of African American single-gender alumnae. The Walden University Participant Pool was used as a springboard to snowballing due to its ability to reach a large number of people who were willing to participate in studies.

Survey respondents and study participants contacted friends and family members who had attended a single-gender school and asked them to complete the survey for study participation. A former coworker identified three potential study participants, two of which completed the survey but did not respond to the invitation to participate in the study. Valerie sent emails to three friends who are alumnae of a single-gender HBCU before she left to go on a mission trip. Her snowballing resulted in the participation of Esther, an HBCU alumna who added richness and depth to the study due to her unique experiences in a predominately Black environment. In contrast, the other participants attended school in environments that were predominately White or culturally diverse in make-up.

Data Analysis

The interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) of the transcripts yield an interpretive facsimile and thematic account of the participants' personal experiences of educational resilience (Clare, Rowlands, Bruce, Surr, & Downs, 2008).

Phenomenological studies address the question of what “gives itself” in the lived experience of the participant and does not rely on data in terms of codes, numbers or its objectification, but rather on “phenomenological examples” (Van Manen, 2017, p. 814) Key themes that emerged include critical race feminism or womanism, the participants appreciation of gender relevant education, the value of racial identity and socialization within the context of the participants experience, G. R. I. T. resilience, and support systems within the social capital and spiritual relationships. Survey, written and phone interview data reflected several codes and categories including influence, politics, service

learning, academic and personal role models, support systems, culture, and interactions with the opposite sex (romantic and social). Phrases were coded for analysis with the assistance of QSR International's NVivo for Mac for computer-assisted data analysis (QSR International, Doncaster, Victoria, Australia). The analysis progressed in the following manner. First, I identified key points through line-by-line detailed coding. All key points and clusters were listed in groups that emulated introductory emerging themes, transcripts were then recoded based on these themes. Line by line coding resulted in 214 references that were then analyzed by groups. Group level analysis was conducted based on overlapping and similarity. Groups that emerged from coding include socioeconomic, arts, positive choices, culture, self-perception, role models (academic and personal), clubs and organizations, male interaction, avoidance, barriers, family death, self-esteem, therapy, athletics, family, parents, peers, spiritual, romantic, and service learning. Key themes were then identified and pulled out for further analysis. Themes were labeled as far as possible using the words of the participants' and transcripts were then recoded based on the themes that emerged. All relevant participant quotes were listed under the respective themes and are outlined and identified in the analysis. Major interview data themes included racial identity and socialization, support systems within social capital, gender relevant education, critical race feminism, self-perception, and resilience each ranging from 45 to 23 references, respectively. Some of the nodes (groups) combined to reflect the themes that were outlined within the study. Each of the themes outlined in Figure 3 that had more than 10 references are reflected in the study themes later in this chapter.

Analysis of Survey Data

Information shared by the survey respondents was analyzed in the same manner as recorded and written interview data and resulted in high references to critical race feminism, racial identity and socialization, resilience, gender relevant education, socioeconomics, and social capital, ranging from 16 to eight references each, respectively and support themes that emerged from recorded and written data. Several of the nodes (NVivo) were combined to more accurately reflect the themes that emerged throughout the data analysis.

Analysis of Recorded and Written Interview Data

The recorded and written interview data resulted in similar levels of complexity and follow up probing and questions were asked via email for the written data to ensure depth of investigation. Participants were presented with interview transcripts and written responses and given the opportunity to elaborate and or clarify where they felt necessary based on the information that was collected. The data were richer and more viable because the participants felt comfortable to openly express their themselves and share their experiences.

Transcription

The transcription process consisted of recording each interview by taking notes with Livescribe using a Livescribe notebook and earphones made specifically for the Livescribe pen. This method yielded a higher quality audio recording than recording just using the pen. The audio portion of the interview was also recorded with QuickTime on MacBook Pro as a back-up to ensure that nothing was missed during the interviews. At

the conclusion of each interview, the Livescribe audio and notes were uploaded to Echo desktop. Echo desktop enabled me to click on a specific place in the notes and hear what was said at that point in the interview. I used Dragon Naturally Speaking was used to assist in the next step of the transcription process of each phone interview. The first attempt to transcribe with Dragon Naturally Speaking resulted in only the questions being transcribed; this is due to Dragon Naturally Speaking being designed to recognize one voice. In the second attempt at transcription, I listened to the audio recording of the interview and repeated what the participant said as Dragon transcribed each answer into the interview form. Each interview was transcribed as they were completed, and transcripts were uploaded into NVivo as they were completed along with the audio of each interview.

Coding

The conceptual framework and the interview responses guided the coding process. The codes were used to identify themes throughout the study. The codes that were used include racial identity and socialization, support systems within social capital, gender relevant education, critical race feminism, resilience, self-perception, the experience of being an African American, spiritual, academic role models, socioeconomics, barriers, competency, personal support systems, academic support systems, and athletics. Each of the codes resulted 45 to 10 references, respectively. Those codes that were referenced less than 23 times were included in major category themes. The analytic process of the IPA followed the steps as outlined by Clare, et al (2008) which called for computer assisted data analysis, analyzing each transcript individually,

identifying key points, line-by-line coding, listing key points and clusters into groups that reflect emerging themes prior to recoding transcripts based on emergent themes. The analytical and conceptual direction provided by the womanist inquiry process through the phenomenological methodology emphasized the orientation toward change-oriented, collaborative, empowering, and participatory, forms of inquiry Patton (2015). The process of phenomenological data collection and analysis can be extremely involved or streamlined based on the researcher's structured approach (Creswell,2013). The process used to develop the list of codes included searching for the number of times a word was used in the survey responses and interview transcripts using NVivo, and taking those words and phrases to create codes, categories, and themes for data analysis. Interview data were categorized by question and participant in NVivo, printed out, and manually coded into categories and themes by identifying words and phrases that repeated. Once repeated NVivo phrases were identified manually, I coded them in NVivo using coding stripes to help identify the coding density of each theme within the transcripts. Themes that emerged consisted of competency perspective, race, and gender issues that fall under critical race feminism, factors that are relevant to gender specific education, racial identity and socialization, resilience, and support systems within social capital. The process used to move from coded units to categories and themes consisted of viewing each of the units to determine how each fit into overarching themes. Codes and labels were attached to interview phrases. The codes that stood out to the interviewer included parents, peers, academic support systems, social support systems, athletics, and the arts. The coding process consisted of several steps; the first phase was open coding. I scanned

the data for words and phrases that repeated. Data were manually coded by writing common themes in the margins of the interview transcripts. After the first round of manual coding, categories and themes were entered into NVivo and sorted based on the topics that emerged from the data. Patterns and themes emerged based on the analysis of recorded and written interview transcripts through the process of sorting and categorizing (see Figure 3 below).



Figure 3. Codes.

Emergent Themes

The initial stage of data analysis began with transcription of each interview and involved closely reading the transcripts several times in addition to listening to the audio recording more than once in order to immerse myself in the data. Each listening and reading session lent itself to new insights pertaining to the analysis (Noble & Smith, 2015). It was at this stage that I made notes in the margins of the transcripts about the interviews that could potentially be significant. I focused on what was being said, the

language used to say it, as well as how it was being said. I also considered personal reflexivity and how my being an African American female may have influenced how each participant responded to the interview questions and how their responses may have been different or voiced a different way had they been asked by male or person of a different race. Each of these factors affect the rapport between the participant and researcher (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

The notes taken from the transcripts and listening to the audio recordings were used to identify emerging themes, this method provided me with the comprehensive, detailed sources with which to better identify themes that emerged based on the experiences of each participant. The next step involved identifying emerging themes that were connected and grouping them based on conceptual similarities and provided each with a descriptive label. Some themes were eliminated at this point because they lacked continuity with and or limited evidence to support their inclusion. A final list incorporated several subthemes. I wrote themes and comments in the margins of each interview to help identify short, relevant excerpts to be able to identify which were relevant and could be used in the study (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, Noble & Smith, 2015). The themes that emerged throughout the interview process supported those in the conceptual framework developed for the study. They were generational strength, experiences of racial diversity appreciation for single-gender environment, experiences of cultural diversity, overcoming hardships, barriers and obstacles, mentors and role models, the formation of spiritual relationships and feelings of empowerment.

Generational Strength

All of the women who participated in the study exhibited strong competency (positive) qualities during their matriculation as opposed to one of deficit/risk (negative). This was expressed in several interviews as being something that was passed down through generations in addition to being self-imposed. The competency versus deficit/risk perspective. was a strong theme that emerged throughout each of the interviews. In Valerie's parents instilled in her a strong sense of self along with the fortitude to stand her ground and support her position. In her first interview, Valerie shared:

Because my parents had raised me to be strong anyway, and being in that [predominately White] environment I think just upped the ante if you will. I was ready for whatever situation was going to arise because no one was going to argue me down. I was going to be very clear on my position, and we could agree to disagree, but I wasn't going to cosign unless I felt like the point was valid.

When placed in an environment that was culturally unfamiliar she was able to pull from her background and her ability to stand up for what she believed and valued with the knowledge that she had values, morals, and the capacity to infuse them all together stand strong for her beliefs.

Valerie expressed how her experience in a single-gender school built on her competence in the third interview she expressed:

I learned never to settle, to always continue to push forward, to constantly be innovative, progressive, and creative. That was something that my school [Jones] encouraged in me, and it is very much part of the woman that I am today.

Compassion and selflessness, not to the point of self-destructiveness but understanding that the world is not just about me, that it is also about the people who are a part of my larger circle. And the choices that I make should always be made with the idea of will this in some way help someone else in addition to helping me.

The positive interaction between gender relevant education and the competency of women because of family influence (support systems within social capital) and the educational environment is evident in the previous quote.

Jackie expressed her confidence in herself during her third interview by stating the following: “I have confidence ... personal, academic achievement, career achievement and also confidence in women in general and the belief that women are equal with men and as capable as men in all respects.” This statement transcends themes and melds together support systems within social capital, gender relevant education, and the competency over deficit/risk of resilient African American women.

The capacity for competence is exhibited in the ability to recognized the positive rather than dwelling on the negative in situations that occur in life. Valerie shared:

But when I went to college I saw it as a reality and seeing it, being able to speak with people who had traveled the globe and who had done things on behalf of the community and on behalf of others who were in need. It excited me, because it aligned with who I had always dreamt I would be as a person. And realizing to a certain degree that even though that wasn't what I aspired to that it was probably a kernel of a belief that this is what White people do and not necessarily what Black

people do. [And] going to school and seeing my professors doing that and then having a chance to meet their circle of friends, family, colleagues and seeing that it wasn't an anomaly.

The competence over deficit/risk of African American's being exhibited not only within the academic setting but setting examples of the opportunities that are available was expressed by Valerie:

That people of color, that African Americans are doing these things all across the country and all around the world was a realization of a dream that I had had for myself. What I appreciated most about that was that they were themselves and by being themselves they gave me the opportunity to see some of the amazing things that our (African American) community could accomplish.

The themes of racial identity and socialization, support systems, and competence versus deficit/risk were expressed throughout each interview and were at times reflected in a single quote. This concept of the ability to recognize one's self in others (bridging) and being able to pull others up while being pulled up by someone is reflected in the fact that while attending a predominantly White institution Valerie could identify with two African American female professors, who affected her the most, is an important experience. Valerie could see her dreams for herself being lived by others, and through that foresight, she could realize that what she had always viewed as a "White lifestyle" was a competence lifestyle that provided her with a different perspective, one of accomplishment and opportunity through the eyes of Black people.

Experiences of Racial Diversity

Three of the four participants (Jackie: high school, Angela: high school, and Valerie: college) attended schools that were predominantly White or culturally diverse with African Americans being in the minority. Esther is the only participant who attended a school where African Americans were the majority race in attendance. Critical race feminism, the intersection of race, gender, and class were evident in each of the participants' academic experiences. Angela recalls the first time she thought about race, or when race first presented itself as an issue:

It (St. Anne's) was very diverse, all nationalities. Not until one of the girls said something "you people." I don't remember what exactly. She was making a statement in the classroom, and she'd made the statement "you people do such and such." I had never been exposed to that, so I was like who is "you people?" So, at that point there came the whole bit of rebellion, and I would fist bump and stuff and sing (African American) songs and say African American quotes and stuff. I would go and learn quotes just to go back and say them to this girl because she hurt my feelings. Before then I had not really thought about my race and the whole matter until challenged by another student. That was 10th grade.

This was the first time that race became an issue for her. Angela was in an environment that was nationally diverse and had never had to address her racial differences in the academic setting. Esther's recollection of facing racism came not in the classroom but the athletics arena:

When I played sports, I faced a lot of racism from some of the other local schools that didn't have Black students. One time I got angry and had to be taken away from the game, but my teammates and their parents always backed me up. My sophomore year the volleyball coach cut all but one Black student. The other students refused to play unless I was let on the team as I had been the captain my freshman year. The coach refused to play me in my position and battled me all sophomore and junior year. I decided not to play my senior year to focus on other things. Now I wish I would have played and continued to challenge her.

The fact that in retrospect Esther realized that her race presented itself as an obstacle and at times provides the platform for change. Like racial stereotypes, gender stereotypes are so ingrained in our society that we don't realize how they are affecting us or how we tend to play into them. Valerie shared this in her second interview:

I didn't even realize at the time that I had in some ways played into those gender stereotypes, but I definitely had, so being in a single-gender setting helped me break out of those things. Even while not realizing at first what an impact they had on me, so I guess not really knowing that yes, gender roles had an impact on me and then recognizing that maybe they do.

Some themes emerged in sets or groups during data analysis. One example of this is reflected in the previous statement where gender relevant education is evident in the data, as well as critical race feminism.

In the second interview, Valerie said that "I would say [that I deal with] class issues and gender issues not as much the racial issues." Because she lives in a city that is

predominately African American, her struggles do not revolve around race as much as class and gender. She elaborated on the subject and connected the institutionalism of racism and gender biases in society today:

Gender challenges are always kind of sticky. Because it's like racism in a lot of ways, institutionalized racism, we know it exists, but because people have become so good at hiding it, it gets really hard to put your finger on it and say this is not right and someone needs to do something about it.

Esther, who attended an HBCU, shared in her third interview that her experience prior to college involved race and gender:

Race and gender are equally involved in my experiences. I went to a small Catholic school where I was one of five Blacks in my class. While I felt bonded to my classmates and my school at the time, I don't really have a connection to the school now. It is down the street from my office and across the street from the courthouse where I work every day, yet I haven't been inside in probably a decade. [Conversely] I will forever be connected to Rockefeller University (HBCU). I am connected to Rockefeller University in a way I will never be connected to my high school, law school, or grad school.

This connection is attributed to the positive experiences acquired in the African American, single-gender educational environment. Because of the extraordinary women that she interacted with as professors, counselors, and classmates, she could take those principles and apply them to her daily life. Jackie's experience was different, as she explained in her third interview:

If I ever felt that being African American at the single-gender school, if I ever felt like it was a challenge in an academic setting, for me it was not. I never felt like the teachers aren't going to think that I am going to do as well. People are going to think that I am dumb or that I am dumb in this situation because these kids are all smart and (have been) going to a private catholic school their whole lives. I never had that sense of inferiority, based on race, sometimes I felt like I was dumb, but it wasn't because of race.

Valerie shared that in her single gender educational environment she felt that she was encouraged as an African American woman to voice her opinion and speak up for what she believed in:

Particularly what it means to be a Black woman who speaks up. So being in an environment where it was encouraged, and it was supported, and it wasn't perceived in a negative way, but it was observed in an empowering way.

Jackie recognized that her social life would have been much different had she attended a coed school. She reflected that "It is possible that I would have had a boyfriend in high school, that I would have had sex in high school. Otherwise, socially I might have felt more pressure." Her exposure has allowed her to accept that it is acceptable to not fit into a box "I have a wide spectrum in terms of culture, likes and dislikes. It has made me more culturally well rounded."

Appreciation for Single-Gender Environment

Each of the participants expressed their appreciation for the single-gender environment and the positive environment that was provided to them and the tools and

mentors who assisted them in overcoming obstacles and adversities. Jackie explained in the first interview how important single gender environment was to her, this was reflected in the fact that “on the day that I took the entrance exam, I toured the school and was impressed—I had a good feeling about the school, that it was a place that would provide a good education and good character building.” As she matriculated she found that, “Girls never played second fiddle to boys concerning academics, sports, student government, religious celebrations, clubs, music, or any other school activity. I never felt that I was less important than a boy simply because of my gender.” All participants when asked about the difference between the coed and single-gender educational settings mentioned the feeling of being less important than a boy in coed environments. Valerie expressed this in the first interview when she shared the following insight:

One of the things that stood out for me, of course, was just the focus and the encouragement that was given to women on my campus. I was raised to be a bit of a strong-willed girl. So even though I didn't allow gender disparities to stop me from doing what I wanted to do, I was aware enough in my high school setting that there were definitely some situations and some moments when assumptions were made about what female students were capable of, as opposed to what male students were capable of doing. So being in a learning environment where everything that had traditionally been considered a guy territory if you will, was peopled by women, and women who were very successful at it, women who were intrigued by it, women who were exploring new ideas and new concepts connected to it. That was affirming for me, because being in a coed environment

and being a strong individual who stood up for myself, that of course is accompanied by all of the negative stereotypes about what it means to be a woman who speaks up

Being encouraged to voice one's opinion and stand up for what they believe in, provides women with a learning environment that is safe mentally and emotionally, while providing the opportunity for stress-free learning environment (Lewallen, Hunt, Potts-Datema, Zaza, & Giles, 2015). This is reinforced by the interviews of others. Although Esther only attended a single-gender school as a college student, she stated the following in the second interview:

I am a proponent of single-gender education, especially at the middle school and high school level. Some of my Rockefeller University classmates also went to single-gender high schools, and I always appreciated hearing about their experience. I think the opportunity to excel and have a safe space is essential.

During her second interview, Valerie shared the following about her experience in a single-gender environment:

I realize now that it ended up being great for me because, one, it probably helped me stay far more focused than I would have been had I lived on a campus with men. So, that's a good thing, and I can appreciate that in retrospect, like at 18 or 19-year-old, I thought I was grown up and living this great adventure away from home. But part of the adventure, I realized, had there been a greater social distraction on campus; I probably would have been a mess. So, that part of it was excellent, I realize now that it opened my eyes to the broad spectrum of abilities

and capabilities that women possess even in areas that I had not traditionally thought to be woman-centered per se, and so having peers pursue, what we call the hard sciences.

Esther acknowledged in the third interview that, “Just as law school taught me to “think like a lawyer and grad school taught me to think like an academic, Rockefeller University taught me to think like an informed Black woman. I am never not considering that.” This theme is important when looking at her single-gender experience as an African American in an African American environment. It helps us recognize the importance of the African American learning environments in conjunction with single-gender education and the benefits that African Americans gain from learning in a culturally responsive environment.

Jackie expressed how because of her experience, “I would say that they [her experiences] were good. Academically I had an excellent experience in terms of ideas and people that gave me a lot of confidence as a woman, a lot of feminist thoughts I would say excellent.” In addition to being reflected in the literature review, all four participants voiced this sentiment. Her recollections of racial pressures came later:

I didn’t feel the pressure to be a “credit to my race” during high school—that feeling wouldn’t come until later. But I was aware that a girl named Tricia and I were always the only Black girls in honors classes (there were only about 10 Black girls in our class of 100 students). It didn’t bother me or make me feel uncomfortable. My Black friends who weren’t in honors classes admitted that they didn’t like school much or didn’t always work hard.

Valerie shared that the single gender educational environment allowed her to recognize the different areas that are available for females in addition to acknowledging the fact that gender biases are sometimes ingrained in the way that we think. She shared how being in the single gender setting positively influenced her experiences and concepts of what women are capable of accomplishing:

Why should I be surprised that I have a friend who wants to be a volcanologist and go to Hawaii and stand on the lip of an active volcano; why can't women do that? So, that has been a really interesting part of the experience for me as well, and I didn't even realize that that was an issue before I attended school there.

Valerie shared that the learning that she experienced took place in all aspects of her educational experience from the classroom to the dorm room, there were discussions that assisted in the growth of all who participated.

That learning was not always necessarily in a course, but it could happen anywhere where you had critical thinkers who were reflecting on the world around them and trying to figure out their place in it. So, it made it a really dynamic reality, sometimes uncomfortable, but I know that it made me a better person and so I embrace that now. Sometimes I couldn't always appreciate it at the moment, but I do now.

Valerie attributes her resilience and perseverance to her experiences in the single gender education environment:

Some of the challenges that presented themselves, but also the perseverance and the resilience that I gained having to work through it, because they were 16 hours

away, there was nothing that they could do about it. I had to figure it out for myself.

In retrospect, her experiences helped her to better understand who she is as a woman in addition to providing a foundation that assist others:

I know now that after having left school that being in a setting like that really did help to strengthen and affirm who I understood myself to be as a woman. [It] gave me an even broader sense of the impact that I as one individual could have on my society, whether it be local, nationally, or even globally.

Jackie found that the only drawback from her experience in a single-gender school had to do with her social development when it came to men:

I think that my development was stunted socially as it pertains to being able to relate to the opposite sex. Great benefit academically, I've never doubted that women are as smart as men or that could excel academically. It definitely benefited me.

Based on her reflection of her experiences in the co-ed environment Jackie expressed that her experiences revolved around males being in the forefront in all aspects:

I think in the co-ed school definitely the girls always took a backseat to the boys, academically, socially, and in terms of sports. Even attention to talent shows the boys were always appreciated and admired a little more than girls, and that difference was always very noticeable to me.

She went on to express the following:

I think academically I would have had a similar experience except I would not have been as outspoken in class; I would not have felt self-confident or brave enough to bring up new ideas for discussion in classes. I might not have done that in a co-ed school, because I would have worried about what impression I was making on boys that I liked or had a crush on.

As Jackie stated, in the single-gender environment,

There was always an expectation of excellence not a sense of pressure but always a sense of yes you can do it, what do we need to do to get you there. I always felt like I was starting out on a framework of I can do this, yes, it's challenging. It helped distil in me the belief that I could achieve what I wanted to achieve and they simply helped me find a path to achieve it. Expectation of excellence with support academically, I never really discussed social matters with the people that I considered support.

Jackie was able to sum up her experience in the following quote:

First and foremost, I was surrounded by girls and women who were the smartest people I had ever known, the best athletes. It influenced me in the sense that I never thought that they were smart for girls or they were good to be girls in sports. I just thought that they were good period; it gave me the confidence and the courage that even when I was in a situation where men were dominating or trying to intimidate the women in the situation, I wouldn't be intimidated in those types of situations.

In the single gender environment, she was able to relax and not worry about the influences of males:

And I don't know it was just cool being able to be relaxed and be with your friends and not have to put on airs, not necessarily, not care about your looks, just focus on our studies as well as our sports. So, it was an academic as well as athletic experience.

Angela's pride for the school extends from her years of matriculation to the current state of the school and the things that they are implementing in the current curriculum. She shared that:

One of my friend's daughters goes there and she graduates this year. She is part of the STEM program, which I think is definitely needed, and so she's doing that and there are other women there, their interests are for the girls. They are starting to develop programs and academies. I think that's very exciting.

Angela said that the experience provided an environment that allowed her to be focused and enjoy the experience of education:

I'm actually glad that we went to the school to get the experience and exposure that we got. I don't know that being surrounded by boys always we would have been as focused. It was definitely a good part of the whole experience; I would say exposure and being able to stay focused.

She went on to say, "I guess in part it was about, it was about focusing on who I was supposed to be, instead of just an athlete or she's popular, she's in student government. It honed in on me finding me."

Angela was able to sum up her experience and how it has influenced who she is as a resilient African American female “I would say that all of my experiences definitely made me who I am.” Valerie shared that her search for a college resulted in her finding a whole student experience including academic, housing, and social, which “felt like home” on her initial visit to the school:

When I visited Jones, the women that went there impressed me. I stayed for two days and I was housed within their housing system, which I loved. I loved the fact that it was not a dorm but they had a house system that consisted of small groups of women, relatively speaking. I felt like it was a sense of community there. It felt like home, which I enjoyed. The campus was gorgeous, the programming that they offered academically was astounding, and as I learned a little more about the women who had been affiliated with the school, I really started to feel like this was a program that was designed for who I understood myself to be at the time, and who I aspired to be moving forward. By the time, I received my letter of acceptance it had become my first choice.

Ending up in a single gender school was not intentional for Angela, “So, it wasn’t so much that I was seeking a single-gender school but I found that this particular single-gender school had everything that I was looking for.” Valerie recalled that the focus was always on the women and the development of them knowing that they could do and be whatever they set their minds to:

One of the things that stood out for me of course was just the focus and the encouragement that was given to women on my campus. I was raised to be a bit

of a strong-willed girl, and so even though I didn't allow gender disparities to stop me from doing what I wanted to do, I was aware enough in my high school setting that there were definitely some situations and some moments when assumptions were made about what female students were capable of, as opposed to what male students were capable of.

The single gender environment supported and encouraged women exploring areas that traditionally considered male dominated careers:

And so being in a learning environment where everything that had traditionally been considered a guy territory if you will, was peopled by women, and women who were very successful at it, women who were intrigued by it, women who were exploring new ideas and new concepts connected to it.

Seeing women and "Having friends who were studying mathematics," "engaged in career pathways attached to NASA," and "wanting to help design jets for the military". Were all "Things that had always been to me considered a man's route and seeing women shine in those areas broadened my idea of what it meant to be a woman." She "didn't even realize at the time that I had in some ways played into those gender stereotypes, but I definitely had, so being in a single-gender setting helped me break out of those things." The realization of the impact of gender stereotypes and sexism was not something that was immediately evident, "Even while not realizing at first what an impact they had on me, so I guess not really knowing that yes, gender roles had an impact on me, and then recognizing that maybe they do." Being in the single gender education environment opened her eyes to issues that were not as evident while in the co-ed environment "So,

that has been a really interesting part of the experience for me as well, and I didn't even realize that that was an issue before I attended school there."

When asked about being an alumna of a single-gender university, Valerie eloquently acknowledged that, "It means that I am part of a global network of powerful women who are consciously seeking to implement positive social change in the world." She recognized that being in the coed setting, she did not push herself to and past her full potential. She was content with being in high-level courses during high school and being "smart for a girl." In the single-gender university, she was exposed to women who were pushing boundaries and creating their own pathways.

Experiences of Cultural Diversity

Of the four participants three (Angela, Jackie and Valerie) attended single-gender schools that were predominately White or less culturally diverse; only one (Esther) attended a predominately African American school. The women's racial identity and socialization was discussed throughout each of the interviews and reflected the fact that they each had to deal with race in one way or another. Each of the women could pull from the lessons that they learned from parents or within groups established to support them as African Americans. Jackie recalled the following in the first interview:

There also weren't many Black girls at Martha's School for Girls, and I'd spent most of my elementary and middle school years in predominantly Black and Latino school environments. This added even more to my feelings of being an outsider at this school with so many rich girls. My freshman year, I did become pretty good friends with one other Black girl in my class, and later I became close

friends with Black girls in younger grades. Most of these girls remain my close friends today.

The fact that the racial make-up of the school and socioeconomic status of the other girls on campus tended to make Jackie more comfortable with other African American girls and moved her to form lasting friendships with these girls shows the importance of racial identity and the need for socialization with those who come from similar backgrounds and have similar racial experiences:

I'm actually glad that we (her twin and herself) went to the school to get the experience and exposure that we got. I don't know that being surrounded by boys always we would have been as focused. [It] is definitely a good part of the whole experience, I would say exposure and being able to stay focused.

The experiences were similar with the participants who attended predominately White institutions (PWI) or culturally diverse schools. Esther's experience was different because it took place in a predominately African American environment. Valerie, who attended a PWI, shared in her first interview:

Black Student Association, for example, was an organization that was important to me because, even though it was not my first time being in an environment that was a predominately Caucasian academic setting, my high school was a suburban high school, and so it was predominately Caucasian. But it was my first time being in a broader setting where there were very few people who looked like me.

Valerie took courses that were designed toward her learning more about Africa and those of African descent. She also recalled in the first interview how she went about selecting courses based on her desire to become more in tune with her racial identity:

There were absolutely courses that I chose specifically because I wanted to build a more holistic understanding of the African American presence or the presence of persons of African descent across the globe. That was not something that I got in my suburban high school. I did a lot of independent reading. I've always been a voracious reader, so I did a lot of reading on my own. Being able to pursue that in an academic setting with people that were more knowledgeable in those areas and who could offer personal experiences, gave that richness that I had been missing in my high school experience, and also in my personal experiences. So, there was coursework that I took that was geared toward that reality and not just the African American reality, but African history and culture as a whole.

She shared that “there were interests that I had developed that I wanted to continue to pursue that did not fit into a prescribed concept of what it meant to be a Black person, I suppose.” When addressing one’s racial identity there are many preconceived notions about what it means to be African American Valerie could pursue her interests that did not always fit this stereotype. Valerie recalled that her single gender educational environment sometimes called for her to clarify that she was in school to gain an education and not always educate others concerning the lives of African Americans

So, there were those moments when I had to remind people that if you are attempting to educate yourself. I need you to continue taking classes or I need you

to check out a book, or I need you to watch some plays or go to a film because that is not my job. I am here to learn, just like everyone else is here to learn.

In her, Valerie's, single gender environment, there were times when even the African American women at the school did not always have the same interests. Valerie enjoyed interests from a wide range of areas

In some of those instances and situations, it was a little awkward. There were other areas where the challenges, honestly that were with some of the other African American women on campus. I like the symphony, I had never had many opportunities to go when I was home, but as a student, there were discount tickets, so I went. I really wasn't concerned with whether people thought to love Brahms and Beethoven was part of being "Black." It was what I enjoyed, and it was what I wanted to do. So, there were those interesting crossover moments when sometimes I had to deal with preconceived notions from my Caucasian classmates, but sometimes I had to deal with preconceived ideas from my African American sisters.

The experiences in the single gender education environment assisted in her recognizing and overcoming barriers in addition to deepening her sense of what it means to be a woman:

Looking back on it [my experience], I can appreciate a lot of things that I could not see at the time. Particularly recognizing that being surrounded by women who were pushing the barriers if you will, took me even further in my own understanding of what it meant to be a woman.

The socialization process was difficult for Valerie. In the first interview, she shared the following experience:

I did really feel like I was on an island in a way. Because like I said I had gone to a predominately White high school, and I still lived in a racially diverse area and when I went to school that was not the case. I think that I was so starved for variety; I was so starved for my own community that in some ways I stopped being true to whom I was as an individual just because I wanted to fit in.

Additional experiences shared by Valerie surround the context of being able to identify with other African American woman within her educational setting:

I think the greatest influence on me was showing me the variety of things that were open and available to me in the context of being an African American woman because two of the three professors that impacted me most were also African American. It helped me to get a larger sense of what it meant just to be Black in America; I'd always grown up with the realization or with the belief that we as a people and as a community have the capacity to do anything that any other community has the capacity to do. I had never seen it in action, so it was an abstract concept.

Angela's racial identity and socialization process took place in the home (outside of school) and was reflected in her responses in the first interview:

Our parents always tried to make sure that we knew more about our history than just what was taught in school. They would always say you're not taught everything in school that you should be taught in school, and they would stress

that, they would buy the board games and the videos and stuff that showed what African Americans had contributed to the world, so that we wouldn't have just what was taught from school.

The importance of cultural learning within the home and the effects of support systems in and outside of school in addition to parents taking responsibility for children's learning on a cultural level in addition to education and social is the essence of the adage "it takes a village to raise a child". Esther reiterated the following in the second interview:

I am more aware of my role as a Black woman because of my status as an alumna of Rockefeller University. This makes me approach everything with a more layered understanding. I rarely see things as Black and White. I am constantly aware. I view everything with the historic lenses of oppression, especially in my practice of law. As the only Black-practicing attorney in my town, it impacts me every day. I often feel alone in fighting for the community I love.

Valerie expressed that during her time at Jones, she chose to take courses that would deepen her knowledge of her African American heritage and those who were descendants of the African continent:

There were interests that I had developed that I wanted to continue to pursue that did not fit into a prescribed concept of what it meant to be a Black person, I suppose. So, with both instances, sometimes being comfortable in those settings took a little bit more, just because I think there were people to women who looked like me having those sorts of interests.

When meeting new people and building relationships, Valerie shared that she is more selective and cautious about whom she allows into her inner circle. Her insight regarding building relationships is very deliberate due to experiences with racism:

I might be a little more cautious now about building relationships with Caucasians. I have Caucasian friends that I love and they are fabulous people and I am very close with. But I'm probably not as, I definitely not as, automatically trusting and secure with them because I've had more exposure to some of the subtler ways that racism can come into play.

She shared her understanding that the realities in education are apparent even with those who care about the students but are unaware of underlying assumptions:

I don't think that people really understood how ugly racism is in this country, and because of that [I am cautious], because of experiences along the way, recognizing some of these realities, even as a teacher—having colleagues who genuinely love the children that they are working with but at the same time will make observations or assumptions about those students' capacities.

Her insight into the need for additional interpretation when race may be a factor:

And then needing someone to chime in and say, no you haven't interpreted that properly at all. You've misread it because you don't understand the racial cues and cultural cues that go along with that, so you need to realign your thinking. Seeing that and seeing how it has impacted children has made me more cautious.

Jackie expressed that the love of her ethnicity was and is evident in how she feels about herself and her experience in the single-gender environment; she stated the following about her matriculation and overcoming being viewed:

I loved being Black, liked R & B music and hip-hop, I loved “Black” dances, I even loved Black slang in the right settings. (Even though I’m a grammar snob). However, I was often told that I talked like a White girl, and I didn’t do many of the things that Black girls my age did: have sex, curse, stay out late, or get into fights.

Esther expressed that in the African American, single-gender learning environment it was evident that everyone was focused on the success of those who attended the HBCU. She reflected that, “Personally, I found it easier to focus and for my teachers to focus on me. It was clear that everyone who worked at Rockefeller had the goal of promoting success for Black women.” She later acknowledged, “Choosing Rockefeller was the best decision I ever made. I am extremely happy that I attended.” This reflection was evident with all of the women when they reflected on the decision and experiences that resulted from attending single-gender schools, at both the secondary and post-secondary levels.

Overcoming Hardships, Barriers & Obstacles

The essence of resilience was reflected throughout each interview and exhibited through participant recollections. Each of the women told of how they overcame hardships and barriers either before they attended the single-gender school, while they were attending, or for as long as they can remember. Every one of the participants

expressed how they were able to overcome things that may have caused others to give up. In the first interview, Jackie reflected on her home life (outside of school) and how she dealt with, and how she is still dealing with, issues that presented themselves while she was growing up:

In terms of the problems at home, I often stayed in my room with the door closed and tried to ignore the craziness happening in the rest of the house. (Or) I stayed away from home a lot (at friends' houses nothing illicit) because my own home life was so chaotic. Sometimes my siblings and I would talk to each other about the crazy drama at home, but we were kids and didn't have any solutions for the problems. For general teenager problems: questions about sex or relationships, I would often talk to my friend Andrea or her mom.

In the third interview, Jackie expressed how she was able to deal with and overcome her hardships, and how they have helped shape who she is:

I think that they have helped in terms of showing me that whatever problems I have had I was able to overcome them. There were times when I couldn't pay my rent; I was going to be kicked out of my apartment, but I was able to find a way to get the rent money. Experiences like that have happened over the years have helped me realize that you have been in similar situations before and you found a way out, so you will be able to find a way out somehow.

Because Valerie chose to go to college away from home, she shared experiences in her first interview about her parent's confusion with her choice of school:

They were befuddled [with my decision to attend a school so far away from home]. Honestly, I had a boyfriend and I thought that was all wonderful, not that I thought that we were going to get married or anything, but still I liked him. He had been an important part of the end of my high school career, and with that having been a reality for my family, I think they were a little bit confused about my choice itself. It was far away; that was a cause for concern for them as well.

Questions and concerns were voiced by her family about her decision to attend a PWI so far away from home,

What are you going to do to have fun? How are you going to feel about not having guys around? How do you feel about it being a PWI (predominately White institution), particularly as a Black woman? What is the population of students of color there? Those were the conversations that we had, and I think they had some reservations right up until the time that I left.

Valerie shared that during her time in the single gender education environment, “There were some internal affirmations that happened for me, while I was on campus that I couldn't even see or recognize until I gained some distance and gained some additional life experiences.” She attributed the environment with increasing her ability to keep pushing toward her goals and overcoming barriers and obstacles:

I would say that I learned never to settle, to always continue to push forward, and to constantly be innovative, progressive, and creative. That was something that my school encouraged in me, and it is very much part of the woman that I am today.

Her ability to take what some would view as an obstacle and turn it around to help her in her journey is one of the skills that helped Valerie as she worked through those things that may have caused others to quit school or attend a school closer to their family and friends.

Valerie attributes much of her determination, drive, and resilience to the single-gender educational environment:

I would say that I learned to never settle, to always continue to push forward, to constantly be innovative, progressive, and creative. That was something that my school encouraged in me, and it is very much part of the woman that I am today.

Esther explained where her ability to bounce back comes from when she shared in her third interview that, “I’m still surviving because of the strength I’ve learned from my prior experiences and the foundation given to me by my family,” She went on to share:

However, holding on to my experiences of positive change (and tough discussions) that I had at Rockefeller University help me to know my work is not in vain. My wonderful experience at Rockefeller University reminds me to have hope when I feel there is no hope.

The ability to take one's life lessons and apply them to helping others to grow individually and as a community is a valuable lesson that was learned in the single-gender community.

Mentors, Role Models and Support Organizations

The single-gender experience enhanced the support system of each of the women by providing them with additional mentors and role models who were focused on them

reaching their fullest potential and success. The fact that several of the participants were in environments that forced them to utilize their racial resources, other African American students, teachers, counselors or professors, was evident in each interview. The theme of support systems emerged throughout the interview process with each of the study participants, support systems that were identified included family, friends, spiritual friends, academic mentors. Jackie in the first interview shared:

My track teammates' parents were a good support system—in addition to giving me rides home after track meets, they gave me advice about track, sports, and life in general. My friends' parents were also helpful with life advice and an overall sense of support.

In first interview, Valerie shared that her support system at school consisted of friends:

The Black Student Association gave everyone a Big Sister, so I had a big sister that I'm still in connection with, she was from Brooklyn, and she was very no nonsense. So, for me being from the south and being in a new environment, it was good to have someone like her in my corner. So, we had a really good friendship.

There were those in the academic environment who she could go to for advice and counsel, “My academic advisor was someone that I could also speak with [about problems]. I had a great professor from my constitutional law class, and I would share with her as well.” In addition to her family:

I am very close to my family, so sometimes when I was just feeling down or dreary I would call my mom or my dad or one of my sisters, and we would talk through it and we would make it through.

Even though she had a support system at school, she was still able to call home and talk things over with her parents or siblings, which was a consistent system of support throughout her life.

Valerie spoke about the continued relationships formed in the single gender educational environment, and how they push her toward accomplishing new goals and striving to make the world a better place for those who come behind her:

I have had the opportunity to continue with some of the friendships that I established on campus. [To] be a part of a network of women who are exploring a variety of life realities, is something that keeps me motivated and keeps me excited for them as they launch into new adventures, and I get to share and be a part of that through our alumnae quarterly, through reunions, we are friends on Facebook. Considering that this was not a choice (to attend single-gender school) that I selected intentionally it has ended up being one of the most wonderful choices that I have made.

She went on to express that the foundation of service-oriented mindset was laid in the single gender school:

When I stopped working for myself and started thinking about how my actions were going to impact the community and the seeds that were planted at my school. It has been a continuation of that foundation and those ideas. I am far more service minded reaching out to others, wanting to be a part of the larger community. Those are the things that are at my core now that I really didn't practice when I was younger.

The fact that Valerie can, “talk it out with other peers and colleagues has been one avenue that I have pursued. Looking at ways to position myself differently, so that I can break out of those particular challenges was another method that I chose.”

Esther recalled in the third interview that her support was more than just academic and social:

They [support system] supported me emotionally and definitely financially. My church gave me a scholarship every year. They made me feel like a genius when I came home and sent me letters and cards to support me throughout the time I was at Rockefeller University.

Angela could pull from her “village” and use them as examples to live by:

My godmother who is retired now but was working on her Ph.D. when we were growing up. She instilled never giving up and staying focused. I think that, that still has an impact on me now, in trying to emulate her but putting my own spin on it.

Valerie pulls from her network that has extended past her days in school and draws from a pool of people to formulate a perspective that crosses into all parts of her life, promoting social change for women and the world:

It means that I am part of a global network of powerful women who are consciously seeking to implement positive social change in the world. It's something I think that people often say, but the truth of the matter is, it just isn't happening. In my network of friends, people that I have directly interacted with, people that I have become familiar with through online school based learning

opportunities, returning to campus for reunions, networking through different organizations where we might have common enrollment, these women are, they are changing the world. That excites me; it helps to keep me fired up while moving down a path that I can help the world. Being a part of a network like that is affirming, empowering, it's exciting, and I love it.

As she reflected on her time away from home in the single-gender environment, she recalled the following:

At the time, I really didn't think that, that was anything that I needed. I already had a very strong sense of who I was and what my place was in the universe if you will, and the experience at Jones broadened my universe, first of all. And from a distance now of almost 25 years, I can also see that there was a roving process that evolved.

Valerie takes these lessons and instills them in her lessons to her students providing them with support systems that are like those that she was provided in support of the single gender education and the foundation that it provides students:

It is also a part of the expectation that I began to express to my students as well. So not only was I pushing myself beyond what I had pursued in my own life, but also, I was becoming more conscientious with my students to recognize that there were always higher heights and deeper depths. That as long as we wake up every day there is always something new that can be learned. There are new adventures to be had, there are new ways that we can interact with people, and new ways that can understand the world in which we exist. We should always be seeking those

opportunities. That was something that I got at Jones. Jones taught me to push myself and encouraged me to push everyone else around me.

Because of the values instilled in her by her family and professors, she has been able to refocus her ambitions from self to community:

The professors that I had instilled a sense of community responsibility. Having the professors that I had, they were constantly making me circle back and realize that, ok, yes, college is about learning more about who you are, about developing your personal and professional goals and aspirations. But it is also about asking yourself how can I then take the person that I have become and use that to help someone else in his or her journey.

This sense of community and focusing on the needs of others is something that she drew from her support systems.

The fact that the limited number of Black girls was a large difference from the educational environment that Jackie was used to, added to the experience and the support systems that were provided to her.

My freshman year, I did become pretty good friends with one other Black girl in my class, and later I became close friends with Black girls in younger grades.

Most of these girls remain my close friends today. I did have White friends also, but these were more casual friendships.

Being in the single gender environment and seeing women supported for their passions and validated for their convictions:

That was something that I enjoyed as well. Seeing women end up in those traditionally male roles, being successful and being happy, being validated as the woman that I was and having people support the fact that I had strong passions and I had strong convictions and I stood up for those convictions and I was celebrated and applauded.

Valerie shared that the fact that the male professors' positive interaction and support of the female students pushing into male dominated environments was encouraging:

I enjoyed that and I also enjoyed the way that our male professors interacted with the students. A lot of the condescension that you sometimes saw (in the coed environment) between male teachers, especially in a subject area that was considered to be predominately masculine like math or science or even some of our extras like shop or auto mechanic. So, recognizing how our male professors especially valued and respected us as women and female students was a positive change from what I was used to seeing before.

The fact that there were women who had and were accomplishing those things that she was interested in, in addition to them "looking like" her added to the comfort of being in a single-gender environment. Valerie's insights on the experiences along with how she has fostered positive relationships through different channels was evident:

I love it, I have had the opportunity to continue with some of the friendships that I established on campus, be a part of a network of women who are exploring a variety of life realities, is something that keeps me motivated and keeps me excited for them as they launch into new adventures.

The single gender environment provided a safe environment for students to explore and experience different arenas without having to fight:

All of the different things that I was involved in at my school very easily, student organizations, I believe that those things would have required a fight and because I see myself becoming really combative and angry and aggressive feeling like every time I wanted to do something I had to fight with someone to get it done.

Esther shared that her personal role models continue to be her grandmother, mother, and aunt. She shared that, “they’ve influenced me in countless ways. I learned to speak my mind and care for others from them. They also taught me how to read, write, sing, drive a car, everything!” She shared that she has “battled depression since junior high. People did not know, so it was really a personal battle. My mother didn’t want to handle it, especially as she had to grieve the deaths of my grandmother and aunt during the time.” Esther expressed the feeling that had she remained in the coed environment she “would have either continued to be a token or I would have been lost in the shuffle.”

Formation of Spiritual Relationships

Valerie also formed a relationship with someone in the church that she found and attended in a neighboring city to where she attended school which provided her with a spiritual friend:

I had a really good friend who was a member of my church, and she and I had a really good relationship. She was very down to earth; she was very fun, and she was able to offer a lot of practical insight into things that I was wrestling with as a young woman that certainly appeared overwhelming to me. She had a way of

getting to the heart of the matter and talking about it from that perspective and stripping away some of the additional layers that were really superfluous anyway. That was something important that I needed in my life. It was something that I was used to getting from my mom, but with her being so far away, having someone like that in my circle helped to maintain a sense of reality.

The church and one's spiritual relationship was communicated throughout the study with all four participants in one way or another, whether it was attending church growing up, receiving financial and emotional support, finding a church family when attending school away from home, or developing a healthy spiritual relationship as an adult. Angela mentioned the following in the third interview:

Having a personal relationship with the Lord has definitely been my saving grace. I know that I cannot do any of this on my own. Realizing that this is my purpose and this is what He has brought me here to do and always going back to that. Lord you put me here for a reason, so reveal to me what I need to do so that I can do what you want me to do. ... When we were growing up we were always in church. Growing up I resented it.... I appreciate as an adult that I had to find my way back and develop a relationship, as an adult, that personal relationship.

Angela explained in the first interview that her support system consisted of “definitely our parents, our parents were very involved in everything that we did at our school they lived in the gym when we had basketball games, they lived on the track.” In addition to this involvement, there was other support for Angela which included role models, academic and spiritual:

My mom and godmother's both of my godmothers were working on their Ph.D. when we were in school, so they were role models and my mom she always pushed us, there were members of the church that every now and again would peak our interests.

This push toward academic excellence is evident in her work and the excellence that she strives toward teaching her students.

Valerie reflected that once she could expand the boundaries past those of the campus, she had an additional outlet that provided her with comforts that were more familiar as far as culture and spiritual experiences and the socioeconomic factor that was a part of her experience. She expressed this when she reflected on how finding a church home was an important part of her culture, racial identity and socialization, and spiritual relationships:

After I found a church in a nearby city, that was another community for me that was very supportive and encouraging. So, when there were holidays especially and I could not afford to go home because I was there on scholarship, not a trust fund baby, the socioeconomic part of it, I forgot about that. Sometimes the socioeconomics could be a little touchy as well, because we had legacy students there, whose great grandmothers, and grandmothers and mothers and aunts and cousins and everybody else in the world had gone so you had these legacy expectations and definitely the idea of superiority in that respect. As a student who could not afford to go to St. Kitz over the holiday, when we had short holidays that did not warrant me trying to scrape up enough money to try and get

back home. I had some place I could go, so, I would stay with members from my church for those short holidays, and it gave me a chance to get off campus and to just be in a nonacademic environment that was just a little closer to what I was used to at home. Summerville, which is the city where I went to church, had a more diversified ethnic base than the city where my school was located. So, that was an opportunity to decompress if you will and be in a situation that was a little bit closer to what I was accustomed to in terms of the cultural reality.

Feelings of Empowerment

The process of empowering a community that has been historically stripped of its power is a large part of what each of the women in this study gained from their matriculation and maturation in the single gender academic environments. They have taken this empowerment into their careers and communities to help build the next generation.

Jackie shared that she is proud of the school and what it has become, how it has evolved, and those who are associated with it,

I am very proud of the school now, they are doing awesome things; they're essentially doing academies. Their interests is for the girls. They are starting to develop programs ...and it seems like more alumni are getting involved, and it is good to see that people are giving back.

Valerie's college experience taught her very special lessons regarding C. R. U. and her ability to keep moving forward when she wants to quit. In the third interview, she shared that:

Compassion and selflessness, not to the point of self-destructiveness but understanding that the world is not just about me. That it is also about the people who are a part of my larger circle, and the choices that I make should always be made with the idea of [the question]: Will this in some way help someone else in addition to helping me?

Angela's determination to (re)claim her ancestry by learning songs and quotes that were important to her heritage and culture as a way to lash back at a girl who had called her out based on her race was her way of (re)appropriating her cultural unity, she shared that "at that point there came the whole bit of rebellion, and I would fist bump and stuff and sing (African American) songs and say African American quotes and stuff". While Jackie expressed that her way of (re)appropriating her identity and unity within the African American community evolved around the fact that "I loved being Black, liked R & B music and hip-hop, I loved "Black" dances, I even loved Black slang in the right settings".

Valerie shared how this experience was more affirming for her as a woman in a single gender education environment as opposed to being in a coed educational environment:

That was affirming for me, because being in a co-ed environment and being a strong individual who stood up for myself, that of course is accompanied by all of the negative stereotypes about what it means to be a woman who speaks up. Particularly what it means to be a Black woman who speaks up, and so being in

an environment where it was encouraged and it was supported and it wasn't perceived in a negative way, but it was perceived in an empowering way.

Valerie realizes that the fact that the choices that she makes today impact not only her and her immediate circle but her community as well. She understood her position as an African American woman living in a society that often does not value that position, and knowing that it takes more work to succeed. She acknowledged this when she expressed that:

I think it's been so deeply ingrained, maybe now at this point in my life I am more aware of how the choices that I make impact the community. I always knew that for us (African American women) that there was this understanding that we had to be a little bit better, we had to work a little bit harder, we had to be a little bit more focused and committed because there was always the supposition that there were people who did not support our success. In some instances, they would actively fight against that, so growing up those were things that were a part of my psyche.

These stereotypes were somewhat ingrained and it wasn't until she was in the single gender environment was she able to view the racism and sexism "But again it was like the internalized gender stereotyping; I didn't realize that it was there. It was just how life was and I really didn't become conscious of it in an intentional way until I was in school." It was a philosophical epiphany for her to become aware of the impact that her actions had on her life but on her community as well."

Because at that time it just became clear that there is a battle going on out here, and what had always been more philosophical growing up as a child became very real for me as I grew into a young adult. Now I am very aware of how my actions and how my choices impact our community. Whereas before I probably would have just said I'm Valerie and yes, I happen to be African American. Now it is very specific, no, I am an African American woman. This is my reality and many of the choices that I have made, much of the shaping that has gone into me becoming the woman that I am now is connected in some ways to my race, whether we want to admit it or not. I know we live in this reality where people want to pretend that racial issues don't exist. That being an African American woman does matter, it does make a difference and it does shape how your life develops.

Jackie shared how she draws strength from what she feels like “when I achieve something, I have to overcome additional barriers that a White person or sometimes even a Black man doesn't have to overcome. I have unique challenges or barriers that I have to overcome just being a Black woman.” She shared how “Fortunately, I don't limit myself because I am a woman or because I am Black.” She pulls from her ancestry, “I draw on the ancestors, I think about what other Black women have achieved, going back to Harriet Tubman, Toni Morrison or Nina Simone. I find inspiration from historical Black women.”

Results

This section presents the data based on alumnae responses to interview questions that were driven by the research questions and literature review for this study. The themes that emerged through the data analysis were competency versus deficit/risk, critical race feminism, the relevance gender specific education, womanism, racial identity and socialization, resilience, support systems within social capital, C. R. U. and spiritual relationships. The themes provided a view of how African American female alumnae describe their experiences in single-gender educational setting in order to capture and distil their shared experience of educational resilience in and outside of school. Open-ended, in-depth interview questions were utilized as a research tool to gather answers to the research questions of the study (see Appendix H and I). The research questions that were designed by myself and guided the creation of the survey and interview protocol (see appendix C, D, E). The survey consisted of nine open-ended questions. Each of the interview protocols consisted of 19 to 21 questions. The following research questions were developed for this study:

1. How do African American female alumnae of single-gender educational settings describe their experiences as they relate to resiliency?
2. How do African American female alumnae describe the effect of the single-gender schooling as it relates to resiliency in their lives outside of school?

The responses to the questions revealed that each of the participants walked away from their perspective campuses with a sense of greater respect for the abilities and accomplishments of women in general and African American women specifically. The

resilience that each exhibited through their lives and the support systems that were in place is evident in the participant's recollections of their experiences in the single-gender setting, regardless of whether it was in high school or college, African American, diverse, or predominately White. The fact that each of them could draw from spiritual and social relationships is an example of the adage “it takes a village to raise a child” and provides a lens into the lives of these young ladies.

Research Question 1

How do African American female alumnae of single-gender educational settings describe their experiences as they relate to resiliency?

African American female alumnae of single-gender educational settings described their experiences as they relate to resiliency in terms of the generational strengths that they gathered from their mothers, grandmothers, aunts and fathers for those participants who grew up in two parent homes. They were able to view the accomplishments of those who came before them and use those examples to push toward their individual goals. Their experiences of racial diversity provided them with the cultural and racial strength to move past those stereotypes that are ingrained in society and turn them into positive experiences that would later assist in their lives after matriculation. All four participants expressed their appreciation for the single-gender educational environment. The single-gender education environment provides students at all levels with academic, emotional, social, and spiritual development. Female students achieve higher academically when they are educated in environments where they can focus without distractions from the opposite sex. They never felt like they were less

important than male students or that their ideas had to be stifled or channeled through different channels. Being in an environment where females were always in the forefront when it came to academics, athletics, religious activities, student government, clubs and other school activities was of great importance to each participant. Being in a single-gender environment allowed them to stay focused.

The strength to overcome hardships, barriers, and obstacles was an ability that each of them attributed to various times in their lives. The barriers, hardships and obstacles were a large part of each participants' life and who they are today. The feelings of empowerment displayed by these students is exhibited as part of their resilience and determination to succeed regardless of the obstacles and barriers placed before them. Much of their drive, determination, and resilience can be attributed to the single-gender educational environment. The role of extended family, friends, mentors, role models, and support systems provided each participant with support systems that they could lean on for extra academic, social, financial, or spiritual support. The formation of spiritual relationships as opposed to just attending church became apparent to each participant as adults and the importance of having a personal relationship with God. Each of the alumnae experienced gender and racial pressure at various points throughout their educational experiences. Being African American in the single-gender environment exposed them to people and values to which a sense of community and drive to assist those who have been traditionally undervalued can be attributed. They had feelings of empowerment from the accomplishments that they saw from those in their communities of color, this also shows how much still needs to be accomplish in communities of color.

Research Question 2

How do African American female alumnae describe their experience of the single-gender schooling as it relates to resiliency in their lives outside of school?

The African American female alumnae participants described appreciation for their experiences of single-gender schooling as it relates to resiliency and overcoming hardships, barriers and obstacles in their lives outside of school. This was assisted by the relationships that were formed with mentors, role models, friends, and athletic coaches who were there to coach and lend social, academic and spiritual guidance when needed. Their experiences of cultural and racial diversity were evident in each of their experiences in the single-gender educational environment and how it affected their lives outside of school by influencing their choices in the churches that they attended along with the social events that they sought out when they were off campus. Each of the participants shared how they felt empowered and inspired by their ancestors to draw on the lessons of the past and use them to help build a foundation for the African American ladies who will come after them. The opportunities afforded to them outside of the academic community were an important part of the cultural, racial, social, and spiritual foundations that they formed while in school and flowed into their lives outside of the academic arena positively affecting and empowering them to overcome hardships, barriers and obstacles that they would face. These foundations allowed them to be empowered and empower others.

Discrepant Data

Analysis of the data showed no data that were contradictory in the survey or the interviews. The responses were consistent within this group of women. The consistency of responses suggested that with this sample of women the results were uniform. So, while it is not generalizable to the general population of African American women, the themes were consistent and strong with this sample. This group of women shares the experiences of educational resilience; however, it is not generalizable to all African American women. We know that there are some individuals that are not resilient, whether it is African American women, Caucasian women, Hispanic women or Asian women. This study reflected on what is it about these women, the results show that these women are all have an experience of resilience. There are African American women who are A4F who were not educated in single gender environment, it does highlight this phenomenon and what else we need to know.

Summary

In Chapter 4, the collection of data through the survey and interviews were described. The profiles of each of the survey respondents and study participants were discussed. Each of the emergent themes was explained along with participant responses to validate each of the themes that emerged from the interviews. Each of the research questions was answered by providing details from participant interviews. Statements were identified that were relevant to the research questions and included in the discussion by theme and question. The data were condensed to reflect the true essence of the participants' experiences in the single-gender educational setting and its effect on their

lives in and out of school. The emergent themes were identified based on the transcripts of each participant. The themes that emerged from the study are critical race feminism or womanism, the participants' appreciation of gender relevant education, the value of racial identity and socialization within the context of the participants experience, G. R. I. T., and support systems within the social capital. Each theme was supported by direct quotes from the interview transcripts in order to provide a fuller picture of how African American female alumnae of single-gender public classrooms describe their lived experiences in that setting, in an effort to capture and distil their shared experience of educational resilience in and outside of school. The findings of this study were presented to a panel of expert, who confirmed that they are consistent with the previous research findings in the areas of African American females, resiliency, competence versus deficit/risk perspective and single gender education and support the theory that the A4F reflects the move of viewing African American female from a competence perspective and is a direct reflection of the conceptual frameworks representation of the achievements of African American females in the academic setting.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This was an interpretive phenomenological research study designed to explore how African American female alumnae describe their lived experiences in single-gender education programs as they relate to resilience. The study was conducted to capture and distill the shared experience of educational resilience in and outside of school of African American female alumnae of single gender education environments. The interviews provided a view into the experiences of African American female students who were educated in a secondary or postsecondary single-gender education environment. The participants shared their experiences and reflected on those attributes that directly and indirectly affected their G. R. I. T. in the educational environment. The findings of the study reflected several components of the conceptual framework. Additionally, findings extended the theoretical approach via participants' acknowledgment of support systems, including references to the importance of specific support systems within social capital and interpersonal connections with a spiritual component.

Due to these additional findings, the post study literature review resulted in the addition of more recent articles and studies that support and build on the essence of the study. The conceptual framework showed that the factors that contribute to the G. R. I. T. of African American female students in single-gender education environments include social capital (support systems), how they identified racially and socially (racial identity and socialization), gender relevant education aided in removing the negative factors that sometimes come in the co-ed environment, critical race feminism, womanism (Black

feminism) and a competency versus deficit/risk perspective. The interpretation of the findings enhanced the framework to enable a more accurate reflection of the lived experiences of the participants as they relate to G. R. I. T., the perseverance and passion for long-term goals (Duckworth, 2013). These findings directly address ways to overcome educational disparities of African American woman. In Chapter 5, I will review the purpose of the study, discuss the interpretations of the findings, explain the growth and transformation of the conceptual framework, describe the limitations of the study, and identify themes that emerged from the research questions. This chapter also includes recommendations for future research along with implications for social change and researcher's reflections.

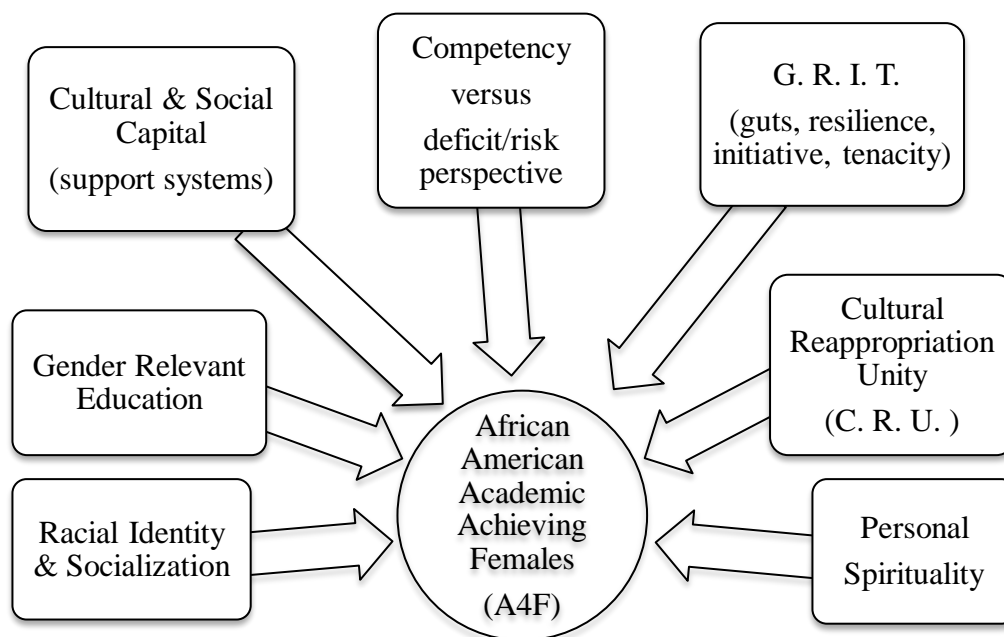


Figure 4. African American academic achieving females (A4F) framework that emerged from research.

The findings allowed an expansion of the original conceptual framework, educational resilience in African American females, that was developed for this study, based on Evans-Winters (2003, 2014, 2015), Gurian (2002), Delgado and Stefancic (2012) and Gilligan (1993). The A4F conceptual framework is what emerged as a result of the research that was conducted. In this study, I explored and described the lived experiences of African American female alumnae from single gender education programs in an effort to capture and distil their shared experience of educational resilience. Resilience is the ability to “bounce back or recover from adversity” or “the power of ability to return to the original form or position (Ginsburg & Jablow, 2015, p. 23). Participants discussed their support systems within a framework of social capital, the role their racial identity plays, knowledge of critical race feminism and womanism, and being viewed as competent by others. The gender specific education environment removed the factor of sexism by peers.

Additional relevant information that emerged from the findings included four findings that extend the theoretical base of the study, including; (a) A4F women who achieve academically despite barriers, obstacles and hardships pulling from their support systems at home, in school and the community to aid in their academic, personal and professional development. These women each had a personal spiritual relationship that attributed to their A4F classification; (b) C. R. U. culturally unifies and empowers the African American community to establish the strength and value that one gleams from ones’ ancestry and community; (c) G. R. I. T. the fortitude to overcome barriers, hardships, and obstacles with the perseverance and passion to accomplish one’s long-

term goals. The ability to rise above those things that are designed to break them and come out with a story to tell or a lesson to teach, (d) support systems within social capital include teachers, mentor, family, extended family and family friends who encourage alumnae and provided support personally, academically and financially; and (d) personal spiritual relationships as an important factor for all participants. Each participant spoke of the importance of having a personal relationship with God as opposed to just spending time in church as they did when they were children. The findings resulted in the A4F which specifically identifies the strength and fortitude of African Americans in the academic setting. Each of the women who participated in the study expressed that in one way or another cultural capital (Johnson, 2017; Maye, 2014; Pennington, 2015), support systems within social capital (Butler, 2015; Hoyle, 2018; Maye, 2014, Palmieri, 2014; Pennington, 2015; Price 2015), personal spiritual relationships (Palmieri, 2014; Pennington, 2015). Research conducted by Johnson (2017) showed that girls educated in single gender classrooms out performed boys educated in single gender classrooms and girls and boys educated in coed environments in support of gender relevant education environments (Maye, 2014, Palmieri, 2014), racial identity and socialization (Hoyle, 2018; Pennington, 2015), G. R. I. T. (Butler, 2015; Hoyle, 2018; Price, 2015), and C. R. U (Hoyle, 2018). played a large part in them becoming A4F. “Phenomenological evidence has to do with grasping the meaning of a phenomenon or event. However, phenomenological evidence is ultimately ambiguous and never complete” (Van Manen, 2014, p. 357). These are not cause and effect components, they are features, at no point during this study was it believed that one was the result of another.

Interpretation of the Findings

This IPR study was designed to explore and describe the lived experience of African American female alumnae from single-gender education programs in an effort to capture and distil their shared experience of educational resilience. This is not to say that African American females educated in the non-single gender education environment do not have the attributes that it takes to be resilient, this study is a snapshot of the experiences of this sample of women and those factors that they attribute to their resilience or have G. R. I. T. African American female students educated in single-gender education environments attributed several different aspects responsible for their resilience in and out of school. The participants provided information regarding which aspects attributed to the G. R. I. T. of African American female students who were educated in a secondary or post-secondary single-gender education environment. The participants shared their experience of G. R. I. T. and those attributes that directly and indirectly affected their G. R. I. T. in that environment.

The findings were viewed through the lenses of critical race feminism and competence versus deficit/risk of the A4F from the perspective of African American (race) females (feminism), in a positive learning environment. I then used that lens to examine the content regarding cultural capital (capital from the African American culture), support systems within social capital (family, friends, church, and community), gender relevant learning (single-gender schools), personal spiritual relationship (having a relationship with God as opposed to just attending church), racial identity and

socialization (identifying as and socializing with the African American culture), C. R. U., and G. R. I. T., showing how the content factors into the resilience of this population.

The content of the conceptual framework, cultural capital, social capital, gender relevant learning theory and racial identity and socialization theory, spirituality, C. R. U., and G. R. I. T. were all results of the analyzation and interpretation of the findings. While the perspective, critical race feminism theory (Hernández, 2016, Howard & Navarro, 2016) and competence versus deficit/risk perspective on minority learning and research guided the lens through which each of the participants was viewed during the study, the findings viewed in the context of the conceptual framework showed that when African American female students educated in the single educational environment are able to be viewed through the perspective of competence versus that of a deficit/risk, which enabled them to excel and achieve their goals based on the positive environment. This allowed them the ability to express themselves in a safe environment that was not judgmental, while being exposed to those who build upon and expand their cultural and social capital networks. The findings showed that the racial identity and socialization process was imperative in the process for their learning, growing and achieving at high levels. This was attributed to the examples that they were provided through their cultural and social capital networks (support systems), parents, godparents, church members, teacher, coaches, and counselors, in and out of the academic setting (Ernestus & Prelow, 2015).

Emergent Revised Conceptual Framework

The A4F framework that emerged from the findings illuminated and expanded the original conceptual framework. The emergent conceptual framework includes the following elements:

- G. R. I. T. is reflective of the fortitude exhibited by each of the participants to keep going in the face of adversity.
- Critical race feminism looks at how race, gender, and class are interrelated. The gender aspect was removed from this study since the participants were all educated in single gender education settings, this sample of women voiced that they saw the advantage to being educated in a setting where women were not viewed as second class citizens and saw women excel in areas that are typically viewed as male oriented occupations (Ferguson, 2016; Hirsch, Berliner-Heyman, Cano, & Cusack, 2017; Hirsch, Berliner-Heyman, Cano, Kimmel, & Carpinelli, 2011; Martin & Beese, 2016).
- Cultural and support systems within social capital: academic, personal, and spiritual relationships, communication, and interactions with those from the same culture and racial backgrounds. The findings showed that this was a factor in the A4F and educational experience of each of the young ladies. Their “unique voice of color” (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012 p. 160) was apparent in Valerie’s search for a Black church family and Esther’s choice to attend a HBCU. Cultural (relationships), social

(economic) capital support provided by people and the resources (support systems) ensured that the ladies could pull from different resources which made them better equipped to overcome barriers and obstacles (Garland & Bryan, 2017; Lee, Chung, & Park, 2016).

- Personal spiritual relationships versus church attendance - Each participant shared how her personal spiritual relationship with God formed and grew from just attending church on Sunday and Wednesday to a relationship where they identified ways and times when they recognized God's hand in their lives. They reflected on their youth when they were made to go to church and compared it to the differences in the spiritual relationship as adults. They identified times when they knew that, as stated by Angela "if it had not been for the Lord on my side" their lives would be very different.

African American Academic Achieving Females (A4F)

The A4F are women who have been able to acquire high academic accolades and achievements regardless of the barriers, hardships or obstacles that may be placed in their path. These women have G. R. I. T., have a personal spiritual relationship that has played a part in their academic, personal, and professional development. The A4F sample for this study are products of the single-gender educational environment. I realize that the A4F can be found in co-ed educational environments as well as the single-gender educational environment. I am an A4F who was not educated in the single gender environment but have pulled from every other component of the A4F framework, racial

identity and socialization, support systems within my social and cultural capital networks, G. R. I. T., C. R. U. and my personal spiritual relationship all play a part in the A4F that I am today. The A4F references the academic competence and G. R. I. T. of African American students in general and female students specifically (Evans-Winters, 2014, Chesmore, Winston, & Brady, 2016). The women who contributed to this study were all phenomenal in their own rights; their academic achievements added an extra layer to the women that they became through the A4F framework.

The A4F of each of the women who participated in the study is evident in their personal, professional (medical doctor, attorney, consultant and teacher), and academic accomplishments (post graduate and graduate degrees). A4F claims the competence versus deficit/risk factor to establish a term that is culturally relevant and demonstrative of the abilities of the African American community in the academic and professional realms. The phenomenality of these women adds an extra layer that is indicative of the A4F sample represented in this study and exhibits their ability to embrace their strengths while establishing their place in a society that is racially and gender biased and that does not always applaud what they bring to the table.

Attending a single-gender school may not have made these women resilient but it enhanced the opportunity. The components of racial identity and socialization, support systems within cultural and social capital, G. R. I. T., C. R. U. and personal spiritual relationships all play a part in the development of the A4F. The A4F sample of this study had the single-gender educational environment to aid in their becoming an A4F.

Cultural (Re)appropriation Unity (C. R. U.)

The process of establishing the importance and credibility of one's identity within an environment that has appropriated its value and strengths as its own is a way of empowering the African American community to take back what is important and reclaim it. The term C. R. U. establishes the fact that the African American community has taken the steps to (re)appropriate its culture and unify, empower, and "Lift as we climb" as expressed by Mary Church Terrell, 1898 (Terrell, 1940) who said it best when she stated,

With courage, born of success achieved in the past, with a keen sense of the responsibility which we shall continue to assume, we look forward to a future large with promise and hope. Seeking no favors because of our color, nor patronage because of our needs, we knock at the bar of justice, asking an equal chance.

Every one of the participants in this study acknowledged that there was someone who came before them who assisted in the process of their success. Each of them also acknowledged that they knew the importance of taking what they had learned and using that knowledge to assist and lift others in the process of their climbing (Marshall & Wingfield, 2016).

G. R. I. T. (Guts, Resilience, Initiative, Tenacity)

G. R. I. T. is a term coined for the purpose of demonstrating the unique fortitude. According to Margaret M. Perlis' (2013) article published in FORBES Magazine, defines G. R. I. T. in relation to behavior as "firmness of character; indomitable spirit." (para. 3).

Duckworth (2016) refined this definition to encompass one's "perseverance and passion for long-term goals" (p. 269) Each of the participants exhibited G. R. I. T in her journey to becoming the women that they are today. They were able to overcome great obstacles with guts, resilience, initiative and tenacity. Duckworth (2016) expounded on the fact that G. R. I. T. can be grown two different ways, "from the inside out," (p. 269) accomplished through goals, habits, and purpose, and "from the outside in," (p. 269) utilizing the cultural and social capital aspects of one's community.

The ability and fortitude of this sample of women to rise above those things that are designed to break or inhibit their development, success, and happiness is expressed throughout this study. When looking at what it takes to have G. R. I. T., it is apparent that it is something that is grown from the inside and cultivated from the outside and no matter what it enables you to rise above adversity and be successful.

Support Systems in Cultural and Social Capital

The A4F of this sample is attributed to their racial identity and socialization that was instilled in them at home and in school (cultural capital), and their G. R. I. T. which can be grown "from the inside out" and the "from the outside in" (Duckworth, 2016, p. 269). They have taken C. R. U., what they were given socially, personally, and academically, and used it to facilitate an environment and community that aided in the growth of all nationalities. This is a key example of Bourdieu's concept habitus and cultural capital. Habitus focuses on the way in which an individual conceptualizes her situations and creates her life in ways that build on and expand cultural capital. Habitus as a concept directs the ways that we formulate phenomenon and allows us to focus on

significant issues that provide a way of addressing situations through a relational lens (Grenfell, 2014; Grusendorf, 2016). Field (2003) explains that “Formally, Bourdieu defines habitus as a property of actors (whether individuals, groups or institutions) that comprises a “structured and structuring structure” (p. 170). It is “structured” by one’s past and present circumstances, such as family upbringing and educational experiences. It is “structuring” in that one’s habitus helps to shape one’s present and future practices. It is a “structure” in that it is systematically ordered rather than random or without a pattern. This “structure” comprises a system of dispositions, which generate “perceptions, appreciations, and practices” (Field, 2003, p. 50). The participants’ ability to connect their past, present, and future in addition to individual and social dimensions are prime examples of habitus and how their individual experiences make their lives unique. The participants shared similar structural content such as gender, ethnicity, and being educated in single-gender environments, but varied in terms of occupation, region, and social class.

Bourdieu emphasized the fact that cultural capital is not reflective of financial capital; family and school form cultural capital. Cultural capital can be independent of what one holds financially and can at times compensate when there is a lack of financial resources to strategically obtain status and power. Cultural and social capital can both be viewed as assets (Bartee, 2012; Fisher, Kouyoumdjian, Roy, Talavera-Bustillos & Willard, 2016; Garland & Bryan, 2017; Jarness, 2017; Lee et al., 2015; Trotman Scott & Moss-Bouldin, 2014; Yosso, 2005). Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital was used to explain how children from different social classes and groups within classes achieve in an

unequal academic environment Fields (2003) uses Bourdieu & Passeron's, 1977 definition to explain this concept

In some respects, he argued, the transmission of cultural capital represented the most effective form of hereditary transmission of capital, because it went largely unhidden and therefore was less readily subject to control, whereas the inheritance of economic wealth might be reined by taxation. (p. 16)

Limitations of the Study

The nature of the interpretive phenomenological study is limited in nature due to its small sample size and study timeframe. The research resulted in a snapshot of a specific group of women. It cannot be generalized to all African American women without further research. Participants presented additional questions that were out of the scope of this study, and I was unable to address these questions. One of the questions addressed the effects of resilience of African American female alumnae from single-gender schools on romantic and personal relationships. The second question had to do with obtaining input from one of the participants, a twin sister who also attended the single-gender school to establish if the reflection on their experiences were similar or different. I was unable to interview the twin because of scheduling and commitment restrictions.

Recommendations

Recommendations for future research from the analysis of the data include the effect of the A4F educated in single-gender environments on the romantic or social relationships of these women. Did or does it affect how they view or interact with their

male counterparts in a more romantic or social relationship, as opposed to those educated in a coed environment? As reflected by Jackie, who found that the only drawback from her experience in a single-gender school had to do with her social development when it came to men, “my development was stunted socially as it pertains to being able to relate to the opposite sex.” Put another way, Valerie shared that she “did miss the ready access to male interaction. I had a broad circle of male friends, both platonic and romantic, and I did miss having that interaction.”

The findings showed that there is the need for further research of the older and younger generations of this population to see if the findings are consistent across different age groups and generations. The scope of the study was also unable to address what, if any, factors play a part in the romantic relationships of this population, and specifically if being educated in a single-gender setting plays a positive or negative part in the ability to form and maintain romantic relationships.

The study participants were alumnae from single-gender high schools and colleges. Recommendations for future research include studying African American students in the high school and middle school settings across different geographical areas. Future research recommendations include exploring and comparing the differences and similarities of resilience in the educational experiences of the A4F in co-ed educational environments with those in the single gender educational environment. Do the A4F women who did not attend single gender schools have more to overcome due to the extra distractions within the coeducational environment? What do we need to know about the A4F, where do we find her?

Implications

Understanding how African American female alumnae of single-gender education programs describe their shared experiences of A4F on their lives in and out of school can foster social change within the African American community, including how schools and families positively affect this population. First, this can be done by recognizing and positively fostering those components that build G. R. I. T., cultural capital, (social mobility) social capital (social relationships, economic), racial identity and socialization, gender relevant learning, personal spirituality, and C. R. U. Additionally, this can be accomplished by adjusting the lens through which this population is viewed from one of deficit/risk to one of competence perspective on minority learning and critical race feminism in order to recognize the attributes, and contributions made by the A4F population. This study provides a basis for creating programs to assist parents, students, educators, and communities address the academic achievement of African American females (Evans-Winters, 2015, Watson, 2016). What strategies will help cultivate the A4F?

Conclusion

In the snapshot of African American women who have attended single gender schools, the concept of the A4F emerged. However, the emergence of the concept raises questions about the nature and extent of the concept beyond the snapshot. History is rife with African American women who have not attended single gender schools, but still exhibit the characteristics of the A4F: Michelle Obama, Oprah Winfrey, Maya Angelou, Angela Davis, Harriet Tubman to name a few and millions of other less famous women.

A4F women are unique in their diverse make-up. They are faced with the challenge of being a double minority in addition to often having to deal with and overcome the challenges of being in a lower socioeconomic status. The women that participated in this study were women who faced and overcame many of the challenges that other African American females face. The difference is they had G. R. I. T. and were able to overcome these barriers with the help of social and cultural support systems (Williams & Portman, 2014), in a single-gender environment that allowed them to flourish in areas not historically designed toward women in general and African American women specifically. Given the emergent conceptual framework, the question arises: Are there points of intervention that when activated will allow larger numbers of African American women to develop into A4Fs? This research has identified a concept that is potentially far greater than the snapshot created in the study.

This study is about the experiences of individual women that allowed them to become A4Fs through their individual achievements. The A4F sample of this study are women who achieve academically despite obstacles, barriers or hardships that they are faced with in their lives. The question that must be asked is whether this concept is far broader than the snapshot presented by this one study. The A4F concept deserves further exploration and investigation.

References

- Aagaard, J. (2016). Introducing post phenomenological research: A brief and selective sketch of phenomenological research methods. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 30*(6), 519-533.
- Ahern, K. J. (1999). Ten tips for reflexive bracketing. *Qualitative Health Research, 9*(3), 407-411.
- Akram, S., & Hogan, A. (2015). On reflexivity and the conduct of the self in everyday life: reflections on Bourdieu and Archer. *British Journal of Sociology, 66*(4), 606-625.
- Al-Fadhli, H. M., & Kersen, T. M. (2010). How religious, social, and cultural capital factors influence educational aspirations of African American adolescents. *Journal of Negro Education, 79*(3), 380-389.
- Alfred, M. (2009). Social capital theory: Implications for women's networking and learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, (122)*, 3-12.
- American Psychological Association Task Force on Resilience and Strength in Black Children and Adolescents. (2008). *Resilience in African American children and adolescents: A vision for optimal development*. Washington, DC: APA.
- American Psychological Association. (2014). American psychological association. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience.aspx>
- Atkinson, R., & Flint, J. (2001). Accessing hidden and hard-to-reach populations: snowball research strategies. *Social Research Update, (33)*.

- Aud, S., Hussar, W., Johnson, F., Kena, G., Roth, E., Manning, E., Wang, X., and Zhang, J. (2012). *The Condition of Education 2012* (NCES 2012-045). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC.
- Retrieved [date] from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>.
- Barajas, M. S. (2011). Academic achievement of children in single parent homes: A critical review. *Hilltop Review*, 5(1), 13-21.
- Bartee, R. D. (2012). Recontextualizing the knowledge and skill involved with redesigned principal preparation: Implications of cultural and social capital in teaching, learning, and leading for administrators. *Planning and Changing*, 43(3/4), 322-343.
- Bhandari, H., & Yasunobu, K. (2009). What is social capital? A comprehensive review of the concept. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, (37), 480-510.
- Blos, P. (1967). The second individuation process of adolescence. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 22(1), 162-186. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/00797308.1967.11822595>
- Boisnier, A. D. (2003). Race and women's identity development: Distinguishing between feminism and womanism among Black and White women. *Sex Roles*, 49(5/6), 211-218.
- Boykin, A. W., & Noguera, P. (2011). *Creating the opportunity to learn*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Boylorn, R. M. (2013). *Sweetwater Black women and narratives of resilience*. New York, New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.

- Brown, D. L. (2008). African American resiliency: Examining racial socialization and social support as protective factors. *Journal of Black Psychology, 34*(1), 32-48.
- Bruster, B. (2009). Transition from welfare to work: self-esteem and self-efficacy influence on the employment outcome of African American women. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 19*(4), 375-393.
- Bryant, A. C. (2017). Review of Black Feminism in Education: Black women speak back, up, and out by Evans-Winters, V. E. & Love, B. L. *Education Review, 24*. doi:dx.doi.org.10.14507/er.v24.1967
- Burns, N., & Grove, S. K. (2003). *Understanding nursing research* (3rd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Saunders Company.
- Butler, D. (2015). *Motivation and success strategies as resilience: A phenomenological study of African American women engineers in a U. S. Western State* (Doctoral dissertation).
- Butler-Barnes, S., Williams, T., & Chavous, T. (2012). Racial pride and religiosity among African American boys: Implications for academic motivation and achievement. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 41*(4), 486-498.
- Carolan, B. V. (2012). An examination of relationship among high school size, social capital, and adolescents' mathematics achievement. *Journal of Research on Adolescents, 22*(3), 583-595.
- Carver, C. S., Scheier, M. F., & Segerstrom, S. C. (2010). Optimism. *Clinical Psychology Review, 30*(7), 879–889. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2010.01.006>

- Champagne, F. A. (2011). *Epigenetic impact of adversity: Risk, resilience, & nature-nurture interplay* [PowerPoint slides]
http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/pub/departments/childrensstudies/conference/pdf/Champagne_PPT.pdf.
- Chan, Z. C., Fung, Y. L., & Chien, W. T. (2013). *Bracketing in phenomenology: Only undertaken in the data collection and analysis process?* *The Qualitative Report*, 18, 1-9.
- Chavous, T. M., Rivas-Drake, D., Smalls, C., Griffin, T., & Cogburn, C. (2008). Gender matters, too: The influences of school racial discrimination and racial identity on academic engagement outcomes among African American adolescents. *Developmental Psychology*, 44(3), 637-654.
- Chesmore, A. A., Winston, W. I., & Brady, S. S. (2016). Academic behavior and performance among African American youth: Associations with resources for resilience. *The Urban Review*, 48(1), 1-14. doi:10.1007/s11256-015-0342-9.
- Clancy, M. (2013). Is reflexivity the key to minimizing problems of interpretation in phenomenological research? *Nurse researcher*, 20(6), 12-16.
- Clare, L., Rowlands, J., Bruce, E., Surr, C., & Downs, M. (2008). The experience of living with dementia in residential care: An interpretive phenomenological analysis. *The Gerontological Society of America*, 48(6), 711-720.
- Cokley, K., McClain, S., Jones, M., & Johnson, S. (2012). A preliminary investigation of academic disidentification, racial identity, and academic achievement among African American adolescents. *The High School Journal*, 54-68.

- Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 94, 95-120.
- Coleman, M. (2012). Interviews. In A. R. J. Briggs, M. Coleman, & M. Morrison (Eds.) *Research methods in educational leadership & management* (3rd ed., pp. 250-265). London: SAGE.
- Collins, P. H. (1998). It's all in the family: Intersections of gender, race, and nation. *Hypatia*, 13(3), 62-82.
- Cope, D. G. (2014). Methods and meanings: Credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 41(1), 89-91.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Cunningham, M. (2010). Educational Resilience in African American Adolescents. *Journal of Negro Education*, 79(4), 473-487.
- D'Mello, L., & Govindaraju, B. M. (2016). Implications of academic stress in adolescents. *International Journal of Scientific Research and Modern Education*, 1(1), 320-327.
- D'Silva, M. U., Smith, S. E., Della, L. J., Potter, D. A., Rajack-Talley, T. A., & Best, L. (2016). Reflexivity and positionality in researching African-American communities: Lessons from the field. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 25(1), 94-109.

- Davidson-Arad, B., & Navaro-Bitton, I. (2015). Resilience among adolescents in foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review, 59*, 63-70.
- Delgado Bernal, D. (2002). Critical race theory, Latino theory, and critical raced gendered epistemologies: Recognizing students of color as holders and creators of knowledge. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8*(1), 105-126.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2012). *Critical race theory*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Dias, P. C., & Cadime, I. (2016). Protective factors and resilience in adolescents: The mediating role of self-regulation. *Psicologia Educativa, 23*, 37-43.
- Duckworth, A. (2016). *Grit: The power of passion and perseverance*. New York, NY: Scribner.
- Dwarte, M. (2014). The impact of single-sex education on African American reading achievement: An analysis of an urban middle school's reform efforts. *The Journal of Negro Education, 83*(2), 162-172.
- Dye, L., Fuller, L. B., Burke, M. G., & Hughey, A. W. (2017). Beyond social justice for the African American learner: A contextual humanistic perspective for school counselors. *Journal of African American Learners, 6*(1), 1-14.
- Ernestus, S., & Prelow, H. (2015). Patterns of risk and resilience in African American and Latino youth. *Journal of Community Psychology, 43*(8), 954-972.
- Evans-Winters, V. (2003). *Reconstructing resilience: Including African-American female students in educational resiliency research* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 3086056).

- Evans-Winters, V. E. (2011). *Teaching Black girls resiliency in urban educational settings*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Evans-Winters, V. E. (2014). Are Black Girls Not Gifted? Race, Gender, and Resilience. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 4(1), 22-30.
- Evans-Winters, V. E. (2015). Black feminism in qualitative education research: A mosaic for interpreting race, class, and gender in education. In V. E. Evans-Winters & B. L. Love (Eds.), *Black feminism in education: Black women speak back, up and out* (pp. 129-142). New York, New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Evans-Winters, V. E., & Esposito, J. (2010). Others people's daughters: Critical race feminism and Black girl's education. *Educational Foundations*, 24(1/2), 11-24.
- Evans-Winters, V. E., & Girls for Gender Equity (2017). Flipping the script: The dangerous bodies of girls of color. *Cultural Studies Critical Methodologies*, 17(5), 415-423.
- Ferguson, D. S. (2016). *African American women in STEM: Uncovering stories of persistence and resilience through an examination of social and cultural capital* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 10158857).
- Few-Demo, A. L. (2014). Intersectionality as the “new” critical approach in feminist *Journal of Family Theory Review*, (6), 169-183.
- Field, J. (2003). *Social capital*. London: Routledge.
- Fischer, C. T. (2009). *Bracketing in qualitative research: Conceptual and practical matters*. *Psychotherapy Research Methods*, 19(4-5), 583-590.

Fisher, K., Kouyoumdjian, C., Roy, B., Talavera-Bustillos, V., & Willard, M. (2016).

Building a culture of transparency. *Peer Review*, (1-2), 8-11.

Fusch, P. I., & Ness, L. R. (2015). *Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. The Qualitative Report*, 20(9), 1408-1416.

Garland, K., & Bryan, K. (2017). Partnering with families and communities: culturally responsive pedagogy at its best. *Voices from the Middle*, 24(3), 52-55.

Gauntlett, D. (2011, February 1). Making in connecting: The social meaning of creativity, from DIY and knitting to YouTube and Web 2.0 [Video file]. Retrieved from <http://www.makingisconnecting.org/>

Gearing, R. E. (2004). *Bracketing in research: a typology. Qualitative Health Research*, 14(10), 1429-1452.

Gilligan, C. (1993). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Givens, L. (2008). The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods. Retrieved from <http://srmo.sagepub.com/view/sage-encyc-qualitative-research-methods/SAGE.xml>

Grenfell, M. J. (2014). *Pierre Bourdieu Key Concepts*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.

Grusendorf, S. (2016). Bourdieu's field, capital, and habitus in religion. *Journal of Sociology and Christianity*, 6(1), 1-13.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1981). *Effective evaluation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). *Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences*. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 191-215). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Gurian, M. (2002). *The wonder of girls understanding the hidden nature of our daughters*. New York, NY: Atria Books.
- Gurian, M., & Ballew, A. C. (2003). *The boys and girls learn differently action guide for teachers*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Gurian Institute (2012-2013). *Learning about the brain-Through a gender lens* [PowerPoint slides] <http://gurianinstitute.com/>.
- Gurian, M., Stevens, K., & Daniels, P. (2009). *Successful single-sex educational settings*. San Francisco, CA: A Wiley Imprint.
- Gurian, M., Stevens, K., & King, K. (2008). *Strategies for teaching boys & girls secondary level*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Gurian, M., & Stevens, K. (2004). With boys and girls in mind. *Educational Leadership*, 62(3), 21-26.
- Hale, J. E. (1986). *Black children: Their roots and learning styles*. Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Hale, J. E. (2016). Learning Styles of African American children: Instructional implications. *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*, 5(2), 109-118.
- Hamill, C., & Sinclair, H. (2010). *Bracketing - practical considerations in Husserlian phenomenological research*. *Nurse Researcher*, 17(2), 16-24.

- Hart, L. C. (2016). When “separate” may be better: Exploring single-sex learning as a remedy for social anxieties in female middle school students. *Middle School Journal, 47*(2), 32-40.
- Hellawell, D. (2006). Inside-out: Analysis of the insider-outsider concept as a heuristic device to develop reflexivity in students doing qualitative research. *Teaching in Higher Education, 11*(4), 483-494.
- Henfield, M. S., & Washington, A. R. (2012). “I want to do the right thing but what is it?” White teachers' experiences with African American students. *The Journal of Negro Education, 81*(2), 148-161.
- Hernández, E. (2016). Utilizing critical race theory to examine Race/Ethnicity, racism, and power in student development theory and research. *Journal of College Student Development, 57*(2), 168-180. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/docview/1783694163?accountid=14872>
- Hidden Curriculum (2014, August 26). Brain-based learning. Retrieved from <http://edglossary.org/hidden-curriculum>.
- Hirsch, L. S., Berliner-Heyman, S., Cano, R., & Cusack, J. L. (2017). *The effectiveness of single-gender engineering enrichment programs: A follow-up study*. Paper presented at the 2017 ASEE Zone II Conference, San Juan, Puerto Rico.
- Hirsch, L. S., Berliner-Heyman, S., Cano, R., Kimmel, H., & Carpinelli, J. (2011). Middle school girls' perceptions of engineers before and after a female only

- summer enrichment program. In *Frontiers in Education Conference (FIE), 2011* (pp. S2D-1). Washington, DC: IEEE.
- Holloway, I., & Wheeler, S. (2010). *Qualitative research in nursing and healthcare* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Holloway, I., & Wheeler, S. (2010). *Qualitative research in nursing and healthcare* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Honigsfeld, A., & Dunn, R. (2003). High school male and female learning-style similarities and differences in diverse nations. *The Journal of Educational Research, 96*(4), 195-206.
- Horrigan-Kelly, M., Millar, M., & Dowling, M. (2016). Understanding the key tenets of Heidegger's philosophy for interpretive phenomenological research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, ,* 1-8.
- Howard, T. C., & Navarro, O. (2016). Critical race theory 20 years later: Where do we go from here? *Urban Education, 51*(3), 253-273.
- Hoyle, J. C. (2018). *Black girls matter: An ethnographic investigation of rural African-American girls experiencing a specialized STEM high school for gifted and talented students* (Doctoral dissertation).
- Jackson, S. K. (2017). A mother's love: Factors that contribute to African American males' high achievement. Dissertation Abstracts International: Section A. Humanities and Social Sciences, 10713392.
- Janesick, V. J. (2011). *Stretching exercises for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

- Jarness, V. (2017). Cultural vs economic capital: Symbolic boundaries within the middle class. *Sociology*, 51(2), 357-373. doi:10.1177/0038038515596909
- Jensen, E. (2005). *Teaching with the brain in mind* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Jensen, E. (2008). *Brain-based learning: The new paradigm of teaching* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Jensen, E. (2009). *Teaching with poverty in mind what being poor does to kids' brains and what schools can do about it*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Jensen, E. (2010). *Different brains, different learners: how to reach the hard to reach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Johnson, C. M. (2017). *Mathematics performance of sixth-grade students in single-gender and mixed classrooms in a large urban school system* (Doctoral dissertation, Grand Canyon University, Phoenix, AZ).
- Johnston, C. M., Wallis, M., Oprescu, F. I., & Gray, M. (2016). *Methodological considerations related to nurse researchers using their own experience of a phenomenon within phenomenology*. *Informing Practice and Policy Worldwide through Research and Scholarship*, 19, 574-584.
- Jootun, D., McGhee, G., & Marland, G. (2009). Reflexivity: promoting rigour in qualitative research. *Nursing Standard*, 23(23), 42-46.
- Kahn, D. L. (2000). *Reducing bias*. In M. Z. Cohn, D. L. Kahn & R. H. Steeves (Eds.), *Hermeneutic phenomenological research: A practical guide for nurse researchers* (pp. 85-92). London, England: Sage Publications.

- Kiikkala, S. M., & Astedt-Kurki, P. (2015). Bracketing as a skill in conducting unstructured qualitative interviews. *Nurse Researcher*, 22(4), 8-12.
- Kim, E., & Hargrove, D. (2013). Deficient or resilient: A critical review of Black male academic success persistence in higher education. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 82(3), 300-311.
- Lee, S., Chung, J. E., & Park, N. (2016). Linking cultural capital with subjective well-being and social support: The role of communication networks. *Social Science Computer Review*, 34(2), 172-196. doi:10.1177/0894439315577347
- Lewallen, T. C., Hunt, H., Potts-Datema, W., Zaza, S., & Giles, W. (2015). The whole school, whole community, whole child model: A new approach for improving educational attainment and healthy development for students. *Journal of School Health*, 85(11), 729-739. Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/josh.12310/epdf>
- Majee, W., & Hoyt, A. (2011). Cooperatives and community development: A perspective on the use of cooperatives in development. *Journal of Community Practices*, 19(1), 48-61.
- Marshall, M., & Wingfield, T. (2016). *Ambition in Black + White the feminist narrative revised*. Los Angeles, CA: Center for Talent Innovation Publication.
- Martin, J., & Beese, J. A. (2016). Pink Is for Girls. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, 19(4), 86. doi:10.1177/1555458916664762
- Mather, M. (2010). U. S. Children in single-mother families. Retrieved from <http://www.prb.org/pdf10/single-motherfamilies.pdf>

- Matua, G. A., & Van Der Wal, D. M. (2014). Differentiating between descriptive and interpretive phenomenological research approaches. *Nurse Researcher*, 22(6), 22-27.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design an interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Maye, D. D. (2014). *Effects of single-gender classes on the achievement gap*. (Doctoral Dissertation 3638247).
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research a guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. B., & Associates (2002). *Qualitative research in practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (12th ed.). (2016). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis a methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Milner, H. R. (2007). Race, culture, and researcher positionality: Working through dangers see, unseen, and unforeseen. *Educational Researcher*, 36(7), 388-400.
- Motari, L. (2008). *The ethic of delicacy in phenomenological research*. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 3(1), 3-17.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

National Center for Injury Prevention (2010). *National Center for injury prevention*.

Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/Injury/>

National Center for Victims of Crimes (2010). *National center for victims of crimes*.

Retrieved from <http://www.victimsofcrime.org/>

National Institute of Mental Health (2013). *National Institute of Mental Health*. Retrieved

from <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/index.shtml>

Nicoll, W. G. (2014). Developing transformative schools: A resilience-focused paradigm

for education. *The International Journal of Emotional Education*, 6(1), 47-65.

Noble, H., & Smith, J. (2015). Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research.

Evidence-Based Nursing, 18(2), 34-35.

Noguera, P. A., Pierce, J. C., & Ahram, R. (2015). Race, education, and the pursuit of

equality in the twenty-first century. *Race and Social Problems*, 7, 1-4.

doi:10.1007/s12552-014-9139-9

Ozberk, E. B., Findik, L. Y., & Ozberk, E. H. (2018). *Investigation of the variables*

affecting the Math achievement of resilient students at school and student level.

Education and Science, , 1-19.

Palmieri, J. R. (2014). *21st Century girls' schools: For what reasons are new*

independent girls' schools opening in the United States. (Doctoral Dissertation 3613599.)

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Thousand

Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

- Pengiram-Jadid, P. R. (1998). *Analysis of the learning styles, gender, and creativity of Bruneian performing and non-performing primary and elite and regular secondary school students and their teachers' teaching styles* (Doctoral dissertation).
- Pennington, A. (2015). *A thumping from within unanswered by any beckoning from without: Resilience among Africa American women, Farmville, Virginia, 1951-1963* (Doctoral dissertation).
- Perlis, M. M., (2013, October 29). The little black book of billionaire secrets 5 characteristics of grit—How many do you have? Forbes. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/margaretperlis/2013/10/29/5-characteristics-of-grit-what-it-is-why-you-need-it-and-do-you-have-it/#61e615044f7b>
- Peters, M. (1985). Racial socialization of young Black children. In H. Pipes McAdoo & J. L. McAdoo (Eds.), *Black children: Social, educational, and parental environments* (pp.159-174). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Pietkiewicz, I., & Smith, J. A. (2014). A practical guide to using interpretative phenomenological analysis in qualitative research psychology. *Psychological Journal*, 20(1), 7-14.
- Pizzo, J., Dunn, R., & Dunn, K. (1990). *A sound approach to reading: Responding to students' learning styles*. *Journal of Reading, Writing, and Learning Disabilities International*, , 249-260.

- Price, V. (2015). *The quest for success: A phenomenological study aimed at understanding the experiences of successful African American females in high school* (Doctoral dissertation).
- Probst, B., & Berenson, L. (2014). The double arrow: How qualitative social work researchers use reflexivity. *Qualitative Social Work, 13*(6), 813-827.
- Rex, J., & Chadwell, D. (2009). Single-gender educational settings. *School Administrator, 66*(8), 28-33.
- Reilly, D., Neumann, D. L., & Andrews, G. (2017). Gender differences in spatial ability: Implications for STEM education and approaches to reducing the gender gap for parents and educators. In M. S. Khine (Ed.), *Visual-Spatial Ability: Transforming Research into Practice* (pp. 195-224). Switzerland: Springer International. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-44385-0_10
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing the art of hearing data* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE. (Scarf et al., 2017)
- Scarf, D., Hayhurst, J., Riordan, B., Boyes, M., Ruffman, T., & Hunter, J. (2017). Increasing resilience in adolescents: The importance of social connectedness in adventure education programmes. *Australasian Psychiatry, 252*(2), 154-156.
- Shean, M. (2015). *Current theories relating to resilience and young people a literature review*. Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, , .
- Smith, J. (2017). Resist school pushout with and for Black girls. *Occasional Paper Series, 10*(38), . Retrieved from <https://educate.bankstreet.edu/ocasional-paper-series/vol2017/iss38/10>

- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkins, M. (2009). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, methods, and research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Sleeter, C. E. (2011). An agenda to strengthen culturally responsive pedagogy. *English teaching: Practice and critique*, 10(2), 7-23.
- Solorzano, D., & Yosso, T. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 23-44.
- Southwick, S. M., & Charney, D. S. (2012). *Resilience: The science of mastering life's greatest challenges*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, Z. E., Larsen-Rife, D., Conger, R. D., Widaman, K., & Cutrona, C. E. (2010). Life stress, maternal optimism, and adolescent competence in single mother, African American families. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 24(4), 468-477.
- Terrell, M. C. (ca. 1940) *A Colored Woman in a White World*. [Manuscript/Mixed Material] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2002719349/>.
- Trotman Scott, M., & Moss-Bouldin, S. (2014). We Need More Drama: A Comparison of Ford, Hurston, and Boykin's African American Characteristics and Instructional Strategies for the Culturally Different Classroom. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 4(2), 68-80.
- Tsolidis, G., & Dobson, I. R. (2006). Single-sex schooling: is it simply a “class act”? *Gender and Education*, 18(2), 213-228.
- Valerio, M. A., Rodriguez, N., Winkler, P., Lopez, J., Dennison, M., Liang, Y., & Turner, B. J. (2016). *Comparing two sampling methods to engage hard-to-reach*

communities in research priority setting. BMC Medical Research Methodology, 16(146), .

Van Manen, M. (2014). *Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning-Giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing (Developing Qualitative Inquiry)*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, Inc.

Van Manen, M. (2017). Phenomenology in its original sense. *Qualitative Health Research*, 27(6), 810-825.

Vespa, J., Lewis, J. M., & Kreider, R. M. (2013, August). *America's families and living*. Washington, DC: U. S. Census Bureau. Retrieved from U. S. Census Bureau website: <https://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p20-570.pdf>

Wagstaff, J., Cooper, L. B., & Neff, M. R. (2017). Children of single mothers: Well-being. Retrieved from https://www.ebscohost.com/assets-sample-content/SWRC_QL_ChildrenOfSingleMothersWellBeing.pdf

Walker, A. (1983). *In search of our mothers' gardens: Womanist prose*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Waters, B. S. (2015). "Oh, you'll be back" Bridging identities of race, gender, educator, and community partner in academic research. In V. E. Evans-Winters & B. L. Love (Eds.), *Black feminism in education: Black women speak back, up and out* (pp. 173-181). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.

Watson, T. T. (2016). "Talking Back": The perceptions and experiences of black girls who attend city high school. *Journal of Negro Education*, 85(3), 239-249.

- Williams, J. M., & Bryan, J. (2013). Overcoming adversity: High-achieving African American youth's perspectives on educational resilience. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 91*(3), 291-300.
- Williams, J., & Portman, T. (2014). No one ever asked me: Urban African American students' perceptions of educational resilience. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 42*(1), 13-30.
- Woolcock, M., & Narayan, D. (2000). Social capital: Implications for development theory, research, and policy. *World Bank Research Observer, 15*(2),
- Yosso*, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 8*(1), 69-91.
- Yuksel, P., & Yildirim, S. (2015). Theoretical frameworks, methods, and procedures for conducting phenomenological studies in educational settings. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry, 6*(1), 1-20.

Appendix A: Survey

My name is Phyllis Hill, and I am studying how African American alumnae from single-gender schools who have been able to overcome various barriers, obstacles, and problems in their lives in and outside of school. You can help parents, teachers and students by telling your story through the answers to a few questions.

1. What single-gender school did you attend?
2. What dates and grades were you in attendance at the above-mentioned school?
3. Did you graduate from this school?
4. Tell me the story of how you came to attend your alma mater
5. How is your alma mater different from your past educational experiences?
6. What barriers, problems, and hardships have you experienced throughout your life that has made you who you are today?
7. How did you deal with those barriers, hardships or problems?
8. How did you hear about this study/survey (Facebook, Walden Participant Pool, friend, other, etc.)?
9. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
10. Would you be interested in speaking with me further? If so, please provide your email address below:

Would you be interested in speaking with me further? If so, please provide your e-mail address below:

Thank you.

Phyllis Hill, M.Ed.

Doctoral Student,

Walden University

Phyllis.hill@waldenu.edu

Appendix B: Interview Protocol 1

INTERVIEW 1: FOCUSED LIFE HISTORY

(Past educational experience: single-gender or coeducational, preferences, years in each)

Research Question 1: How do African American female alumnae describe their experiences from single-gender schools?

The first interview will focus on the participant's past experiences, both recent past and further past in her life IN school.

The researcher will inform participants that it is her legal obligation to report any information concerning illegal activities or behavior that is detrimental to the participant or others. The dissemination of this information is within the control of the student participants and is not directly related to the study. The interview protocols do not ask participants to reveal sexual practices, family history, substance use, illegal behavior, medical or mental health. Participants are informed in advance of their right to refuse to answer any question or to withdraw from the study completely. Participants will be instructed specifically not reveal any information concerning illegal activities in the consent form in addition to prior to each interview.

Interview Questions:

1. Tell me the story of how you came to attend a single-gender school.
2. What role did your family play in the whole process of moving from your prior school to a single-gender school?
3. Tell me about the school you came from (prompt to make sure you get questions about was it single-gender, etc.)

4. What are some differences between coed schools and single-gender schools that you have experienced?
5. Who did you identify as your support system in elementary, (i.e. teachers, family, counselors, mentors) who did you go to with a problem or issue to help you work through it?
6. Tell me about your friends, social circles, clubs and activities in elementary. How did you enter these groups and/or activities? How did you feel about participating in them?
7. How would you describe your social life when you came to attend a single-gender school? What groups did you join? Were there groups that you wanted to join but didn't? Tell me how you made the decisions about which groups to join or not join.
8. If someone asked you to describe yourself as an elementary school student, what would you say? What three words would best describe you as a first grader? Fourth grader? Seventh grader?
9. Who were your role models in elementary? Describe/tell me about the teachers who had the biggest influence on you in elementary. How did that person or persons influence you?
10. How did your identity as an African American fit into who you were academically?
11. Tell me about any barriers, problems, and/or hardships that you may have experience in elementary school? How did you deal with them?

Research Question 2: How do African American female student's alumnae describe the effect of the single-gender school on their lives outside of school?

The first interview will focus on the participant's past experiences, both recent past and further past in her life OUTSIDE of school.

Interview Questions:

1. How would you describe your life outside of school during your elementary years? Tell me about your family during this time.
2. Tell me about your support systems outside of school during elementary.
3. Tell me about your friends, social circles, clubs and activities (outside of school) when you were younger. How did you enter these groups and/or activities? How did you feel about participating in them?
4. If someone asked you to describe yourself outside of school when you were younger, what would you say? What three words best describe you outside of school when you were six years old? Nine years old? Twelve years old?
5. Who would you identify as a role model when you were younger outside of school? How did that person or persons influence you?
6. How did your identity as an African American fit into who your social life?
7. Tell me about any barriers, problems, and/or hardships that you may have experience outside of school as a young child? How did you deal with them?
8. Is there anything else I haven't asked that you would like to tell me?

Appendix C: Interview Protocol 2

INTERVIEW 2: DETAILS OF PRESENT EXPERIENCE

(Focus on details of experience in single-gender classes)

Research Question 1: How do African American female alumnae describe their experiences in a single-gender school?

The second interview will focus on the participant's present experiences in her life IN school.

The researcher will inform participants that it is her legal obligation to report any information concerning illegal activities or behavior that is detrimental to the participant or others. The dissemination of this information is within the control of the student participants and is not directly related to the study. The interview protocols do not ask participants to reveal sexual practices, family history, substance use, illegal behavior, medical or mental health. Participants are informed in advance of their right to refuse to answer any question or to withdraw from the study completely. Participants will be instructed specifically not reveal any information concerning illegal activities in the consent form in addition to prior to each interview.

Interview Questions:

1. Tell me how you feel about attending single-gender school. How does your family feel about you attending a single-gender school?
2. How do you feel about your experience now and the differences between co-ed and single-gender?
3. Who would you identify as part of your support system, (i.e. teachers, family,

counselors, and mentors) who can you go to with a problem or issue to help you work through it? Have they changed, increased, decreased?

4. Tell about your current relationships with peers at other schools.
5. Tell me about your friends, social circles, clubs and activities now. How do you feel about participating in these groups and/or activities? What changes have you noticed in your attitude toward participating in them?
6. How are your relationships different this school year?
7. How has your view of yourself changed this school year?
8. What school groups are you in now? How are they the same or different from the past groups that you participated in?
9. If someone asked you to describe yourself as an alumnae student at this point in your life, what would you say? What three words would best describe you as an alumnae?
10. Who are your role models now? Describe/tell me about the teachers who have the biggest influence on you now? How does your identity as an African American fit into the picture of who you are?
11. Tell me about any barriers, problems, and/or hardships that you may be experiencing now in school? How do you deal with them?

Research Question 2: How do African American female alumnae describe the effect of the single-gender public school educational setting on their lives outside of school?

The second interview will focus on the participant's present experiences in her life OUTSIDE of school.

Interview Questions:

1. Tell me what your life is like outside of school now. Tell me about your family now.
2. Tell me about your support systems outside of school now.
3. Tell me about your friends, social circles, clubs, and activities (outside of school) now. How did you participate in these groups and/or activities? How do you feel about participating in them?
4. If someone asked you to describe yourself outside of school now, what would you say? What three words best describe you now?
5. Who would you identify as a role model outside of school now? How does that person or persons influence you?
6. How does your identity as an African American coeducational to who you are?
7. Tell me about any barriers, problems, and/or hardships that you may be experiencing outside of school now? How are you dealing with them?
8. Is there anything else I haven't asked that you would like to tell me?

Appendix D: Interview Protocol 3

INTERVIEW 3: REFLECTION ON MEANING

(Reflection on meaning of experience in single-gender classes; how factors influence present, how they understand the experience, comparing past to present)

Research Question 1: How do African American female alumnae describe their experiences in a single-gender schools?

The third interview will focus on the participant's reflection on past and present experiences in her life IN school.

The researcher will inform participants that it is her legal obligation to report any information concerning illegal activities or behavior that is detrimental to the participant or others. The dissemination of this information is within the control of the student participants and is not directly related to the study. The interview protocols do not ask participants to reveal sexual practices, family history, substance use, illegal behavior, medical or mental health. Participants are informed in advance of their right to refuse to answer any question or to withdraw from the study completely. Participants will be instructed specifically not reveal any information concerning illegal activities in the consent form in addition to prior to each interview.

PREPARATION: The first time we talked, we discussed your past life, and the second time we talked, we talked about your experiences in the present. This time, I'd like you to think about your past experiences and your present experience to see how those come together and what they mean to you. *Insert script to be read to participants:*

Interview Questions:

1. Thinking about your early school experience before you first attended a single-gender school and your present experience as a graduate from a single-gender school, what does it mean to you to have attended your school? How do you view your experience at your school?
2. How, if at all, do you think your family relationships, interactions, feelings, etc. have changed through your attendance at an all-female school?
3. What influences do you feel your support systems (i.e. teachers, family, counselors, and mentors) have contributed? Tell me about how you feel your teachers you have influenced you.
4. How do you see the differences between your experience in co-ed and single-gender schools? Have those differences been important in the way you have grown and learned?
5. Tell about how you think your experience would be if you had remained in your previous school (prompt to make sure you get questions about was it single-gender, etc.) Tell me about how you feel about attending a single-gender school?
6. What influences do you feel your friends, social circles, clubs and activities in school have had on you? How has participating in them influenced you and the decisions you make? How have they impacted your academic life?
7. If someone asked you to describe how all your experiences have contributed to making you the student you currently are, what would you say?
8. You told me about your role models in elementary and now. Tell me how they

have made you who you are today. What was their largest influence?

9. How have your academic experiences helped you develop your identity as an African American female student?
10. We have talked about the barriers you have experienced in school, in the past and those you are experiencing now, as well as how you deal with them. Where do you think you get the resources, strength, or ability to deal with them on an academic level? How do you view your experience in dealing with hardship and barriers – has it helped you or hurt you in school? Please tell me why.

Research Question 2: How do African American female students describe the effect of the single-gender public school educational setting on their lives outside of school?

The third interview will focus on the participant's reflection on past and present experiences in her life OUTSIDE of school

Interview Questions:

1. Thinking about your younger years and now, what does it mean to you? How do you view your current experiences compared to those when you were younger?
2. How if at all have your family relationships, interactions, feelings, etc. changed from when you were younger?
3. How do you see the differences between when you were younger and your experiences and now? Have those differences been important in the way you have grown and learned? Tell me about how you feel your family has influenced you.
4. What influences do you feel your support systems, outside of school (family, mentors, church members, etc.) have contributed?

5. Tell me about how you think your experience outside of school would be if you had remained at your previous school (prompt to make sure you get questions about was it single-gender, etc.)?
6. When you look at the young lady that you have become, what influence, if any, do you feel your friends, social circles, clubs and activities outside of school have had on you? Explain how participating in them has influenced/affected you and the decision that you make. How have they impacted you as an African American young lady?
7. If someone asked you to describe how all your experiences have contributed to making you the African American young lady that you currently are, what would you say?
8. How have your past and present role models helped/impacted the person you are today? What would you identify as the most impactful influence this person or persons had/have on you outside of school?
9. How have your social experiences helped you develop your identity as an African American woman?
10. We have talked about the barriers you have experienced in the past and those you are experiencing now, as well as how you deal with them. Where do you think you get the resources, strength, or ability to deal with them at home and in the community? How do you view your experiences in dealing with hardship and barriers – has it helped you or hurt you? Please tell me why.
11. Is there anything else I haven't asked that you would like to tell me?

Appendix E: Confidentiality Agreement

Name of Signer: _____

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: “Resiliency factors in African American female students in single-gender educational settings. I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement, I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant’s name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.
6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
7. I will only access or use systems or devices I’m officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized

individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix F: Research Question 1 and Interview questions

Research Question 1: How do African American female alumnae of single-gender public classrooms describe their experiences in that setting?	
Interview 1: Focused life history	
Interview Question 1	<i>Tell me the story of how you came to attend a single-gender school.</i>
Interview Question 2	<i>What role did your family play in the whole process of moving from your prior school to a single-gender school?</i>
Interview Question 3	<i>Tell me about the school you came from (prompt to make sure you get questions about was it single-gender, etc.)</i>
Interview Question 4	<i>What are some differences between coed schools and single-gender schools that you have experienced?</i>
Interview Question 5	<i>Who did you identify as your support system in elementary, (i.e. teachers, family, counselors, mentors) who did you go to with a problem or issue to help you work through it?</i>
Interview Question 6	<i>Tell me about your friends, social circles, clubs and activities in elementary. How did you enter these groups and/or activities? How did you feel about participating in them?</i>
Interview Question 7	<i>How would you describe your social life when you came to attend a single-gender school? What groups did you join? Were there groups that you wanted to join but didn't? Tell</i>

Interview Question 8	<p><i>me how you made the decisions about which groups to join or not join.</i></p> <p><i>If someone asked you to describe yourself as an elementary school student, what would you say? What three words would best describe you as a first grader? Fourth grader? Seventh grader?</i></p>
Interview Question 9	<p><i>Who were your role models in elementary? Describe/tell me about the teachers who had the biggest influence on you in elementary. How did that person or persons influence you?</i></p>
Interview Question 10	<p><i>How did your identity as an African American fit into who you were academically?</i></p>
Interview Question 11	<p><i>Tell me about any barriers, problems, and/or hardships that you may have experience in elementary school? How did you deal with them?</i></p>
<p><i>Interview 2: Details of present experience</i></p>	
Interview Question 1	<p><i>Tell me how you feel about attending single-gender school.</i></p> <p><i>How does your family feel about you attending a single-gender school?</i></p>
Interview Question 2	<p><i>How do you feel about your experience now and the differences between co-ed and single-gender?</i></p>
Interview Question 3	<p><i>Who would you identify as part of your support system, (i.e. teachers, family, counselors, and mentors) who can you go to</i></p>

	<i>with a problem or issue to help you work through it? Have they changed, increased, decreased?</i>
Interview Question 4	<i>Tell about your current relationships with peers at other schools.</i>
Interview Question 5	<i>Tell me about your friends, social circles, clubs and activities now. How do you feel about participating in these groups and/or activities? What changes have you noticed in your attitude toward participating in them?</i>
Interview Question 6	<i>How are your relationships different this school year?</i>
Interview Question 7	<i>How has your view of yourself changed this school year?</i>
Interview Question 8	<i>What school groups are you in now? How are they the same or different from the past groups that you participated in?</i>
Interview Question 9	<i>If someone asked you to describe yourself as an alumnae student at this point in your life, what would you say? What three words would best describe you as an alumnae?</i>
Interview Question 10	<i>Who are your role models now? Describe/tell me about the teachers who have the biggest influence on you now? How does your identity as an African American fit into the picture of who you are?</i>
Interview Question 11	<i>Tell me about any barriers, problems, and/or hardships that you may be experiencing now in school? How do you deal with them?</i>

Interview 3: Reflection on meaning

Interview Question 1	<i>Thinking about your early school experience before you first attended a single-gender school and your present experience as a graduate from a single-gender school, what does it mean to you to have attended your school? How do you view your experience at your school?</i>
Interview Question 2	<i>How, if at all, do you think your family relationships, interactions, feelings, etc. have changed through your attendance at an all-female school?</i>
Interview Question 3	<i>What influences do you feel your support systems (i.e. teachers, family, counselors, and mentors) have contributed? Tell me about how you feel your teachers you have influenced you.</i>
Interview Question 4	<i>How do you see the differences between your experience in co-ed and single-gender schools? Have those differences been important in the way you have grown and learned?</i>
Interview Question 5	<i>Tell about how you think your experience would be if you had remained in your previous school (prompt to make sure you get questions about was it single-gender, etc.) Tell me about how you feel about attending a single-gender school?</i>
Interview Question 6	<i>What influences do you feel your friends, social circles, clubs and activities in school have had on you? How has</i>

	<i>participating in them influenced you and the decisions you make? How have they impacted your academic life?</i>
Interview Question 7	<i>If someone asked you to describe how all of your experiences have contributed to making you the student you currently are, what would you say?</i>
Interview Question 8	<i>You told me about your role models in elementary and now. Tell me how they have made you who you are today. What was their largest influence?</i>
Interview Question 9	<i>How have your academic experiences helped you develop your identity as an African American female student?</i>
Interview Question 10	<i>We have talked about the barriers you have experienced in school, in the past and those you are experiencing now, as well as how you deal with them. Where do you think you get the resources, strength, or ability to deal with them on an academic level? How do you view your experience in dealing with hardship and barriers – has it helped you or hurt you in school? Please tell me why.</i>

Appendix G: Research Question 2 and Interview Questions

Research Question 2: How do African American female student's alumnae describe the effect of the single-gender school on their lives outside of school?	
Interview 1: Focused life history	
Interview Question 1	<i>How would you describe your life outside of school during your elementary years? Tell me about your family during this time.</i>
Interview Question 2	<i>Tell me about your support systems outside of school during elementary.</i>
Interview Question 3	<i>Tell me about your friends, social circles, clubs and activities (outside of school) when you were younger. How did you enter these groups and/or activities? How did you feel about participating in them?</i>
Interview Question 4	<i>If someone asked you to describe yourself outside of school when you were younger, what would you say? What three words best describe you outside of school when you were six years old? Nine years old? Twelve years old?</i>
Interview Question 5	<i>Who would you identify as a role model when you were younger outside of school? How did that person or persons influence you?</i>
Interview Question 6	<i>How did your identity as an African American fit into who your social life?</i>

Interview Question 7	<i>Tell me about any barriers, problems, and/or hardships that you may have experience outside of school as a young child? How did you deal with them?</i>
Interview Question 8	<i>Is there anything else I haven't asked that you would like to tell me?</i>
<i>Interview 2: Details of present experience</i>	
Interview Question 1	<i>Tell me what your life is like outside of school now. Tell me about your family now.</i>
Interview Question 2	<i>Tell me about your support systems outside of school now.</i>
Interview Question 3	<i>Tell me about your friends, social circles, clubs, and activities (outside of school) now. How did you participate in these groups and/or activities? How do you feel about participating in them</i>
Interview Question 4	<i>If someone asked you to describe yourself outside of school now, what would you say? What three words best describe you now?</i>
Interview Question 5	<i>Who would you identify as a role model outside of school now? How does that person or persons influence you?</i>
Interview Question 6	<i>How does your identity as an African American coeducational to who you are?</i>
Interview Question 7	<i>Tell me about any barriers, problems, and/or hardships that you may be experiencing outside of school now? How are</i>

	<i>you dealing with them?</i>
Interview Question 8	<i>Is there anything else I haven't asked that you would like to tell me?</i>
<i>Interview 3: Reflection on meaning</i>	
Interview Question 1	<i>Thinking about your younger years and now, what does it mean to you? How do you view your current experiences compared to those when you were younger?</i>
Interview Question 2	<i>How if at all have your family relationships, interactions, feelings, etc. changed from when you were younger?</i>
Interview Question 3	<i>How do you see the differences between when you were younger and your experiences and now? Have those differences been important in the way you have grown and learned? Tell me about how you feel your family has influenced you.</i>
Interview Question 4	<i>What influences do you feel your support systems, outside of school (family, mentors, church members, etc.) have contributed?</i>
Interview Question 5	<i>Tell me about how you think your experience outside of school would be if you had remained at your previous school (prompt to make sure you get questions about was it single-gender, etc.)?</i>
Interview Question 6	<i>When you look at the young lady that you have become, what</i>

	<p><i>influence, if any, do you feel your friends, social circles, clubs and activities outside of school have had on you?</i></p> <p><i>Explain how participating in them has influenced/affected you and the decision that you make. How have they impacted you as an African American young lady?</i></p>
Interview Question 7	<p><i>If someone asked you to describe how all of your experiences have contributed to making you the African American young lady that you currently are, what would you say?</i></p>
Interview Question 8	<p><i>How have your past and present role models helped/impacted the person you are today? What would you identify as the most impactful influence this person or persons had/have on you outside of school?</i></p>
Interview Question 9	<p><i>How have your social experiences helped you develop your identity as an African American woman?</i></p>
Interview Question 10	<p><i>We have talked about the barriers you have experienced in the past and those you are experiencing now, as well as how you deal with them. Where do you think you get the resources, strength, or ability to deal with them at home and in the community? How do you view your experiences in dealing with hardship and barriers – has it helped you or hurt you? Please tell me why.</i></p>
Interview Question 11	<p><i>Is there anything else I haven't asked that you would like to</i></p>

tell me?